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ANNEX

ANNEX

to the

Commission Decision

**approving the annual work programme 2026 of the European Research Council
Executive Agency**

Annual work programme 2026

EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE
AGENCY

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FOREWORD. Message from the Director

The European Research Council (ERC) is Europe's leading funding agency for frontier research. It supports bottom-up research across all fields of science, guiding its evaluations solely by excellence. Top scientific talent, outstanding researchers, and research leaders produce **high-quality science** and **knowledge** that underpin innovation and help address societal challenges. ERC projects generate numerous highly cited publications, patents, and spin-off companies, reflecting the ERC's lasting impact on Europe's research ecosystem.

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a year of expansion. The ERCEA will manage its largest-ever operational budget of approximately EUR 2.8 billion and implement an exceptionally high number of calls for proposals, including the new **ERC Plus funding scheme**. This initiative, arising from the Commission President's **Choose Europe** strategy, provides an additional EUR 320 million over 2026–2027 to strengthen Europe's position as a global hub for research and innovation.

The increase in activity will touch all agency services. In collaboration with the ERC Scientific Council, the Scientific Department is preparing the new ERC Plus call and refining its evaluation process, as well as implementing measures to accommodate the rising submission rates overall. The Human Resources unit will recruit new staff for the growing agency, manage turnover, analyse the 2025 staff survey, support the recently adopted new anti-harassment policy and implement an initiative on occupational health.

Technological innovation remains a priority. **The agency's AI working group**, established in 2025, will guide the integration of use cases into the **2026 IT Master Plan**, including a pilot for a virtual assistant interacting with a document corpus. Efforts to enhance knowledge management and operational efficiency will also be intensified.

A further priority is preparing the agency for the next framework programme, where the ERC programme is poised for significant growth. Negotiations for the agency's future premises and evaluation rooms will begin as current leases approach expiry. In parallel, discussions on evolving job profiles and organisational agility will ensure the agency can continue to deliver excellence at scale.

The ERCEA remains closely engaged with DG Research and Innovation, central Commission services, and the ERC Scientific Council, addressing the challenges ahead and safeguarding the ERC's world-class evaluation system and operational excellence. With these measures, the agency is well-positioned to continue supporting frontier research and contribute to Europe's efforts to maintain and advance its position in global science.

PART 1. Mission statement

The European Union created the European Research Council (ERC) in 2007 to respond to the scientific community's need for a pan-European funding agency focusing on bottom-up frontier research, with the intention of retaining and attracting top scientific talent and the most accomplished researchers to work in Europe and the associated countries. The ERC supports the best principal investigators in Europe in all fields of science and selects research projects on the sole basis of scientific excellence.

The ERC is composed of an independent Scientific Council and an ERC dedicated implementation structure, the ERCEA. The Scientific Council is composed of 22 scientists, scholars and engineers of the highest repute. They establish the overall ERC's scientific strategy and have full authority over decisions on the type of research to be funded. The ERCEA supports the work of the ERC Scientific Council in all its tasks. The ERCEA is responsible for all aspects of administrative implementation and execution of ERC actions under the oversight of its parent Directorate-General, DG Research and Innovation.

The ERCEA is committed to funding cutting-edge research aimed to bring about major scientific breakthroughs. Furthermore, the ERCEA is supporting the European Commission's evidence-based policy-making activities, by providing valuable input drawn from its project portfolio. The ERCEA will continue to support its parent DG in achieving the general and specific objectives of Horizon Europe (2021-2027), the Framework Programme for research and innovation ⁽¹⁾ (Horizon Europe or HE) by implementing the ERC component of Pillar I 'Excellence Science' with efficiency and effectiveness, as it has done under the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for research and innovation (Horizon 2020 or H2020) for the period (2014-2020) and the 'Ideas' specific programme implementing the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (FP7) for the period (2007-2013).

As reflected in its mission statement, the ERCEA is '*Dedicated to selecting and funding the excellent ideas that have not happened yet and the scientists that are dreaming them up*'. The ERCEA's core values are commitment, continuous improvement, and integrity ⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Cf. Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1290/2013 and EU No 1291/2013.

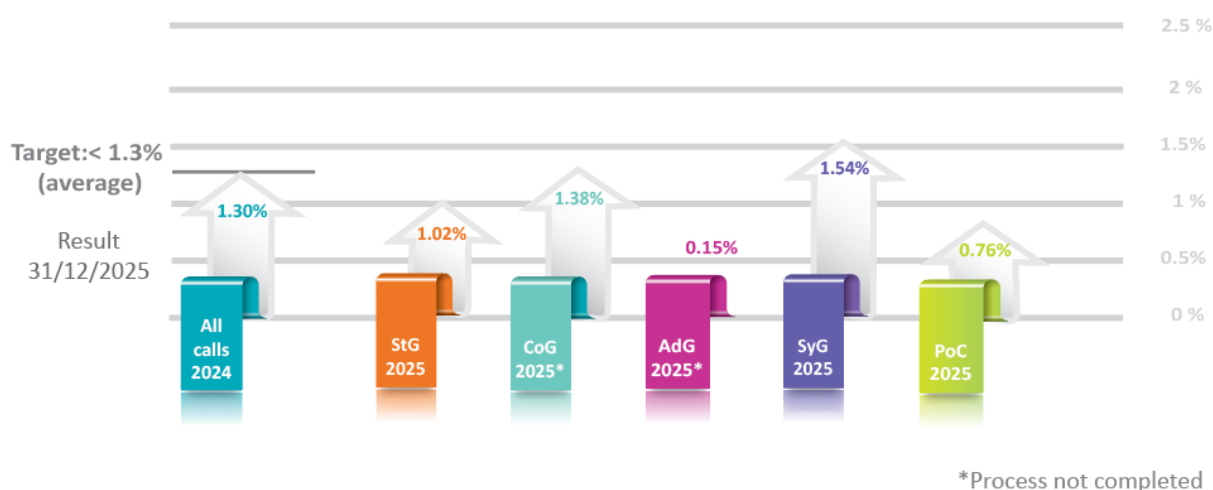
⁽²⁾ Continuous improvement encompasses the additional dimension of efficiency and creativity, and integrity also refers to honesty and respect.

PART 2. Key performance indicators

The following key performance indicators (KPIs) have been selected to measure the implementation of the programmes entrusted to the ERCEA. They cover its main activities and consist of financial management and internal control indicators. One indicator measuring the quality of the evaluations is also part of this list.

1. Overall percentage of redress cases received

All applicants receive feedback on their proposal at each step of the evaluation process. If they disagree with the assessment made by the ERCEA at the admissibility and eligibility check level or by the peer reviewers at the evaluation level, they have the possibility to submit a request for an evaluation review, so-called 'redress case'. This procedure is not intended to call into question the scientific judgement made by the peer review panel. It looks into procedural aspects of the evaluation. A low percentage of redress cases- which adds to a very low number of reevaluations and Article 22 requests ⁽³⁾ compared to the number of proposals received - indicates the high quality of the evaluation process, as well as its compliance with the evaluation principles of excellence, transparency, fairness, and impartiality ⁽⁴⁾.



