

European Research Council

ERC funding schemes and strategic insights

UPDATED after reaction of ERC Council on 29 April

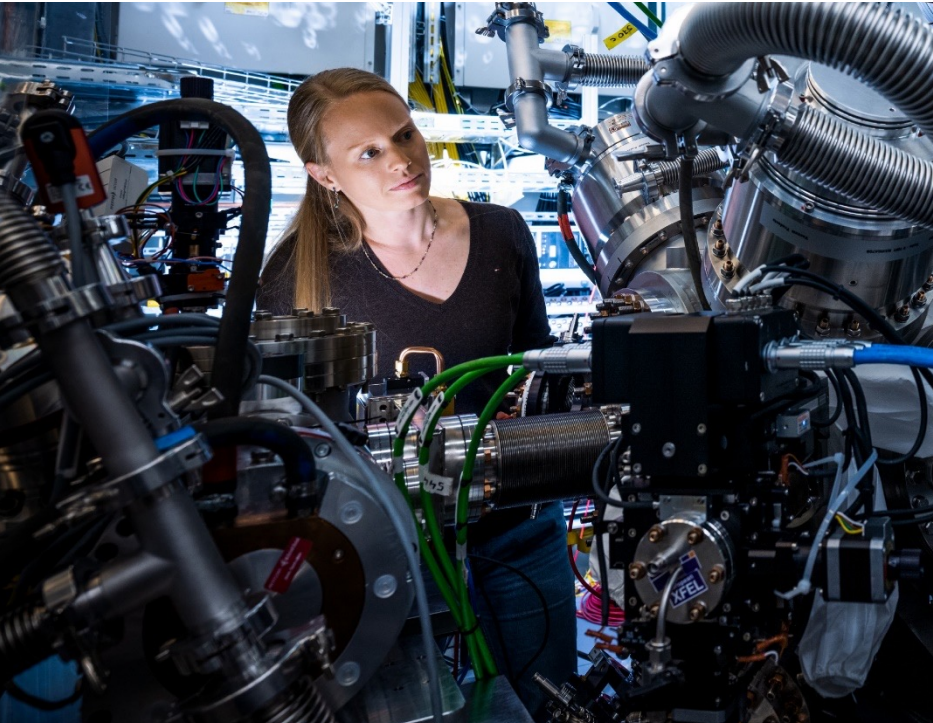
Nicolas Villacorta

Delegate for Helmholtz Matter in Brussels

23 April 2026, online for NuFFER

European Research Council

Overview



European XFEL

- Helmholtz in Brussels
- ERC funding lines
- What could change compared to now?
- Excursion: Working at the EU institutions



Helmholtz in Brussels

Helmholtz Association

Helmholtz in Brussels

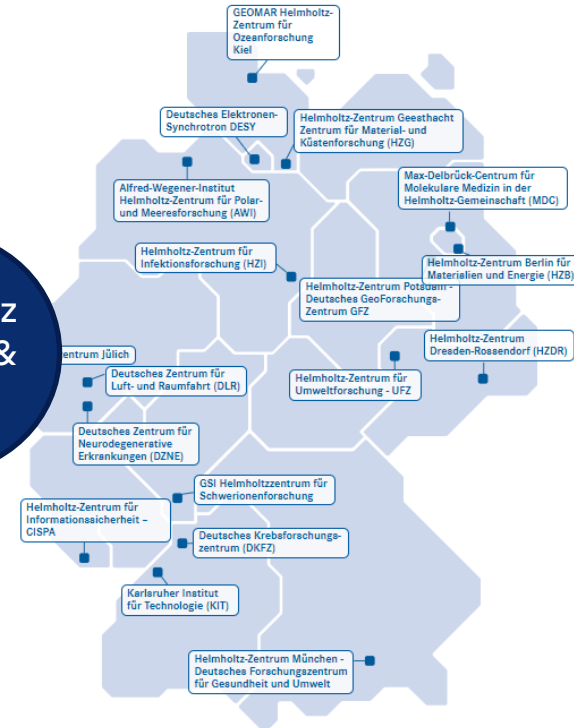
What is Helmholtz doing in Brussels?



