

The European Research Council

ERC 2024 Proof of Concept

Line Fredslund Volkens

Unit B.2. - Call & Project Follow-up Coordination

14th May 2024

ERC-PI/HI event Ljubljana



European Research Council

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Proof of Concept 2024

ERC supplementary funding for PIs



Proof of Concept

Size of the grant: **€150 000** (lump sum)

Duration: **12 months**

Demonstrate that the idea funded by the original ERC grant has innovation potential and significant economic or societal benefits

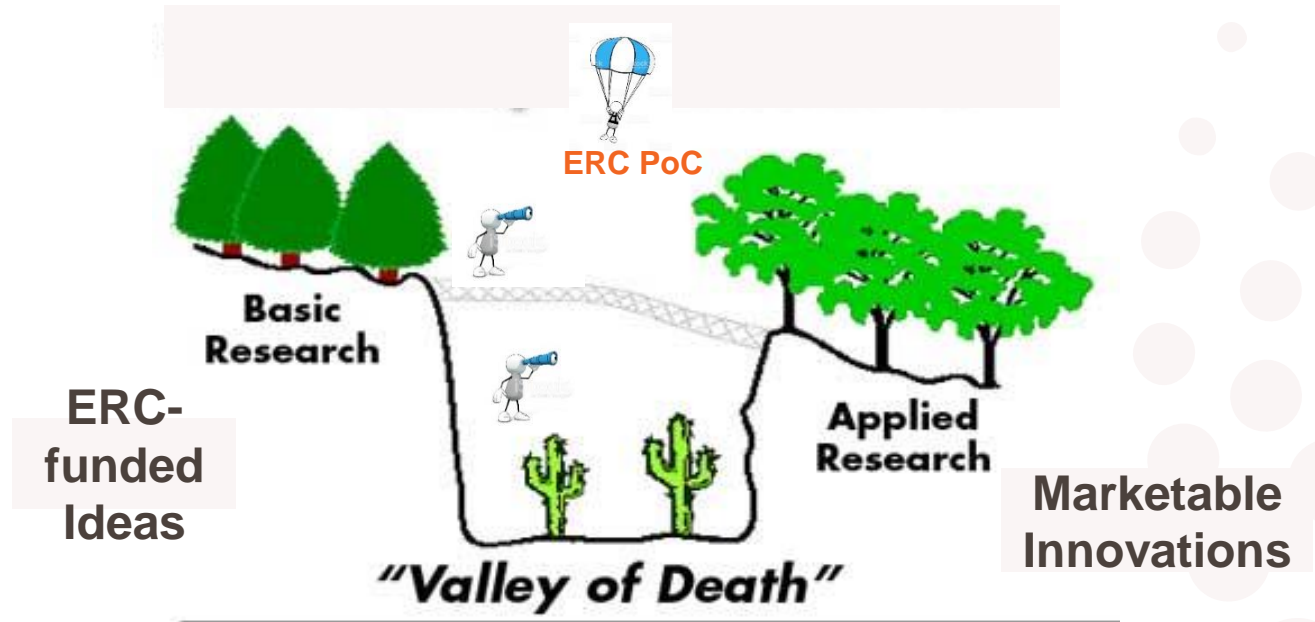
- **One continuous open call**
- **Two cut-off deadlines**
- **30M EUR PoC call budget in 2024 (budget split btw the 2 cut-off deadlines)**