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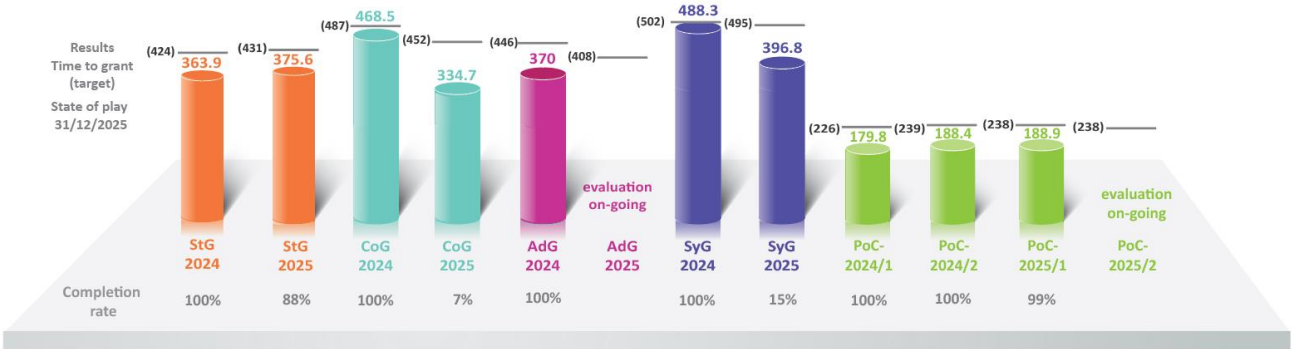
2. Time to grant

This indicator measures the average number of days from the call deadline (i.e. the final date for submission of complete proposals) to the signing of the grant agreement for the funding of selected proposals. The ERC has a derogation to extend the eight-month limit set by the rules of

⁽³⁾ Legal review by the Commission of agency's acts taken in the implementation of the delegated programme (cf. Art 22 of [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 58/2003](#) of 19 December 2002 laying down the statute for executive agencies to be entrusted with certain tasks in the management of Community programmes).

⁽⁴⁾ For further information, see the introductory section of the [ERC Rules of Submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe](#).

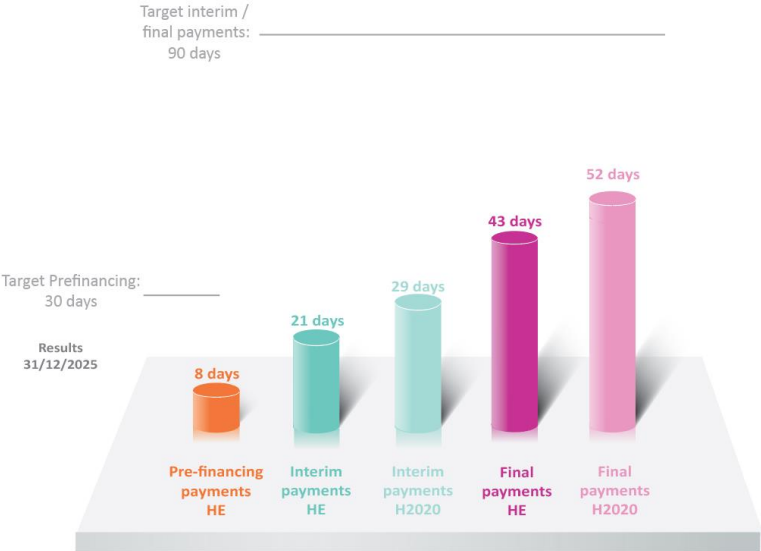
participation in Horizon Europe ⁽⁵⁾. This derogation is linked to the ERC’s unique evaluation system based on excellence criteria that requires more steps than other Horizon Europe evaluations.



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3. Time to pay

This indicator measures the time taken by the ERCEA to pay beneficiaries. The contractual limit allowed depends on the type of payment, namely 30 days for pre-financing of grants and experts payments, and 90 days for interim and final payments of grants. The target is to pay 100% of payments within the contractual limits.

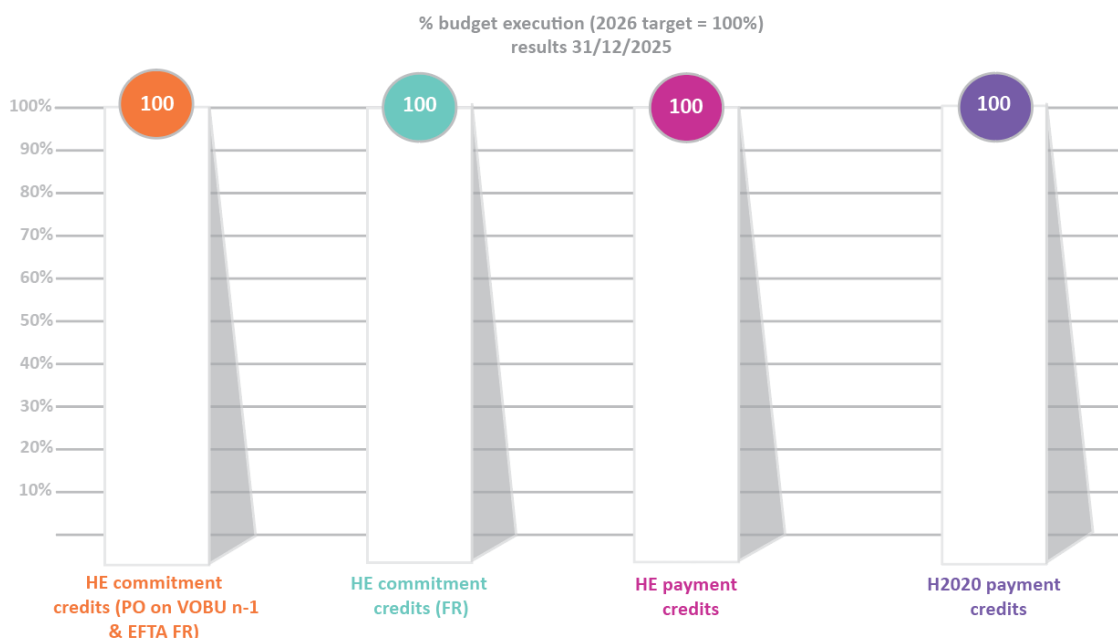


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⁽⁵⁾ Cf. Article 31 of Regulation (EU) 695/2021 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No1290/2013 and (EU) No 1921/2013.

4. Budget execution (operational budget)

The budget execution encompasses commitments and payments. The operational budget shows two distinct layers. The first one is the Fund Reservations (FR) (ex L1), which relate to the global amount for all calls, committed directly after the completion of each call evaluation or based on the envelope allocated for the call in the ERC Work Programme. Funds Reservations are made against the available appropriations, either the voted budget (VOBU), EFTA or Associated Third Country contributions. The second layer is Purchase Orders ⁽⁶⁾ (PO) either validated directly against the available budget or over Fund Reservation (FR) of the year (2026) or of previous year (ex-L1/L2). It is partly engaged after each signature of grant agreement. The payment credits are divided into payments for pre-financing, interim and final payments of Horizon Europe grants and experts on the one hand, and interim and final payments of Horizon 2020 grants on the other hand. The target is 100% execution for the commitments and payment credits.