Brussels office

- Access to EU-Programmes
- Intl. visibility
- Strategic alliances
- Co-develop frame conditions

Helmholtz centres & HQ



Helmholtz in Brussels

What do we do for the Helmholtz centres?



Monitor EU
research policy &
developments

Inform, advise
and support on EU
policy
developments +
funding
opportunities

Troubleshooting

Offer trainings &
coachings

Provide a meeting
room with up to
18 seats

Position and
represent
Helmholtz
towards the EU

Helmholtz in Brussels

Who is who



Dr. Ioannis Legouras
Head of the Brussels Office



**Alexandra-Sonja
Lawson**
Assistant to the Head of
Brussels Office



Kristine August
Deputy Head of Brussels Office
PR & Public Affairs Manager



Dorothea Kapitza
Legal Advisor



Barbara Geilen
Office Management



Dr. Andreas Krell
Delegate for the Research Field
Earth and Environment



Dr. Holger Ihssen
Delegate for the Research Field
Energy



Dr. Jens Jäger
Delegate for the Research Field
Health



Christian Linder
Delegate for the Research Field
Information



Dr. Nicolas Villacorta
Delegate for the Research Field
Matter

Helmholtz in Brussels

Who does what?

Dr. Ioannis Legouras	EU research policy; ERA; Competitiveness Compass
Kristine August	(Science for) policy; G6; communication
Dr. Andreas Krell	Horizon-ERC; Horizon-Missions; LIFE
Dr. Holger Ihssen	Horizon-CL5; Horizon-Widening; EERA; CEF-Energy
Dr. Jens Jäger	Horizon-EIC; Horizon-CL1; Horizon-MSCA; EU4Health
Christian Linder	Horizon-CL4; Digital Europe; CEF-Digital
Dr. Nicolas Villacorta	Horizon-INFRA; Horizon-ERA; Horizon-MSCA; ESFRI; I3; EFRE
Dorothea Kapitza	DESCA; EARTO; IGLO; research assessment; "AK Internationales"
Alexandra-Sonja Lawson	Meeting room; event support
Barbara Geilen	ERC support; statistics; bookkeeping; intern-programm
Kathrin Keefer	Mailing lists of policy reps.; ERC panels



ERC funding lines

In Horizon Europe

ERC funding lines

Structure of Horizon Europe 2021-27 with three pillars



ERC funding lines

In a nutshell

Starting Grants

starters

(0-10 years after PhD)

up to €1.5 m (+€1 m)
for 5 years

Consolidator Grants

consolidators

(5-15 years after PhD)

up to €2 m (+€1 m)
for 5 years

Advanced Grants

track-record of
significant research
achievements
up to €2.5 m (+€1 m)
for 5 years

Plus Grants

outstanding track-
record. Address major
scientific challenge.
Open new research
field. Up to €7 m for 4
- 7 years

Proof of Concept

Bridging gap research <-> earliest stage of
marketable innovation for ERC grant holders
lump sum of €150 k for 1.5 years

Synergy Grants

2-4 Principal Investigators up to €10 m (+€4 m)
for 6 years
1 PI can be based outside EU/AC

ERC funding lines

In a nutshell. More information under <https://erc.europa.eu/apply-grant>

Abbr.	ERC Grant	Call Code	Deadline	Max. budget (€ m.)	Experience	Requirements PI
StG	Starting Grant	(ERC-2027-StG)	(Oct. 2026)	1.5 (+1)	≤ 10 y after PhD	+
CoG	Consolidator Grant	(ERC-2027-CoG)	(Jan. 2027)	2 (+1)	> 5 and ≤ 15 y after PhD	++
AdG	Advanced Grant	ERC-2026-AdG	27/8/2026	2.5 (+1)	not specified	++++
PLUS	Plus Grant	ERC-2026-PLUS	2/9/2026	7	All career stages	+++++
SyG	Synergy Grants	(ERC-2027-SyG)	(May 2027)	10 (+4)	Any seniority	Collaborate w/ up to 3 other PIs
PoC	Proof of Concept Grant	ERC-2026-POC	17/9/2026	0.15	-	ERC grantee

ERC funding lines

ERC Frontier Research Grants. StGs in PE: <https://go.fzj.de/M63tr>

Starting Grants (StG) in 2027

Project budget: €1.5 m. for max. 5 y (+€1 m.)

