

EURAXESS LINKS ASEAN

Briefings: The European Research Council (ERC)

It is all about excellence!

The ERC funds ground-breaking frontier research projects across all fields of science to facilitate and encourage world-class research in Europe. Support is given to individual outstanding Principal Investigators (and their teams, where applicable) on the basis of scientific excellence.

ERC grants are open to excellent researchers of any age, any nationality and at any place of work. The research must be carried out in a public or private research organisation in one of the EU Member States or Associated Countries. However, ERC grantees can keep their affiliation with their respective home institute outside Europe. Team members can be based outside Europe. ERC grantees also have the option of moving within Europe with the grant.

Recognition and independence

The ERC offers selective and generous grants, independence, recognition and visibility. The ERC's 'bottom-up' approach allows successful candidates to work on a topic of their own choice, with a team of their own choice. Grantees gain true financial autonomy for 5 years. The ERC is a global quality label recognised by the international research community. ERC Grantees not only attract top team members, both from Europe and the world, but also succeed in attracting additional funding.





[Click here](#) to read an interview with ERC Starting Grant recipient Dr Mangala Srinivas.

Since its creation in 2007, the ERC has awarded research grants worth nearly 11 billion euros to more than 6,000 scientists and scholars from all over the world, both early-career and senior, carrying out their ambitious research projects in all scientific disciplines. Of these, five are ASEAN national working in prestigious institutions across Europe. An estimated 300 ASEAN researchers work as team members on ERC-funded research projects. The ERC encourages more top ASEAN researchers to join the ranks of ERC grant holders.

Which Grants are available?

There are 3 main types of ERC grants:

- **Starting Grant (StG)** for researchers 2-7 years after award of PhD.
- **Consolidator Grant (CoG)** for researchers 7-12 years after award of PhD.
- **Advanced Grant (AdG)** for established research leaders.

Additionally, ERC grant holders can apply for top-up funding (**Proof of Concept Grant; PoC**) to explore the innovation potential of their research results.

Indicative Call Timetable

Calls	Expected call date	Deadline(s)	Budget € million (estimated grants)
Advanced Grant ERC-2016-AdG	24 May 2016	1 Sep 2016	540 (235)
Starting Grant ERC-2017-StG	19 Jul 2016	18 Oct 2016	605 (415)
Consolidator Grant ERC-2017-CoG	20 Oct 2016	9 Feb 2016	575 (320)
Advanced Grant ERC-2017-AdG	16 May 2017	31 Aug 2017	570 (245)
Proof of Concept ERC-2016-PoC ERC-2017-PoC	22 Oct 2015 19 Jul 2016	26 May 2016 4 Oct 2016 19 Jan 2017 25 Apr 2017 5 Sep 2017	20 (130) 20 (130)



Where do I find more information?

Official webpage of the [European Research Council](#).

[ERC Funding Opportunities Explained](#) – Presentation by Dr Martin Penny, ERC Executive Agency

[Information for Applicants](#)

[ERC Work Programme 2016](#)

[Interview](#) with Dr Martin Penny, ERC Executive Agency on Youtube

View the ERC's [step-by-step video](#) – An introduction to the application process, including tips & tricks for the interview

For personalised assistance please contact your nearest [EURAXESS Links](#) representative.



Interview with ERC President Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon

Prof Bourguignon, what does the ERC have to offer researchers outside Europe? Does the international researcher need to be based in Europe to be an ERC grantee?

First and foremost, the ERC grants are appealing because researchers are totally free to propose topics they find the most challenging and to organise their support the way they find the most appropriate. The funding is substantial, both in terms of grant amount – up to 2.5 million euros – and in terms of length – up to five years. They are open to researchers working in all research disciplines. What's more, the grants are very flexible and give researchers tremendous autonomy to pursue their scientific ideas. By now the "prestige" of the ERC label of excellence makes the grants coveted by scientists. ERC grantees I meet often underline that the application process is very simple and user-friendly and that red tape is kept to a minimum. We want scientists to focus on what they are best at – doing science!

Researchers of any nationality, regardless of their current place of work, can apply for ERC funding, provided that they have a contractual relation with an institution based in Europe and are ready to spend at least 50% of their working time there. This means that – after being awarded an ERC grant – they can keep the affiliation with their research organisation in their country of origin, if they so wish, for the rest of the time. Several ERC grantees who moved to Europe have testified that leaving their country does not mean leaving their networks behind or burning bridges. There are also other incentives for international researchers to apply for ERC funding, such as additional funds to cover start-up costs for those moving to Europe, amounting to up to 1 million euros extra. What is also worth noting is that team members taking part in an ERC-funded project can be based in non-EU countries as long as it is justifiable and well explained in the candidate's application.

How important is it to the ERC to engage researchers working outside Europe in its funding schemes?

It is part of the ERC's mission to attract the best scientists from outside Europe. Top research is an intrinsically international endeavour. We know that bright minds exchange ideas across borders and continents, so we should let them collaborate freely to progress and to make ground-breaking discoveries. The ERC encourages such "brain circulation" and ultimately also aims to make Europe a prime location for top talent globally.

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**Does the ERC give priority to younger researchers? If so, how is this done?**

Yes, the ERC is serious about early-career researchers. Two-thirds of the overall ERC budget go to the most promising young minds. They should be empowered early in their careers and be given maximum scientific freedom. Top scientists with as little as two years of experience after their PhD are already eligible to apply for ERC grants.

Let me also point out that, on average, each ERC grant holder employs around six team members, of which many are post docs and PhD students. In this way, the ERC also supports a new generation of researchers. An estimate shows that around 300 of these team members are nationals of ASEAN countries, mainly from Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

Is it possible for researchers who do not hold an ERC grant to be associated with an ERC grantee's team?

Yes, the ERC wants to encourage its grantees to engage even more with fellow scientists in the global research community and motivate international talent to take part in ERC-funded projects in Europe, in particular young researchers. As said, we believe in "brain circulation". To inspire such global scientific exchange, the ERC has already a number of agreements (so called "implementing arrangements") in place with renowned research funding agencies outside Europe to provide opportunities for early-career scientists to temporarily join research teams run by ERC grant holders. In 2012, the ERC launched the first of such initiatives with the US National Science Foundation (NSF). By now, agencies in another six countries on four continents have signed such agreements, namely South Korea, Argentina, Japan, China, South Africa and Mexico. And there are more countries lined up, so stay tuned!

Before we close this interview, do you have any tips for potential ERC grant applicants?

Plan it well in advance. Competition is tough, so take the time to carve out the best possible application. You also need to show in your proposal that your research project will push the frontiers of knowledge, and that it is not just incremental research. Before applying, ask yourself "what is it that is innovative about my project?". I would also advise applicants to try to speak to ERC grantees in the same field of research who can share their experience and provide advice. Lastly, the researcher needs to apply with a host institution in Europe, so it is crucial to establish contacts and find one early on before applying for ERC funding.

Thank you Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon!

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