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5. Estimated risk at closure

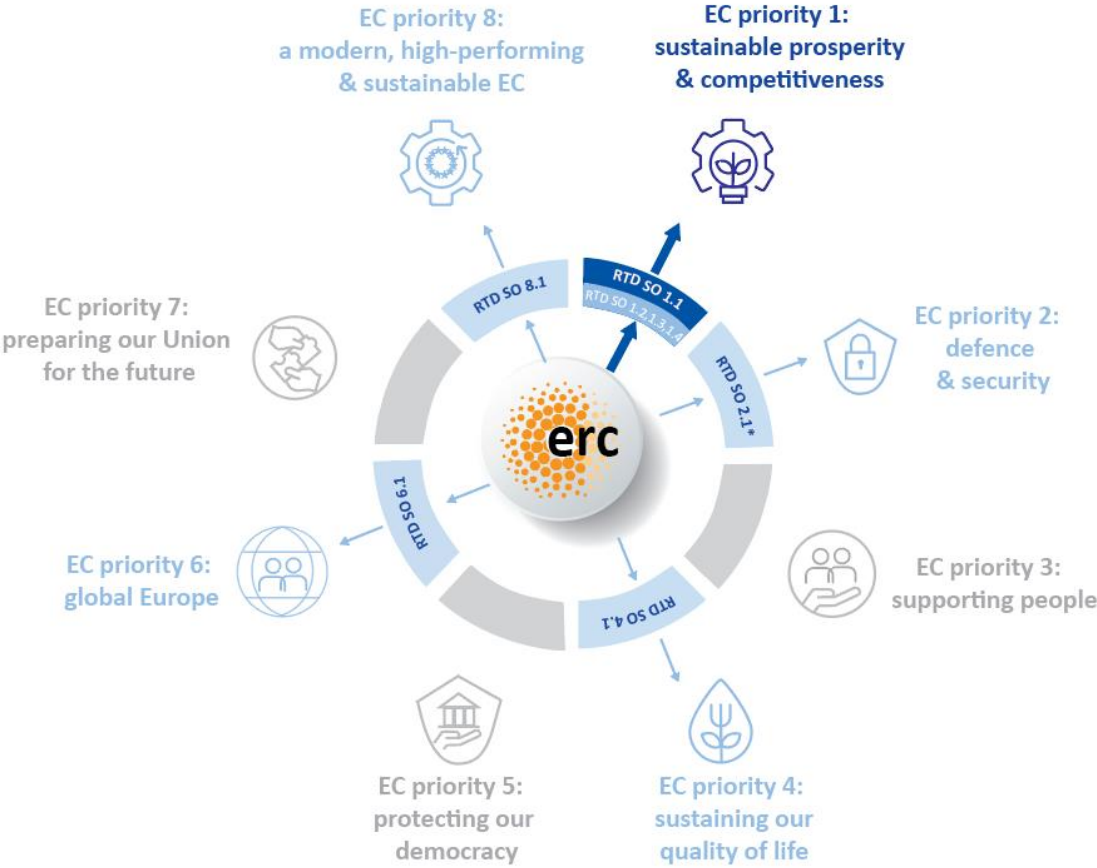
This indicator measures the amount of detected errors affecting the expenditure of each programme (referred to as 'risk at payment'), which may be corrected through control results (referred to as 'estimated future corrections') by the end of each programme. The difference between these two amounts represents the 'estimated risk at closure,' with a target below 2%.

⁽⁶⁾ Terminology to be used in new Commission financial management system (SUMMA) for the signature of grant agreements.

PART 3. Delivering on the Commission’s priorities: main outputs for 2026

In 2026, the ERCEA will continue implementing the tasks delegated ⁽⁷⁾ by the Commission. It will therefore select – based on scientific excellence only – and fund creative scientists of any nationality and age to run blue-sky research projects based in Europe and associated countries. By encouraging highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and supporting investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, the ERCEA will continue supporting the Commission to achieve its general and specific objectives under Horizon Europe by implementing the ERC component of Pillar I, ‘Excellence Science’.

ERC contribution to headline ambitions of Commission 2024-2029



⁽⁷⁾ Cf. Commission Decision C(2021)950 of 12 February 2021 on delegating powers to the European Research Council Executive Agency with a view to the performance of tasks linked to the implementation of Union programme in the field of frontier research comprising, in particular, implementation of appropriations entered in the general budget of the Union.

As shown in the graph above, the ERC predominantly contributes to General Objective (GO) 1 – sustainable prosperity and competitiveness – and in particular to Specific Objective (SO) 1.1 – Fostering the EU’s Scientific and Technological Progress. Considering the bottom-up nature of the ERC it also contributes to the other parent DG’s GOs and SOs (see graph in light blue) and to a lesser extent also to the Commission priorities Nr 3 and Nr 5 via its Social Sciences and Humanities project portfolio.

Scientific and technological progress measured by scientific publications

The ERC is contributing to have scientific impact by creating high quality new knowledge. Therefore, to measure key ERC objectives –supporting high-quality scientific publications– a set of performance indicators have been designed. For H2020 Programme Pillar I ‘Excellence Science’, one indicator is specific for ERC. For Horizon Europe, a number of common key-impact pathway indicators for the whole framework programme have been defined and individual programme parts will contribute to these indicators to a different degree and through different mechanisms.

Since publications are generally produced towards the end of the project rather than at the beginning, and citations continue to be made after the publication, these indicators will continue to be measured several years after the completion of ERC projects.

The indicators and its respective targets for the ERC are presented in the following table.

H2020 and HE	Excellent science – European Research Council (ERC)	
Specific Indicator for ERC	Baseline	Target
Share of publication from ERC-funded projects which are among the top 1% highly cited per field of science ⁽⁸⁾ .	Baseline (H2020) ⁽⁹⁾ : N/A	Target for HE: 6% (i.e. same target than the long-term impact indicator below)
Horizon Europe		
Indicator: Key impact pathway 1 – Creating high quality new knowledge ⁽¹⁰⁾	Baselines	Targets
Short term impact: publications – number of peer-reviewed scientific publications resulting from HE programme (ERC and other parts of HE programme results)	Baseline ERC (2024): 2181 ⁽¹¹⁾	Target ERC (2030): 72 000

⁽⁸⁾ This indicator specific to ERC is part of its legal basis of both H2020 (OJ L, 2013/347, 20.12.2013, p. 126, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1291/oj>) and HE (OJ L 2021/167/1, 12.5.2021, p. 18, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2021/764/oj>).

⁽⁹⁾ A baseline could not be defined for this indicator as it was not monitored before H2020 started. Target for H2020 was set 1.8%. Latest result for H2020 by end of 2025 is 5.5%.

⁽¹⁰⁾ These three indicators are common to all HE (OJ L 2021/170, 12.5.2021, p.65, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj>).

⁽¹¹⁾ The figures reported by ERCEA might differ from those reported by DG RTD due to methodological differences and differences in reference periods (e.g. values based on the entire data available for ERC versus data from periodic reports for HE).

Medium term impact : Citations – Field-Weighted Citation Index of peer-reviewed Publications resulting from HE programme (Mean Normalised Citation Score (MNCS) ERC and other parts of HE programme results)	Baseline ERC: N/A ⁽¹²⁾	Target for ERC (2030): 1.9
Long-term impact ⁽¹³⁾ : World-class science – Number and share of peer-reviewed publications resulting from project funded by HE programme that are core contribution to scientific fields (ERC and other parts of HE programme results)	Baseline ERC (based on FP7 data) ⁽¹⁴⁾ : 5.7%	Target for ERC (2030): 6%

The ERCEA is supporting the European Commission’s evidence-based policy-making activities, by providing valuable input drawn from its project portfolio of frontier research. A dedicated sector is tasked to coordinate the feedback to policy activity to the Commission, as well as the related activities in close connection with the monitoring and analysis of scientific impacts of ERC funded research made by the Scientific Council as part of its mandate. The feedback to policy plan, outlines an array of portfolio analyses that helps the ERCEA to build the capacity to respond to requests from the Scientific Council, the parent DG, other policy DGs, and the Scientific Advisory Mechanism (SAM) as well as any other ad-hoc requests. The sector is also in charge of coordinating the ERCEA Mapping Frontier Research (MFR) classification exercise.