PoC was created in 2011 to bridge the Valley of Death



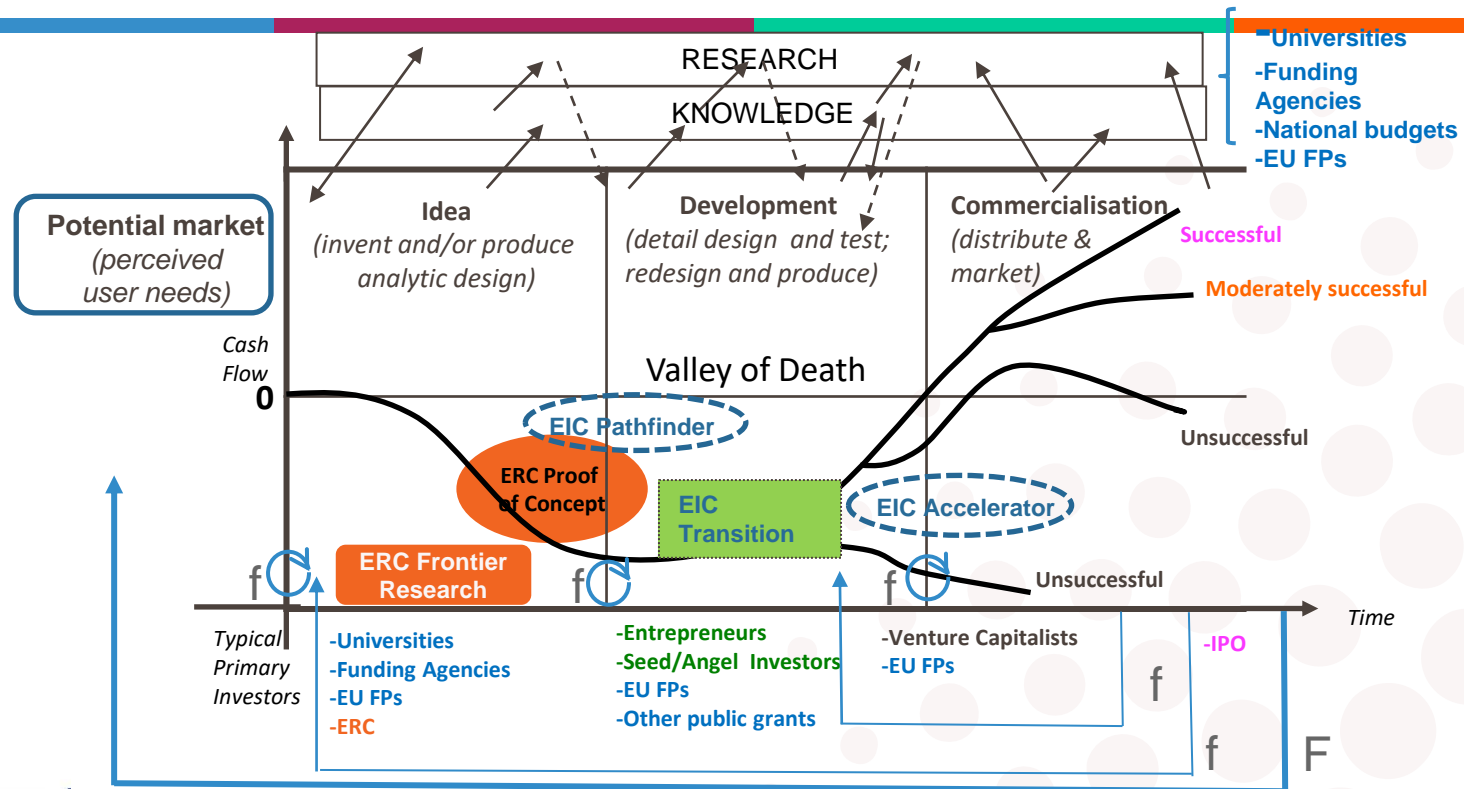
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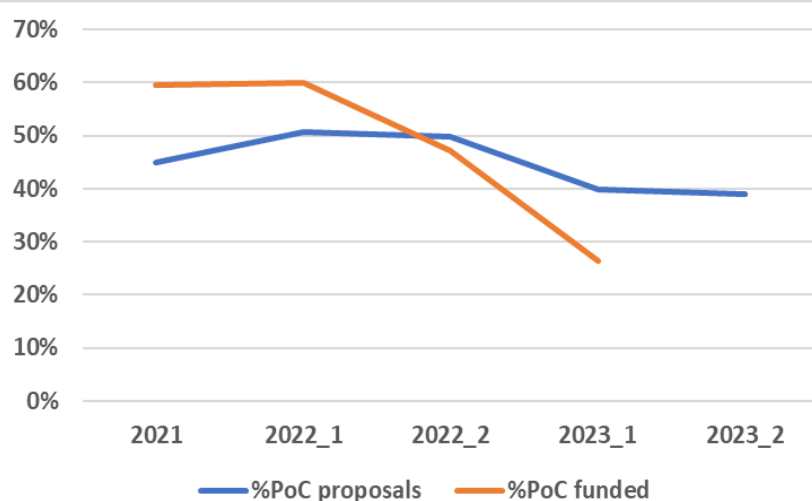
After 13 years: PoC remains closer to idea generation than to innovation