Deadline: TBD Oct. 2026

Applicant: (Early) researcher w/ PhD degree ≤ 10 years

Dedication to project: 50 % (at least)

Objectives: Support for excellent PI at the career stage at which they are starting or already started their **own independent research team** or programme. PI must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal

Requirements for PI: (as inspiration)

- One high-impact paper as main or corresponding author
- Demonstrate early achievements in field
- Presentations, patents, awards...

Conditions for host institutions:

- Portability of grant allowed
- PI can apply for independent funding
- PI manages funding
- Allocate resources for PI
- Allow PI to indep. publish as main author
- PI able to supervise team
- PI to have access to RI and lab space
- Meet time-to-grant of grant agreement

ERC funding lines

ERC Frontier Research Grants

Consolidator Grants (CoG) in 2027

Project budget: €2 m. for max. 5 y (+€1 m.)

Deadline: TBD Jan. 2027

Applicant: Researcher w/ PhD degree > 5 and ≤ 15 years

Dedication to project: 40 % (at least)

Objectives: Support for excellent PI at the career stage at which they may **still be consolidating** their own independent research team or programme. PI must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal

Requirements for PI: (example from 2021)

- Several high-impact papers as main author
- Up to 10 research outputs
- Research monographs
- Granted patents
- Promising track record for career stage
- Invited talks to renowned conferences
- Prizes, awards, academy memberships, ...

Conditions for host institutions:

- See Starting Grant

ERC funding lines

ERC Frontier Research Grants

Advanced Grants (AdG)

Project budget: €2.5 m. for max. 5 y (+€1 m.)

Deadline: 27 Aug. 2026

Applicant: Seniority not specified. Active researcher with a track record of significant research achievements.

Dedication to project: 30 % (at least)

Objectives: Support for excellent PI at the career stage at which they are **already established research leaders** with a recognised track record of research achievements. PI must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of scientific proposal

Requirements for PI: (example from 2021)

- 10 high-impact papers as main author
- 3 major research monographs
- 5 granted patents (if applicable)
- 10 invited talks to intl. renowned conferences
- 3 expeditions as PI (if applicable)
- Organisation 3 world-renowned conferences
- Intl. recognition through prizes, awards, ...
- Launch career of outstanding researchers
- Recognised innovation leadership

Conditions for host institutions:

- See Starting Grant

ERC funding lines

ERC Frontier Research Grants

Synergy Grants (SyG) in 2027

Project budget: €10 m. for max. 6 y (+€4 m.)

Deadline: TBD **May 2027**. No call planned for 2028

Applicants: Two to four innovative and active principal investigators working together

Dedication to project: 30 % (at least) for each PI

Objectives: Jointly support research problems that cannot be tackled by any single PI or their teams alone.

Requirements for grant:

- Each PI has a competitive track record matching their career stage
- Each PI is an outstanding researcher in their field
- Interplay of outstanding expertise in different research fields

Conditions for host institutions:

- See Starting Grant

ERC funding lines

ERC Frontier Research Grants **WARNING: Tough competition**

Plus Grants (PLUS)

Project budget: €7 m. for 4 to 7 years

Deadline: 2 Sept. 2026

Applicant: All stages. Outstanding principal investigator who addresses a major scientific challenge.