As regards external communication, the ERC priorities are set out in an annual strategy approved by the Scientific Council in the December plenary meeting. The current strategy will cover both 2026 and 2027 to take account of the final year of Horizon Europe and activities to mark the 20th anniversary of the ERC in 2027. The strategy is to implement the Scientific Council’s mandate to communicate with the scientific community, key stakeholders and the general public and to support the overall narrative on Horizon Europe. The strategy is guided by three strategic objectives: to make the case for the intrinsic value of frontier research; to provide researchers globally with information on ERC funding opportunities; and to promote public engagement with research.

Communication actions in 2026 are expected to include: actions to promote the importance of frontier research in the context of the inter-institutional negotiations on the 10th Framework Programme; the promotion of ERC funding opportunities within Europe and globally in line with

⁽¹²⁾ Data for MNCS are not yet available. Actual value is forthcoming and will be calculated as soon as sufficient data is available. This value expected around Q3 2026 may impact on the ERC target sets for 2030.

⁽¹³⁾ This indicator is similar to the ERC specific indicator ‘*Share of publication from ERC-funded projects which are among the top 1% highly cited per field of science*’. While the ERC specific indicator includes all publications, the long-term impact indicator only referred to peer-reviewed publications; however, in practice the current methodology hardly allow to make the difference between all publications and the peer-reviewed ones.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The most accurate value for such indicator comes from ERC projects granted from FP7 (2007-2013) for which we have the entire overview of the publications produced. This value that may fluctuate every year reached a stabilised value of 5.7%.

the *Choose Europe* initiative ⁽¹⁵⁾; the promotion of the new ERC Plus call; the further development and expansion of the Ambassadors for the ERC network with the Association of ERC grantees; and inspiring stories insights and outcomes of ERC research.

ERC funding instruments and calls for proposals

The management of the specific parts of Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 programmes delegated to the ERC is defined in the annual ERC work programmes, which are established by the ERC Scientific Council and adopted by the Commission. The ERC Work Programme 2026 ⁽¹⁶⁾ describes in details the different funding instruments aiming to reinforce excellence, dynamism, and creativity in European Research by providing attractive long-term funding support to excellent investigators and their research teams. It has introduced a new ERC funding scheme, the ERC Plus that will contribute to the *Choose Europe* initiative ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Among its other tasks, the Scientific Council establishes the methods and procedures for peer review and proposal evaluation, which are used to select the proposals to be funded. The ERCEA implements the programme and executes administrative tasks related to the running of the Agency. The ERC Work Programme 2026 provides all information related to the research activities implemented through calls for proposals ⁽¹⁸⁾ as well as other types of activities allowing the Scientific Council to carry out its duties and mandate.

As planned in the ERC Work Programme 2025 ⁽¹⁹⁾ and the ERC Work Programme 2026, the ERCEA will complete in 2026 the evaluation of the Advanced Grant (AdG) call 2025, launched during the first semester 2025. It will also finalise the evaluation of four 2026 calls launched during the second semester of 2025 (namely, the Starting Grant (StG), the Consolidator Grant (CG), the Synergy Grant (SyG), and the Proof of Concept (PoC)). It will start the evaluations of the AdG2026, and ERC Plus 2026 which will be completed in 2027. Finally, it will launch and begin evaluating some of the 2027 calls, which will be defined in the ERC Work Programme 2027, scheduled to be adopted by the Commission in June 2026.

⁽¹⁵⁾ As a follow-up to the Commission President's speech '*Choose Europe for Science*' delivered at La Sorbonne in Paris on 5 May 2025.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Cf. Commission implementing Decision C(2026)62 of 15 January 2026 amending implementing Decision C(2025)5000 on the financing of the 2026 work programme in the framework of the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) in relation to the component 'European Research Council' under Pillar I 'Excellent Science' with a view to introduce a new grant scheme – the ERC Plus Grant.

⁽¹⁷⁾ An additional call has been decided by the ERC Scientific Council for 2026, the ERC Plus call, part of the '*Choose Europe for Science*' initiative announced by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her 5 May 2025 [speech at La Sorbonne](#).

⁽¹⁸⁾ Information on ERC calls for proposals can be found on page 10.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Cf. Commission implementing Decision C(2023)3999 of 10 July 2023 adopting the 2024 work programme in the framework of the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe the framework programme for research and innovation (2021-2027) in relation to the component 'European Research council' under Pillar I 'Excellent Science'.

ERC grant schemes

All ERC grant schemes support Principal Investigator-led actions. Except for Synergy Grant (SyG), all grants are mono-beneficiary.

The objective of the Starting Grant (StG) and Consolidator Grant (CoG) calls is to boost excellent research by early-career researchers by providing support at the critical stage when they are establishing or consolidating their own independent research teams and programmes.

The Advanced Grant (AdG) call encourages substantial advances at the frontier of knowledge by supporting outstanding, senior investigators to pursue ground breaking research.

For this purpose, grants of up to EUR 1.5 million for a period of five years may be awarded to researchers of any nationality who have two to seven years of experience since completing their PhD, and who submit an excellent research proposal (StG). This amount can reach up to EUR 2 million for researchers with seven to 12 years of experience (CoG) and EUR 2.5 million for senior researchers (AdG).

The Synergy Grant (SyG) call aims to stimulate cross-fertilisation between scientific fields and encourage new, productive lines of enquiry as well as new methods and techniques including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface of established disciplines. The SyG can reach a maximum amount of EUR 10 million for a period of six years, and involves between two and four Principal Investigators.

Principal Investigators may request additional funding of up to EUR 1 million for StG, CoG and AdG calls (except for Principal Investigators in Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant re-locating to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere to take up their ERC grant. In this case, the maximum additional funding shall be EUR 2 million) and EUR 4 million for SyG as indicated in the 2026 Work Programme (WP).

If any commercial or societal applications arise from blue-sky research, ERC grantees can apply for the Proof of Concept (PoC). It is a complementary funding instrument aiming to bridge the gap between research and the early commercialisation phases ⁽²⁰⁾. These ERC grants provide valuable synergies between the ERC and the European Innovation Council parts of Horizon Europe. For this purpose a lump sum of EUR 150 000 is awarded for an 18-month period.

Finally, the ERC Plus Grant supports outstanding Principal Investigators who address a major scientific challenge. Applications for ERC Plus Grants should be for projects that could not be carried out with a regular ERC grant. Applicants should explain how the proposed project aims to go beyond those of a regular ERC project, for example, because they have a vision to transform their field or open a new field of research. Scholars at all career stages can apply for an ERC Plus Grant if they have an outstanding record of scientific achievement at the forefront of their field. Such grant may provide up to EUR 7 million for up to seven years.