European Innovation: financial support



EIC Transition: Participation of proposals originating in PoC

	PoC proposals	PoC funded	Others proposals	Others funded	TOTAL proposals	TOTAL funded
2021	104	25	127	17	231	42
2022_1	73	12	71	8	144	20
2022_2	91	16	92	18	183	34
2023_1	66	5	100	14	166	19
2023_2	100	N.A.	157	N.A.	257	N.A.



	PoC proposals	Pool of eligible PoC	%
2021	104		
2022_1	73	452	16%
2022_2	91	435	21%
2023_1	66	365	18%
2023_2	100	309	32%

	PoC funded/ all proposals	PoC funded/ PoC proposals
2021	11%	24%
2022_1	8%	16%
2022_2	9%	18%
2023_1	3%	8%

PoC objectives and scope in Horizon Europe

- Objective: facilitating the exploration of the commercial and social innovation potential of ERC-funded research.
 - **Less of a focus on achieving economic or social impact as a direct result of the grant;**
- Scope enlarged
 - **to include further research activities needed to explore the innovation potential of the idea proposed;**
- Evaluation based on the sole criterion of excellence, comprising:
 - **Breakthrough innovation potential,**
 - **Approach and methodology,**
 - **Principal Investigator: strategic lead and project management**
- Data Management Plan now required (within 6 months from project start).
- Gender Equality Plan required at the signature of the grant



Which activities are funded?

The activities to be funded shall draw substantially on scientifically excellent ERC-funded research.

The funding will cover:

- activities aimed at exploring the pathway from ground-breaking research towards innovation
- activities at the very early stage of moving research ideas towards the initial steps of a process leading to an innovation or socially valuable proposition
- this includes further research to translate research ideas to possible application and development and testing to validate the idea in the lab



Proof of Concept: Eligibility

- Eligible Principal Investigators **have an ERC grant**, which is either **running** or **ends after 1 January 2023**
- The PoC idea has to **draw substantially on the ERC funded research**
- Only **one eligible application per PI per year** = per PoC call
- Maximum **3 PoC grants** per ERC StG, CoG or AdG grant (can run in parallel)
- Maximum **6 PoC grants** per ERC SyG (with consent of all SyG PIs)
- The **host institution can be different** than for the main grant; **Additional beneficiaries are allowed** as for ERC main grants
- **Same rules regarding portability** of the PoC grant as for main grants



Proof of Concept: Proposal

10-page proposal (excluding references):

- 1. The idea – breakthrough innovation potential** (max. 3 pages)
- 2. Approach and Methodology** (max. 6 pages)
- 3. Principal Investigator - strategic lead and project management** (max. 1 page)

Online administrative submission form A (similar to ERC main grant applications)

Supplementary documents (e.g., Host Institution Support letter, Letters of support or letters of intent)






https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_WAKrKgWKS

Read more:
<https://erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/proof-concept>



PoC - evaluation questions ERC WP 2024

1.a Breakthrough innovation potential

- Does the proposed idea have the potential to drive innovation and business inventiveness and/or tackle societal challenges?  Section 1a.i
- Are the proposed expected outcomes innovative or distinctive compared to existing solutions?  Section 1a.ii
- Is the proposed idea high risk-high gain?  Section 1a.iii
 - If successful, will the outcome result in a breakthrough innovation?
 - Is there a risk that some aspects are difficult to overcome?