Dedication to project: 30 % (at least)

Objectives: Support ideas that cannot be conducted as classic ERC projects. Have a vision to transform their field or open a new field of research

Requirements for PI:

- Outstanding record of scientific achievement at the forefront of their field
- Intellectual leadership compared to peers in same career stage

Conditions for host institutions:

- See Starting Grant

ERC funding lines

Other funding lines for ERC grantees

Proof of Concept (PoC)

Project budget: €0.15 m. for max. 1.5 y

Cut-off deadline: 17 Sept. 2026

Applicants: ERC grantee w/ running ERC project or recently finished (cut-off 1st Jan. 2025)

Objectives: Support ERC grant holders to explore the commercial and social innovation potential of their ERC-funded research

Requirements for grant:

- Demonstrate the relation between the idea to be taken to proof of concept and the main ERC grant
- Idea to show breakthrough innovation potential

Conditions for host institutions:

- PI submits on behalf of the host institution



What could change?
in 2027 and in Horizon Europe 2028-2034

ERC work programme for 2027 (updated after ERC reaction on 29/4)

New eligibility windows. Application and resubmission restrictions

Eligibility windows and restrictions

- **Starting grants:** PhD defence not older than **10 years** before 1st Jan. 2027
- **Consolidator grants:** PhD defence **between 5 and 15 years** before 1st Jan. 2027
- Exceptions with e.g. parental leave and clinical training
- Researchers to hold only one StG and only one CoG during their career (grantees cannot reapply to same funding line)

Application restrictions

- **SyG 2027:** All PIs to remain eligible during evaluation process, otherwise proposal ineligible.
- Applicants to submit **only one application** to 2027 main grant calls

Resubmission not allowed

- **StG/CoG/AdG/SyG calls 2027:** score C at step 1 in ~~2024~~, 2025 or 2026 or score B at step 1 in ~~2025~~ or 2026 in **any other main grant call** (for SyG 2027 also SyG 2026)
- **ERC Plus 2027:** As above and not having passed step 1 of ERC Plus 2026
- Restrictions to be rethought in **2028**

The next Horizon Europe 2028-2034

DISCLAIMER

The EC has made a proposal that

CAN CHANGE

it will be fiercely negotiated with the EU Parliament and national European Governments (famous **trilogue**) until the very end of 2027

Which means:

- Take the **figures** here with a grain of salt
- Structure, funding lines and research topics to be funded are subject to change