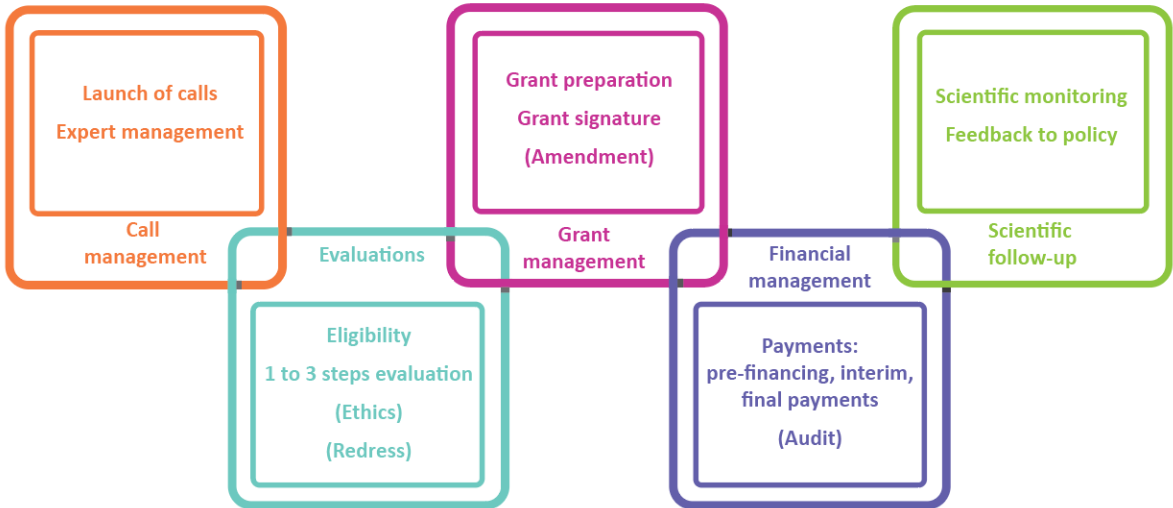
⁽²⁰⁾ For additional information, see the ERC Work Programme 2026 https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026/wp_horizon-erc-2026_en.pdf.

Among these grant schemes, AdG (since AdG 2024 call), PoC and ERC Plus are using the lump sum cost model scheme.

Overview of ERC activities

Approximately 47% of the 2026 operational budget is expected to be allocated to young scientists [Starting Grant (StG) and Consolidator Grant (CoG)], 43% to established research leaders [Advanced Grant (AdG) and Synergy Grant (SyG)], 7% to outstanding Principal Investigators who address major scientific challenges (the ERC Plus Grant) and 2% for grantees willing to explore the commercialisation potential of their ERC frontier research projects [Proof of Concept (PoC)].

The implementation of the ERC Work Programme by the ERCEA covers various processes, from the management of calls and experts, the evaluation of proposals received, to the granting process, and the financial and scientific follow up.



The ERCEA core business are managed by two departments, namely the Scientific Management and the Grant Management Departments, which closely interact.

Call management and evaluations

In 2026, the ERCEA Scientific Management Department will prepare and launch six calls for proposals (StG, CoG, AdG, SyG, PoC and ERC Plus Grant). An increase in number of applications , compared to 2025, is expected in 2026 ⁽²¹⁾. It will organise on-site peer review evaluations with panel members nominated by the Scientific Council, as well as remote interviews for applicants who have passed the first step of the evaluation ⁽²²⁾. The planning will also include

⁽²¹⁾ More than 12 000 were received in 2025 which represented an overall increase of 25% compared to 2024.

⁽²²⁾ More detailed information on the evaluation process can be found in the ERC Work Programme 2025 and related documentation (information to applicants and guide for peer reviewers which are published on the [ERC website](#) and the [participant portal](#)).

the completion of the AdG2025 call evaluation. Providing timely information to applicants about the outcome of their proposals at the end of each evaluation step will also be a key task, measured using the time-to-inform performance indicator.

Calls	StG 2026	CoG 2026	AdG 2026	SyG 2026	PoC 2026	ERC Plus
Estimated success rate ⁽²³⁾	12-15%	12-15%	8-15%	7-13%	30 -48%	N/A ⁽²⁴⁾
% of budget allocated to each call (approx.)	24%	23%	26%	17%	2%	7%

The ERCEA also ensures that the selected proposals comply with ethics principles and the requirements of the relevant legislation ⁽²⁵⁾.

Since the launch of the first calls under Horizon Europe in 2021, the ERCEA ethics process has undergone several modifications in line with the Commission’s new approach. The latter changed the ethics process from a compliance-based to a trust-based approach, with a focus on complex and serious ethics issues. Changes implemented so far by the ERCEA have focused on two main aspects: incorporating the new guidance on the trust-based approach and simplifying the process. This conceptual change has been successfully implemented, resulting in an increase in proposals cleared during (pre-)screening. The ERCEA plans to explore additional measures to improve the ethics process during 2026, guided by the systematic analysis of ethics data.

Additionally, the ERCEA will continue to implement the security pre-screening of research proposals as part of the existing security appraisal process in Horizon Europe, along with the legal provision regarding the right to object to the transfer of ownership or exclusive licensing of ERC project results to non-associated third countries under Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe.

In addition, the ERCEA will continue handling redress cases submitted by unsuccessful applicants as well as performing scientific monitoring of ERC funded projects.

Grant and financial management

The Grant Management Department is tasked with the transformation of the selected proposals into ERC grant agreements and the follow-up of their financial management and implementation throughout their lifecycle. The grant agreements are signed with Host Institutions ⁽²⁶⁾, which handle the day-to-day administrative management of grants allowing the selected applicants, the Principal Investigators, to focus on their research. A target of 120 days on average from the date of informing successful applicants has been set to sign the

⁽²³⁾ Expressed in range as it depends on the number of proposals received.

⁽²⁴⁾ New call without past submission statistics.

⁽²⁵⁾ Cf. ‘Ethical principles’ section in the ERC Work Programme 2026.

⁽²⁶⁾ Research must be conducted in a public or private research organisation (known as a host institution/II).

grant agreement, including the new scheme ERC Plus. However, for the Synergy Grant call, the target has been set at 140 days on average, reflecting the more complex nature of these grants (multi-beneficiaries).

To assist Host Institutions and Principal Investigators, the department will continue to organise workshops and provide training on grant preparation, financial reporting, amendments, and audit. The aim is to increase awareness and knowledge of the programme provisions and financial rules, as well as to enhance the timeliness and quality of reporting. These tailor-made seminars provide an interactive forum for questions and answers. Events for ERC grantees will in particular offer practical guidance and advice on financial reporting, amendments and any aspect related to the management of their grant. Host Institution events will contribute to sustain a very low error rate within the ERC's population. In 2026, six on-site events for Host Institutions and Principal Investigators are scheduled to be organised. Two events for Host Institutions and one for Principal Investigators will be held on the ERCEA premises in Brussels. The remaining three will take place in co-operation with the Host Institutions located in Member States and associated countries.

In addition to the above, Principal Investigator-specific info sessions, held immediately after the dispatch of the granting invitation letters for each call, continue to be highly successful. These sessions offer guidance, facilitate an open and direct communication channel with the ERCEA beneficiaries and ultimately improve the ERCEA's time-to-grant. In 2026, info sessions are planned to be organised for ERC grantees across the four main grant schemes (StG, CoG, AdG and SyG).

The Grant Management Department will also continue to ensure the timely execution of payments and full budget execution, including commitments and payments, by the end of the year.

It will also support the parent DG, more particularly the Common Audit Service, to implement the audit strategy.

Support to the ERC Scientific Council

The ERCEA is mandated ⁽²⁷⁾ to support the Scientific Council in all the tasks it performs ⁽²⁸⁾. Hence, the ERCEA provides support to the Scientific Council and related bodies (standing committees, working groups, task forces, ERC Board), and produces briefings, papers, and reports on the ERC's scientific strategy. Furthermore, it supports the ERC President and Scientific Council members in their institutional relations and networking activities, coordinates

⁽²⁷⁾ Cf. Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU.

⁽²⁸⁾ Establishment of the overall strategy for the ERC, the work programme for the implementation of ERC activities, the methods and procedures for the peer review and proposal evaluation on the basis of which the proposals to be funded are determined, its position on any matter which from a scientific perspective may enhance achievements and impact on the ERC and the quality of the research carried out, a code of conduct addressing, inter alia the avoidance of conflict of interest.

and supports the ERC's external communication and monitors and evaluates its frontier research activities.