PoC - evaluation questions ERC WP 2024

1.b Approach and methodology

- Are the proposed activities and planning appropriate and effective to explore the pathway from ground-breaking research towards innovation? Activities may include:
 - testing, experimenting, demonstrating and validating the idea;
 - conducting research required to carry out the above activities and to address the weaknesses uncovered by them;
 - clarifying IPR protection or knowledge transfer strategy;
 - involving industry partners, societal or cultural organisations, policymakers, or any other potential stakeholder supporting the translation of research results into innovation;
 - assessing potential “end users” of the expected innovation.

→ Sections 1b.i + ii

- Are the proposed timescales and resources adequate for the implementation and feasibility of the project, and properly justified? Will the activities be conducted by persons well qualified for the purpose?

→ Section 1b.iii

PoC - evaluation questions ERC WP 2024

1.c. Principal Investigator - strategic lead and project management

- Does the PI demonstrate a clear vision on how to organise the management of the project, the consolidation of information and data needed to take strategic decisions and implement the proposed plan, including risk and contingency measures?



Section 1c

Proof of Concept: Evaluation procedure

Single step evaluation procedure (~100 days from submission to notification):

- Remote evaluation by 5 independent experts in technology transfer and social innovation
- Each evaluation element receives a comment and a mark: *very good*, *good (pass)* or *fail*
- No panel meeting discussion – only individual reviews
- Rank listed proposals have to pass all evaluation elements (pass-mark by majority of experts)
- Ranked list established by the marks given by experts to evaluation elements 1, 2 and 3
- Highest weight is given to evaluation element 1 followed by element 2 and then
- Highest ranked proposals within the budget for the evaluation round are main listed
- A short reserve list is created in case of granting failure among the main list projects



Proof of Concept: Tips for applicants

- Be convincing about your involvement in the project – PI lead and project management!
- Know your competitors and describe the competitive landscape!
- What is the novelty in your specific idea or application – how is it different from other solutions?
- Who are your end-users? Who will benefit from your innovation when fully developed?
- In case of a commercially valuable innovation idea – describe your market!
- In case of a socially valuable proposition – what will be the expected impact of your project idea when fully developed?
- In case of a database or application development – how will this be maintained beyond the project period?
- In case additional funding/investment is needed – how will this be pursued? Through which channels?



PoC changes as of 2023 – Seal of Excellence

- ERC Work Programme 2024

‘A Seal of Excellence will be awarded to proposals that have received a pass mark in all three of the evaluation elements set out in this Work Programme, but cannot be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.’

The Seal of Excellence will be provided automatically to the applicants when they receive the evaluation outcome in the F & T Portal (with the rejection letter). To be eligible for a Seal of Excellence you must give consent to sharing some basic information about your application with other funding and support organisations.

Guidance from RTD will be provided as to where the applicants can search for funding of their project from other sources.

Information on funding bodies that recognise and support Seal of Excellence projects is available at:

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence_en

POC 2023 – update on the Seals of Excellence (SoE)