The next Horizon Europe 2028-2034

Proposed programme structure for 2028-34 with four pillars

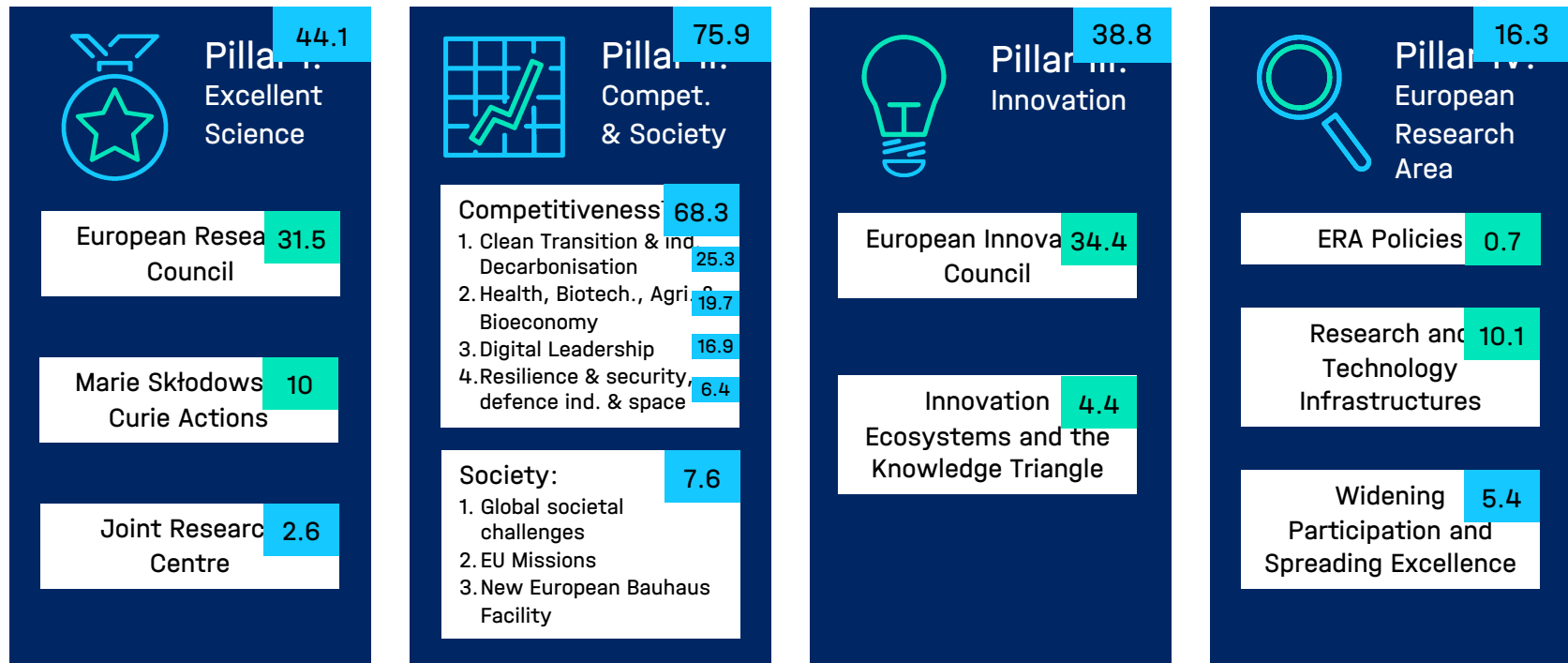


¹To be implemented under the European Competitiveness Fund. Source: Proposal of European Commission COM(2025) 543 final/2 of 16/7/2025

The next Horizon Europe 2028-2034 **DISCLAIMER: Tentative figures**

Proposed and presumed budget

American € bn in current prices



¹To be implemented under the European Competitiveness Fund. Source: Proposal of European Commission COM(2025) 543 final/2 of 16/7/2025

The next Horizon Europe 2028-2034 **DISCLAIMER: Tentative figures**

Budget compared to Horizon Europe 2021-2027

Horizon Europe 2028-34 (calculated in 2025)			Horizon Europe 2021-27 (calculated in 2018)		
ERC	€31.5 bn	18 %	ERC	€15 bn	17.5 %
Marie Curie	€10 bn	5.7 %	Marie Curie	€6.3 bn	7.7 %
EIC	€34.4 bn	19.7 %	EIC	€8.8 bn	10.2 %
INFRA + TI	€10.1 bn	5.8 %	INFRA	€2.2 bn	2.5 %
			OITB (former TI)	€0.04 bn	0.05 %
Widening	€5.4 bn	3.1 %	Widening	€2.8 bn	3.3 %
...			...		
Horizon Europe	€175 bn	100 %	Horizon Europe	€81.6 bn	100 %

Further information on Horizon Europe 2028-2034: <https://go.fzj.de/FnyDq>

The next Horizon Europe 2028-2034 **DISCLAIMER: Tentative figures**

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Working in the EU institutions

Helmholtz Brussels

Civil servants and contractual agents at the European Commission

Alternative career paths for research fellows

Candidates:

- Fresh PhDs or Post-Docs
- Seeking for positions close to research

Duration:

- As contractual agent: six years max.
- As civil servant: permanent after one year probation

Funding:

- Paygrades and allowances from European institutions: contractual (FGIV), civil servant (AD5; specialists AD6)

Profile:

- Graduates from every knowledge area
- Specialists in occasions (e.g. nuclear inspectors or IT experts)

Application:

- Contractual agents: Roster of candidates
- Civil servants: EPSO's yearly competition

Upcoming competitions:

- Published under <https://go.fzj.de/EjHAP>

Thank you for your attention!

Questions?

Contact details of the ERC NCP office:

<https://www.eubueno.de/en/ncp-erc-2410.html>