In 2026, the ERCEA will support the Scientific Council in the implementation of the ERC Work Programme 2026, in particular in the rolling out of the new ERC Plus Grant scheme, and in the preparation of the ERC Work Programme 2027. In addition, the Agency will help in monitoring the peer review system through the ongoing provision of data analysis and strategic documents. It will also continue to assist the ERC President in fulfilling her duties.

The ERCEA will continue to develop its monitoring and evaluation tools to assist the Scientific Council in assessing the impact of ERC funding on frontier scientific knowledge, technology transfer, national research policies, host institutions, research careers, and other aspects outlined in the ERC Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. This Strategy was updated to take into account the latest trends in programme evaluation ⁽²⁹⁾.

⁽²⁹⁾ <https://erc.europa.eu/about-erc/erc-standing-committees/programme-impact-monitoring-and-evaluation>

PART 4. A modern and sustainable public administration: outputs in 2026

The internal control framework ⁽³⁰⁾ supports sound management and decision-making. It notably ensures that risks to the achievement of objectives are addressed and reduced to acceptable levels through cost-effective controls.

The ERCEA has established an internal control system tailored to its particular characteristics and circumstances. The effective functioning of this internal control system will be assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the year and will be subject to a specific annual assessment covering all internal control principles.

A. Human resource management

The mission of the ERCEA's Human Resources (HR) Unit is to manage and develop the Agency's human resources and to provide logistics and infrastructure support. Its priorities are based on the Commission's HR strategy and complemented with actions addressing the specific needs of executive agencies. The unit acts as a strategic partner aligned with ERCEA's mission, objectives and priorities and actively supports management and staff in view of ensuring its smooth operations.

The ERCEA, in cooperation with other executive agencies, developed a common HR Strategy covering the period 2023-2027. The strategy foresees several actions targeting at enhancing the attractiveness and staff retention, simplifying, and modernising the selection and recruitment procedures and creating better career prospects for agencies staff. The agency will continue to focus on staff career prospects in 2026.

The ERCEA will continue preparing for its new mandate under FP10, including reflections on the Agency's organisational structure, staff skills and job profiles. This exercise is conducted in the context of a proposed budget increase in the next MFF, the impact of new technologies like artificial intelligence on the work environment, simplification efforts and process improvements, and the large-scale review of the Commission. The aim is to create a flexible organisation that can adapt to changing circumstances. A clear plan will also be developed for staff training and future recruitment, ensuring the Agency has the right skills and expertise to deliver its objectives.

⁽³⁰⁾ [Communication C\(2017\)2373 - Revision of the Internal Control Framework](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/revision-internal-control-framework-c-2017-2373_2017_en.pdf)https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/revision-internal-control-framework-c-2017-2373_2017_en.pdf.

Following the launch of the inter-agency network of mediators in the last quarter of 2025, conflict management will become a new focus, fostering a culture of collaboration and respect and enhancing staff motivation and wellbeing at work.

The HR Unit will analyse the results of the 2025 Commission Staff Survey and further support the ERCEA Director and management in defining and implementing an action plan in response to the survey.

To maintain the ERCEA's attractiveness as an employer, the HR unit developed a coherent long-term 'Health and Well-being policy'. This policy focuses on all aspects of physical, mental, and social health. The HR unit will continuously implement and evaluate this policy to assure that staff's needs are met as much as possible. Particularly, focus will be on the implementation of the Commission decision on hybrid working, sickness absences management, the anti-harassment policy, psychosocial risk management and concrete health and well-being actions.

Following the increase of posts financed from contributions of associated third countries, the staff allocation for 2026 (according to the financial statement 2026) will increase to 598 posts, from 580 in 2025. The HR Unit will strive to maintain the occupation rate of at least 98%, to ensure that the ERCEA meets its objectives with a fair workload distribution. The ERCEA will analyse the need for selection processes and their priorities, considering the profiles required in the context of Horizon Europe priorities, the evolution of staffing and the results of the workload exercise that was finalised in 2025. Further selection processes may be organised in collaboration with other executive agencies, where appropriate, opening pools of candidates from which all executive agencies can draw and supporting the ERCEA staff in pursuing their career in the ERCEA or in other executive agencies.

After the success of the Inter-Agency Women Talent Programme, the Inter-Agency Talent Programme was launched in 2025, for the 2025-2026 period. This inclusive initiative is open to 60 (among which 10 for the ERCEA) contract agents FGIV and temporary agents, supporting their growth and development towards coordination/leadership roles. Further to the positive outcomes of the staff exchange and job shadowing programmes (inter-agency and inter institutional), the ERCEA will continue to participate in these initiatives in 2026. The Agency has also adhered to new initiatives launched this year, such as the Inter-Agency Mentorship Programme and the Career Guidance network.

The ERCEA learning and development activities will be guided by the inter-executive agency HR Strategy and the forthcoming the ERCEA learning priorities for the 2026-2027 period. Continued attention will be given to strengthening the feedback culture, leadership, and effective communication, including follow-up actions arising from the 360° review exercise conducted in 2024 for all the ERCEA managers (including heads of sector) and related training initiatives (coaching and networking/strategising workshops). Career development and support for both recommended and specific learning needs (job-related or unit-related) will also remain a strong focus, including the mastery of new corporate, AI-related and collaborative tools. Finally, a people-centred organisational culture will be fostered by enhancing a shared sense of purpose through onboarding, teambuilding, wellbeing and networking activities, and support for staff initiatives and internal capabilities.

Logistics and infrastructure will be another focus area, as the lease contract for the ERC evaluation facility is set to expire in 2027. The evaluation process requires accommodating top scientific experts. The ERC call calendar follows a tight schedule and results in a nearly continuous occupation of the facilities. Videoconferencing technology is required to allow remote interviews with applicants. With an expected increase in budget in the next MFF, there will be a need for more space to accommodate growing numbers of experts and staff. Moreover, in view of a sharp rise in applications submitted to the ERC, the Agency is already facing increasing demands for evaluation rooms in 2026. Arrangements will be made to increase the current capacity while maintaining the required working conditions within the existing premises. These files will be developed in close collaboration with Commission Services, in particular the OIB.

Finally, to ensure that the ERCEA staff are aligned with the ERC's goals, have the necessary resources, and share consistent messages, the ERCEA's internal communication actions in 2026 will remain focused on connecting staff members to the mission of the ERC and the objectives of the European Commission.

B. Digital transformation and data management

Digital transformation

The ERCEA relies on eGrants as its main IT solution to efficiently carry out its core responsibilities and fulfil its mandate. The ERCEA collaborates with the Common Implementation Centre, DIGIT, and eGrants governance to integrate its specific requirements in terms of evaluation, expert, and grant management into the common systems. The key activities in 2026 will focus on Horizon Europe. Improving financial reporting, particularly data quality and coverage of business needs, will be a key priority. It will need several adaptations following the evolution of the corporate technological stack on the base of which information systems are developed. The ERCEA will continue to contribute to the implementation of common features in corporate systems, such as eGrants, and stands ready to support the new Commission's efforts towards simplification.

Regarding the digital workplace for staff, the ERCEA will provide a consolidated, reliable, and secure IT infrastructure, along with the appropriate IT tools, platforms, and services.

To strengthen its digital culture, the ERCEA will continue to promote staff digital skills and collaborative practices. Regular IT training opportunities, including targeted sessions on AI, Teams, and data analytics will be offered through internal and corporate programmes. Digital collaboration using M365 and Teams will remain central to daily operations, supported by ongoing awareness and role-modelling. The ERCEA will also leverage new mobile capabilities, such as the Funding&Me app, to facilitate business processes on the go.