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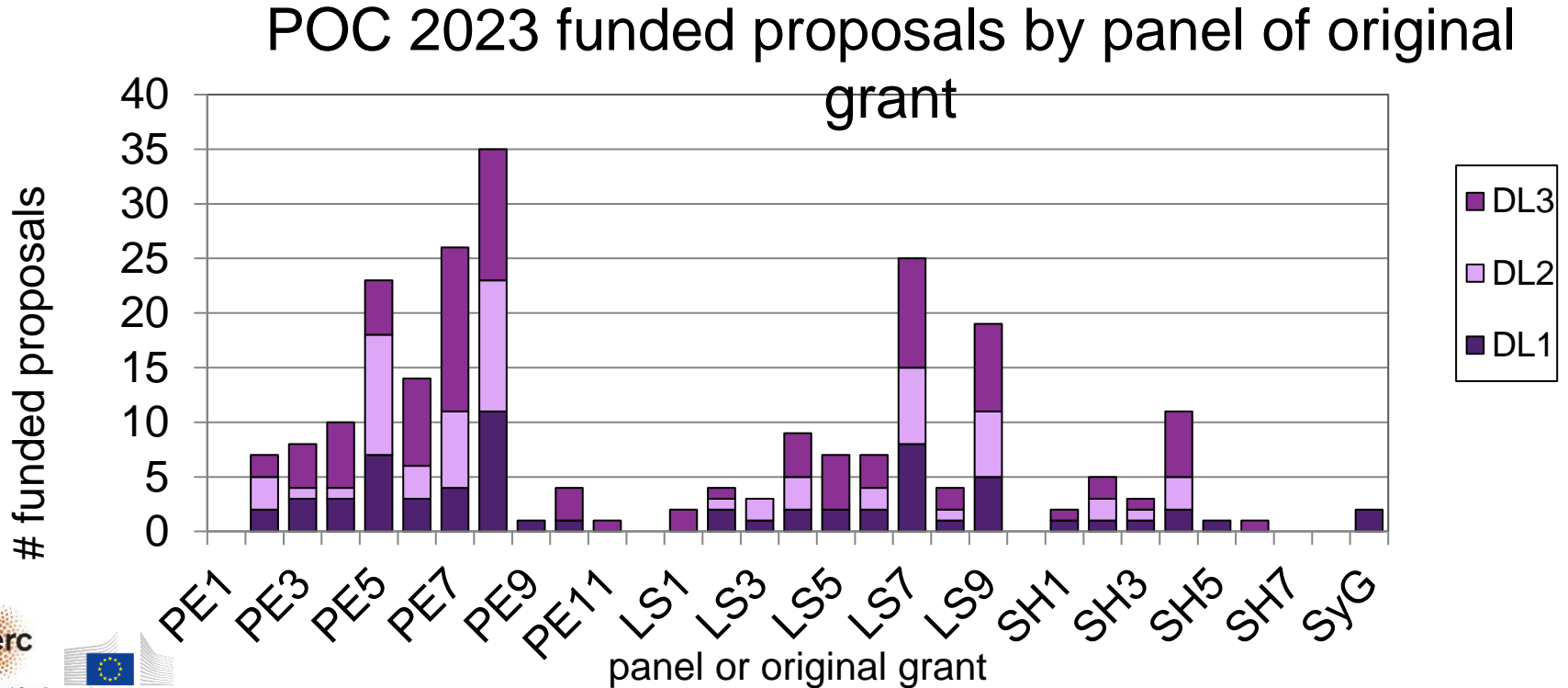
- Applicants are informed in year N+1 of their final rejection
- Agreement with RTD that also reserve listed applicants will be entitled to receive their SoE with their evaluation result and automatic upload for 2024 calls
- Seals of Excellence awarded in 2023:
 - For ERC-2023-PoC DL 1: 15 reserve list projects – 33 below budget
 - For ERC-2023-PoC DL 2: 30 reserve list projects – 76 below budget
 - For ERC-2023-PoC DL 3: 25 reserve list projects – 114 below budget

