



European Research Council

President

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Brussels, 29 May 2024

To:

ERC grantees

ERC panel members

And the wider research community

Dear researchers and research administrators,

The ERC has been working on introducing a new way of awarding grants, namely as 'lump sums', which will be put in place as a pilot scheme for Advanced Grants starting with the 2024 call. I am writing today to give you some background on the decision by the ERC Scientific Council to introduce lump sums, and to let you know in which way this mechanism affects the application and evaluation process. The information here will not be exhaustive, but the staff of the ERC Executive Agency will be running webinars over the summer with detailed advice for applicants and host institutions, with a first one on Friday 7 June 2024 at 11.00 CEST on the [ERC YouTube channel](#).

The reason for using lump sums is that they should reduce administrative work for grantees and their host institutions. Briefly, there will be no financial accounting, no cost claims, no time sheets (at least not for the ERC – institutions may have their own internal demands for time sheets) and no financial audits. The lump sum will be awarded on the basis of a budget that will need to be well explained and justified in the proposal, but expenditures will then not be controlled once the grant agreement has been signed. 80% of the awarded grant amount will be provided at the start of the project, the remaining 20% at completion.

Before agreeing to apply a lump sum model to ERC grants, the Scientific Council had established a series of conditions to ensure that the nature and flexibility of ERC grants will be preserved. Most importantly, the Scientific Council categorically wants the potentially ground-breaking and ambitious nature of ERC grants not to change, and the evaluation criteria will remain the same for all grants, whether for lump sums or actual costs. What has changed for applicants and host institutions are some details in the financial part of the application form (e.g. staff reported by person-months rather than years; explanations for expenses subdivided by cost category).

The final payments of the lump sum grants depend on the completion of the activities described in the grant agreement. For ERC grants, the entire proposal will be formally considered as one 'work package' and the concept of 'completion' of that work package will explicitly not mean that the individual aims of the proposal will have been reached. This would simply be impossible for a high-risk project that is devised more than five years before its completion date.



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Instead, 'completion' will be taken to mean that the work towards the stated aims has been carried out. Like now, if discoveries during the course of the project necessitate a significant deviation from the initially proposed path of investigation, the grantee can request an amendment so that work towards a newly defined goal can be covered by the grant. It is very simple: if the team financed by the grant has worked towards reaching the aims of the project for the entire five years as described in the grant agreement, then this is considered 'completion' of the work.

Please also pass this on to anyone you know who might be preparing an application, and remember it will apply to Advanced Grants only!

Sincerely,



Maria Leptin
President of the European Research Council