The ERCEA maintains and modernises a local set of administrative and evaluation IT tools, resources, and support services to enhance the Agency's productivity. The strategy for local tools is to complement corporate solutions, which remain the preferred choice when the required functionality is available.

In parallel, the ERCEA will continue its continuous improvement programme aimed to simplify and automate business processes. Remaining manual or paper-based workflows are being progressively replaced by digital and modelled processes, in collaboration with DIGIT and using specialised tools where relevant.

The ERCEA continuously maintains and evolves its digital landscape in line with corporate standards. Updates to the Reusable Solutions Portfolio (RSP) and GovIS systems, alignment with the corporate Software Development Lifecycle (SDLC) toolset, and gradual cloud adoption ensure a modern, interoperable, and secure IT environment.

In 2026, the AI taskforce will follow-up on the various use cases proposed by the business units with the objective to support and improve the ERCEA processes. The AI@ERCEA Working Group will ensure structured governance and coordination of all AI initiatives, including the collection, evaluation, and implementation of business use cases. In 2026, it will also promote AI literacy across the Agency, building on the 'AI Driving Licence' concept and tailored guidance to support the responsible and effective adoption of AI tools. In parallel, the IT Unit will develop the capacity to integrate generative AI into digital solutions through staff training, recruitment, and potentially the procurement of new IT services ⁽³¹⁾⁽³²⁾.

Information and IT security

The ERCEA will keep its IT Governance as a top priority, with any IT developments or the acquisition of significant IT solutions requiring approval from the ERCEA IT Steering Committee ⁽³³⁾ and compliance to the rules set by the European Commission's Information Technology and Cybersecurity Board.

Recognising that proactive cybersecurity is essential for minimising IT security risks, the ERCEA has developed and implemented its Information & Technology Risk and Security framework, with the empowerment of the ERCEA IT System Owners as one of its governance principles. In 2026, it will continuously improve alignment with corporate policies, IT Security Plans, and Compliance checks. The ERCEA will also continue the Information & Technology Risk and Security awareness training.

Data, information and knowledge management

In 2026, the ERCEA will continue establishing a comprehensive, Agency-wide data governance framework, tailored to adapt corporate data policies to meet the Agency's specific operational requirements effectively. In line with the Commission's vision for a modern and data-driven organisation, the ERCEA aims to transform data intelligence into a

⁽³¹⁾ IT development and procurement strategy choices will be subject to pre-approval by the European Commission Information Technology and Cybersecurity Board.

⁽³²⁾ For existing information systems, evolutive maintenance might include integration with EC corporate AI offer.

⁽³³⁾ It includes representation from the ERCEA's parent DG.

strategic asset, thus enhancing the implementation of EU programmes with high-quality standards.

In relation to the four key corporate data dimensions, the ERCEA's data governance and IT integration is structured as follows:

- **Data Management:**

- ✓ ERCEA data relates to its mission. This means data mostly related to the implementation and monitoring of the ERC part of the Framework Programmes for R&I since its creation (2007).
- ✓ Data management is systematic, well-documented, and integrated into local governance structures. The ERCEA relies in the use of a mixture of IT corporate tools (e.g. eGrants corporate grant management suite, Atlas for HR, Innovation Radar) and local tools (e.g. Speedwell and Bluebell).
- ✓ Data typology are of operational nature (e.g. submission data, evaluation data, project follow-up data, reporting, budget, HR) and of scientific nature (e.g. analyses, studies, feedback to policy) that is growing every year along with the increase in the grants funded. Specific activities are related to the Scientific Council's responsibilities (e.g. impact of ERC funded research, monitoring and evaluation of ERC funding activities).
- ✓ On knowledge management (KM), since 2020 the ERCEA created a KM Steering Committee chaired by the Director that aims at developing a comprehensive scientific and organisational KM approach for the Agency. A coherent plan will be crafted, unifying initiatives across services into one strategic framework, ensuring a future-ready organisation for the next framework programme.
- ✓ Following a consultation with the European Data Protection Supervisor, the ERCEA has implemented an IT solution for its ERC Archive and is currently developing its governance structure and safeguards, to preserve ERC data of historical and scientific value.

- **Ownership and Responsibilities:**

- ✓ Access to data and IT systems is managed through established access control procedures based on role and need-to-know principles, with periodic reviews where appropriate
- ✓ The ERCEA's Document Management Centre plays a vital role in supporting various critical functions within the agency. It implements an e-Domec-compatible document management policy. It will continue to assess risks related to document management, offer guidance to services and manage access rights to official documents.

- **Data Quality and FAIRness:**

Most of the ERCEA' operational activities are fully integrated within the corporate IT systems by design. This means that the main ERCEA key data assets (submission data,

evaluation data, project follow-up data) are managed through the eGrants suite (SEP, Compass, Sygma, etc.) which are systems aligned with the FAIRness principles.

- **Digital and Data Skills:**

ERCEA has a solid and high-quality review process that requires high level expertise and operational quality, which are ensured by its Scientific Department. This process ensures proficiency in managing data submission, evaluation data, project follow-up, and cross-unit data analyses.

In this area, ERCEA will continue promoting digital and data competencies through targeted IT training sessions on AI, Teams, document management and data analytics offered via internal and corporate programmes, fostering collaborative practices.

The Agency is positioned at an advanced data maturity level and seeks to progress towards a trendsetting status by 2029, driven by our comprehensive data assets management and cutting-edge tools.

Data protection

The ERCEA prioritises the protection of personal data in its activities, ensuring high standards of compliance with Regulation (EU) 1725/2018 (EUDPR). To this end, the ERCEA has developed a system to ensure proper records of processing operations by applying a risk-based approach. The register is published on the ERC website and made accessible to the public.

In 2026, the ERCEA will finalise the revision of the register to assess whether the processing operations remain necessary or if alternative methods should be implemented when processing personal data. In addition, the ERCEA will ensure that new records are finalised to cover new processing operations.

The ERCEA will continue to organise awareness-raising sessions for its staff, focusing on both newcomers and on existing employees. A special event will be organised in January 2026 in occasion of the Data Protection Day in collaboration with the other Executives Agencies.

Particular attention will be given to the impact of Artificial Intelligence and the use of AI tools within the ERCEA, ensuring the highest standards of protection for the rights and freedoms of data subjects.

C. Sound financial management

The Grant Management Department will maintain effective internal control measures across the grant management processes, tailored to the specific requirements of Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe ERC grants and the different types of funding (actual cost grants, lump-sum grants). Controls will ensure effectiveness, economy and efficiency of operations

and will help safeguard the legality and compliance of financial transactions while managing risks appropriately.

In 2026, internal procedures and guidance relevant to the payment business will be developed, notably concerning Horizon Europe grants. In parallel, work will continue in improving, simplifying and streamlining current Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 guides, procedures and workflows to incorporate SUMMA terminology and functionalities. Tailored training for financial actors and external stakeholders will be provided to ensure clear understanding and consistent application of rules, thus supporting operational effectiveness and minimising errors.

Efforts will continue to ensure the Department's involvement in preparing for the upcoming rounds of lump-sum grants. This ongoing involvement will need further refinement of strategies and processes to effectively manage and implement this type of funding model.

Besides, efforts will further continue as to the staff adaptation to the new Commission financial management system (SUMMA). The anticipated impact on the daily grant management processes will be addressed through strategic work organisation and diligent monitoring.