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Statistics

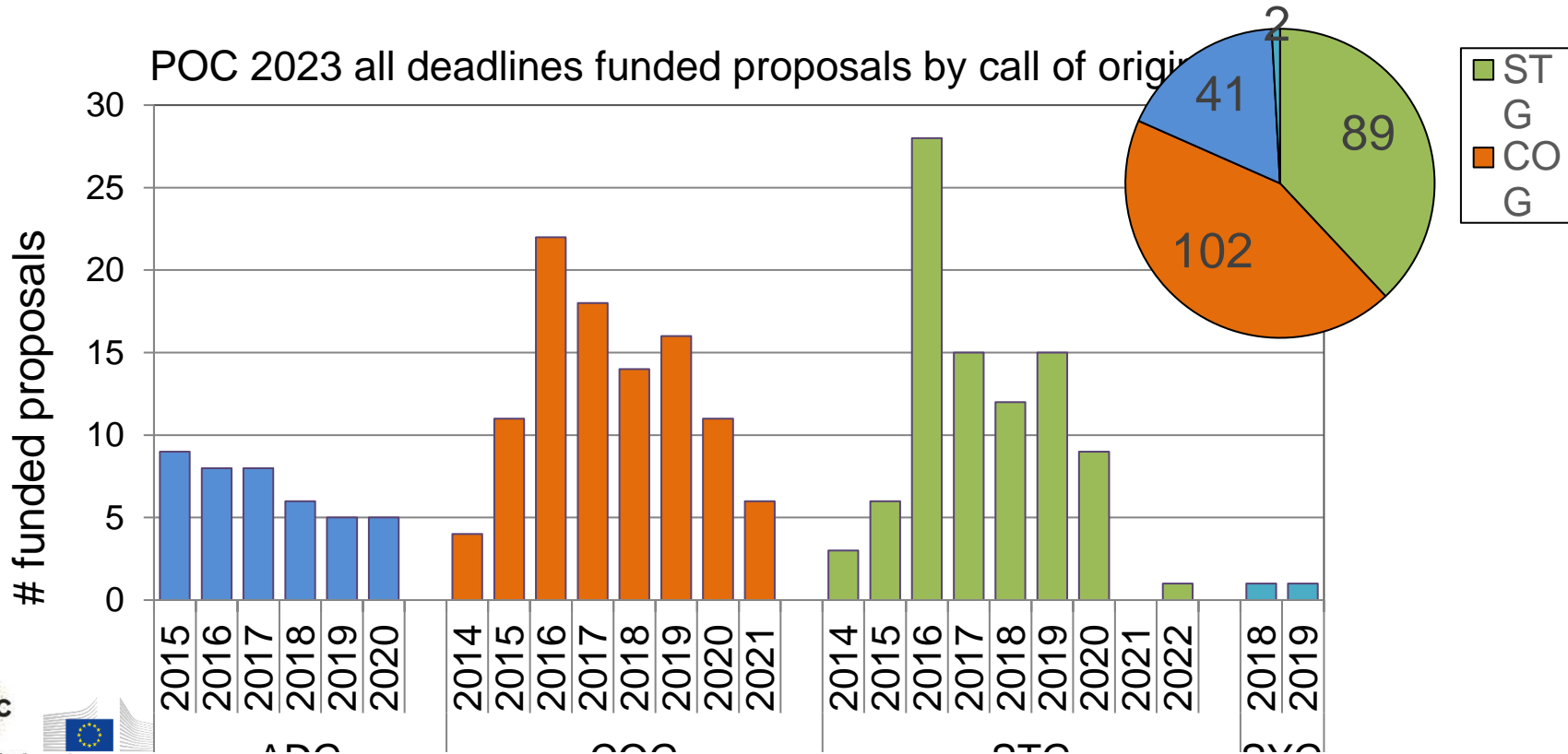
POC 2023 Funded proposals DL1 and DL2 and DL3

Panel of original grant



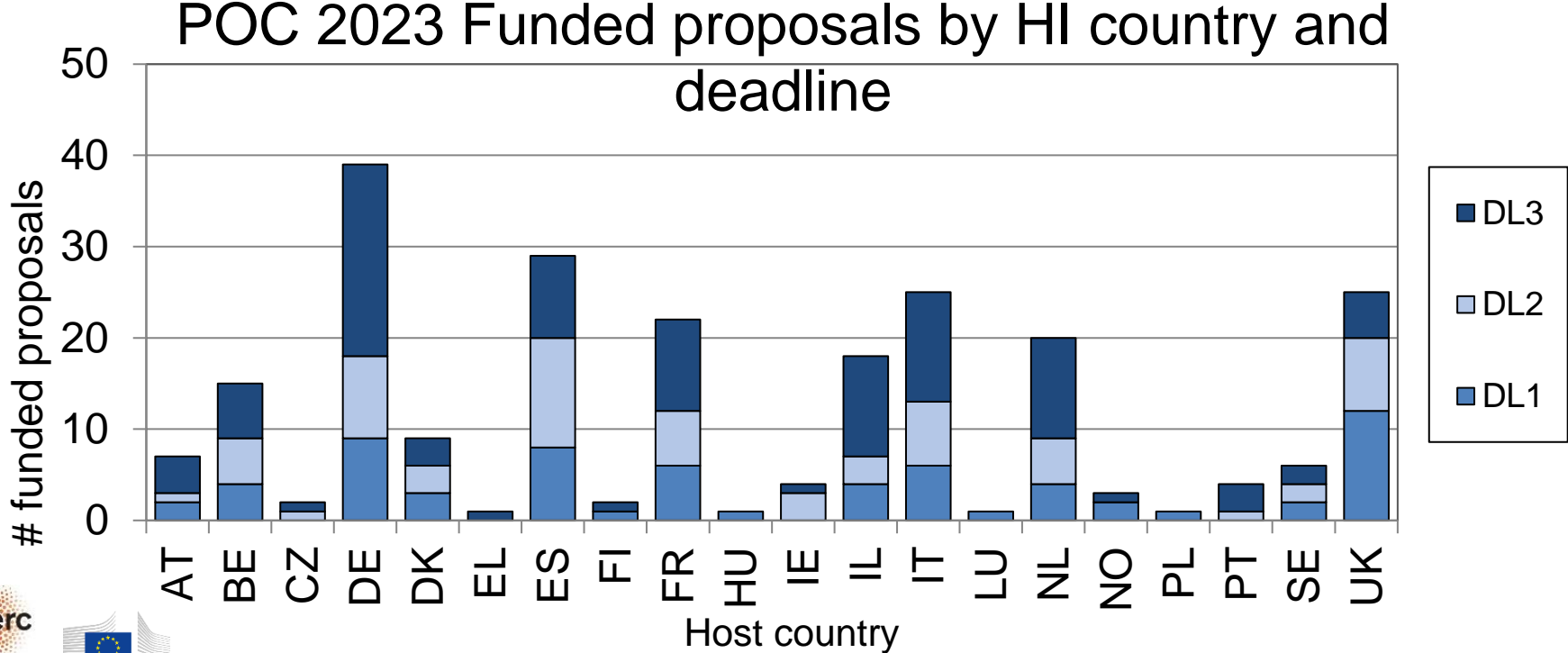
POC 2023 DL1, DL2 and DL3

Funded proposals by call of original grant

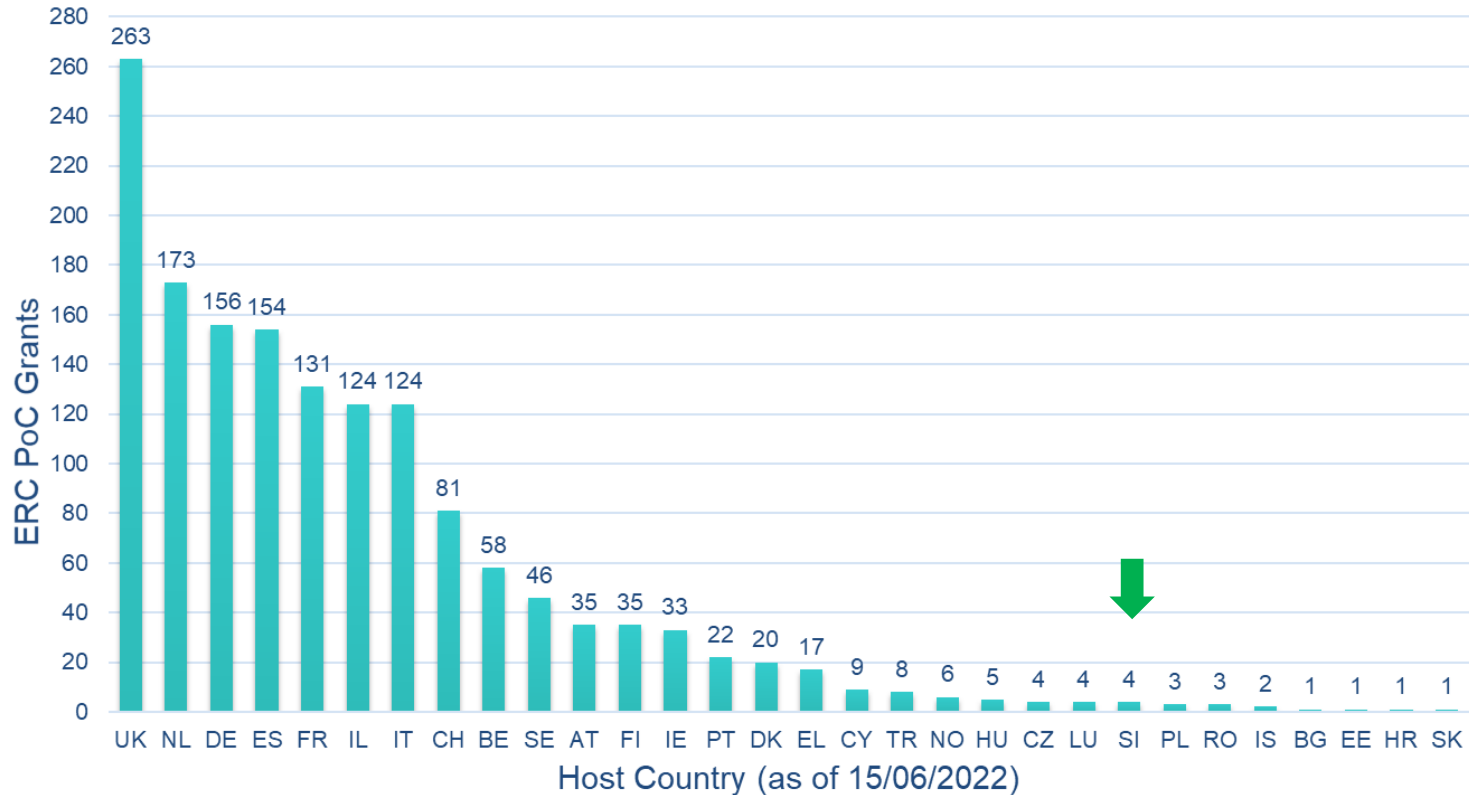


POC 2023 Funded proposals DL1, DL2 and DL3

By host country



Proof of Concept: Funded projects 2011-2022



Proof of Concept: Calendar for 2024

ERC calls	Call Opening	Submission Deadline
Starting Grants ERC-2024-StG	11/07/2023	24/10/2023
Consolidator Grants ERC-2024-CoG	12/09/2023	12/12/2023
Advanced Grants ERC-2024-AdG	29/05/2024	29/08/2024
Proof of Concept ERC-2024-PoC	16/11/2023	14/03/2024 17/09/2024
Synergy Grants ERC-2024-SyG	12/07/2023	08/11/2023



ERC PoC results on the ERC website

Press release: [ERC PoC 2023 DL1](#) & [ERC PoC 2023 DL2](#)

Project examples: [ERC-2022-PoC1](#) & [ERC-2023-PoC DL2](#)

ERC searchable [project database](#) – PoCs searchable by panel of original grant

Other support services:



[Horizon Results Booster](#)

EIC Tech 2 Market: [Tech to Market Programme \(T2M\) - European Commission](#)

 [erc.europa.eu](#)

Thank You!

Contact the ERC Proof of Concept team on
ERC-POC-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu

More information: erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/proof-concept

National Contact Point: erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points

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