The ERCEA is actively assisting and supporting the ex-post audit control performed by the Common Audit Service (CAS) that is contributing to the assessment of legality and regularity of project payments in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programs.

In 2026, the CAS Horizon 2020 audit campaign is approaching its conclusion and, according to the Horizon 2020 Audit Strategy, the overall target of total number of the ERCEA's audited participations is achieved (1120). It is expected, however, that a certain number (estimated around 10) of last Horizon 2020 audits will be carried over and finalised in 2026. In parallel, it will be the third year since launching the Horizon Europe audit campaign which is based on the new corporate approach from the Horizon Europe Multi-Annual Audit Plan (2024-2028) and Audit Strategy. As a result, with less audit burden for beneficiaries, the CAS launched in total 480 participations to be audited, for closing target in 2026, out of which 21 ERCEA's participations are expected to be audited and supported by ERCEA. The Agency will continue contributing to the overall error rate via the technical reviews on HE lump sums actions.

In this context, the ERCEA will continuously monitor, analyse and report on the progress of the CAS audits, support the CAS on problematic issues, coordinate the risk-based selection of participations in the forthcoming audits selection procedures and escalate any risks if completion of the targets underpinning the annual Declaration of Assurance may be at risk. To ensure that the specificities of the ERC programme are adequately addressed during audits, the Audit Liaison Officers of the ERCEA will continue reviewing all preliminary and draft audit reports in line with the working arrangements with the CAS and internal procedures.

The Agency is ensuring implementation of the audit results of the audits performed by the European Court of Auditors on the ERCEA project payments and is analysing those results in

line with the corporate approach to identify potential risks and design preventive controls, where appropriate.

D. Fraud risk management

The ERCEA will pursue the implementation of its Anti-Fraud Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2027, updated in 2024. Both build on the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy Action Plan 2023 ⁽³⁴⁾ and the Common Anti-Fraud Strategy in the Research and Innovation Family 2023, providing the corporate framework.

The close cooperation with OLAF during all phases of a potential fraud case (identification, selection and investigation) will remain one main pillar of anti-fraud activities. Another one constitutes the cooperation and exchange within the Fraud Prevention and Detection Network (FPDNet) and the Fraud and Irregularities in Research Committee (FAIR).

Awareness-raising remains the main preventive measure and the ERCEA will continue to provide specific training to all new staff members on identifying and handling suspected fraud cases.

In alignment with this objective, an action foreseen for 2026 is the implementation of a survey on fraud awareness and perception based on a questionnaire established for members of the research and innovation family by the FAIR committee. The objective of the survey will be to assess staff perception and attitude towards anti-fraud matters and to find out their needs. The result is expected to feed both into further tailoring anti-fraud trainings and fraud risk assessment.

E. Sound environmental management

In 2026, the ERCEA will remain committed to promote the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)-related corporate campaigns in alignment with the Commission's objectives to achieve the Green Deal.

The ERCEA will continue to improve its environmental performance thanks to the dynamic efforts led by the EMAS correspondents and the Greening Group. As part of these efforts,

⁽³⁴⁾ Communication from the Commission 'Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy: enhanced action to protect the EU budget', COM(2019)176 of 29 April 2019; Communication from the Commission 'Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy Action plan – revision 2023', [COM\(2023\)405](#) of 11 July 2023 – 'the Communication on the 2023 revision', and the accompanying revised action plan, [SWD\(2023\)245](#)–'the revised Action Plan'.

the ERCEA will implement European Commission corporate initiatives at the local level, such as the BEST ⁽³⁵⁾ Actions.

In addition to continuing the positive results achieved in 2025 in reducing the environmental impact of staff business travel, the ERCEA will continue to implement measures to encourage travellers to opt for more environmentally friendly modes of transport and remote participation where possible.

With the constraints that the core of the ERC evaluation required external experts to perform their duties on site, and that the programme is facing significant oversubscription (average increase of 30% more proposals received in 2025 compared to 2024), remote interviews of ERC candidates put in place as a post-covid measure to reduce carbon footprint will be maintained. In addition, the internal guidelines for the reimbursement of experts are under revision to align with the greening approach established at Commission level.

In close collaboration with other executive agencies (EAs), the ERCEA will prioritize synergy in organizing joint activities, such as the EA Green Week. This will emphasise raising staff awareness regarding reduced energy consumption, optimizing energy use, and enhancing waste management practices.

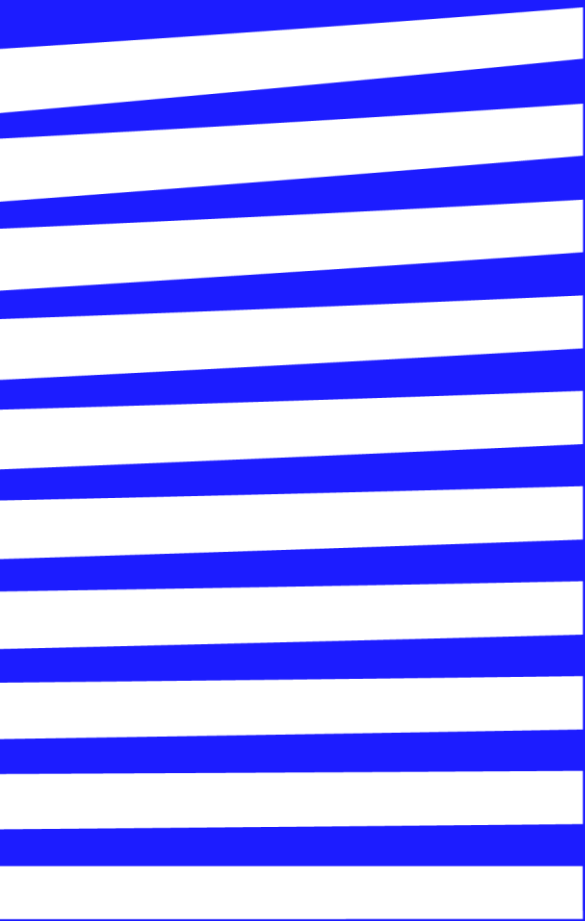
The ERCEA will continue using water fountains to reduce plastic bottle and maintain waste-sorting stations to ensure proper waste management. The ERCEA will also continue to reward the use of public transport and cycling to work, aligning with the Commission's new mobility scheme.

Finally, the ERCEA will offer learning and development opportunities to further consolidate the use of digital collaborative working tools such as M365, aiming to increasing paperless work and digital frugality. EMAS-related news will be published regularly on the ERCEA Intranet to keep staff informed and engaged.

⁽³⁵⁾ Building Energy Savings Together. An initiative to energy saving by closing down the ERCEA's buildings within Winter and Summer and/or optimisation of the temperature in Commission buildings.



ANNEXES



ANNEX 1: Performance tables

Part 3 – Delivering on the Commission’s priorities: main outputs for 2026

General objectives: 1. A new plan for Europe’s sustainable prosperity and competitiveness, 2. A new era for European Defence and Security, models, 4. Supporting quality of life: food security, water and nature, 6. A global Europe: leveraging our power and partnerships, 8. A modern, high performing and sustainable Commission

Specific objectives: DG RTD’s Specific Objectives: 1.1: Fostering the EU’s Scientific and Technological Progress ⁽³⁶⁾

Main outputs in 2026:

Output	Indicator	Target
Evaluation of calls	Number of calls evaluated in 2026	100% (7 calls evaluated: StG2026, CoG2026, AdG2025 step 2, AdG2026 step 1, SyG2026, PoC2026, ERC Plus 2026 step 1)
Grants signed in 2026	% of proposals selected under 2025 calls granted in 2026	100%

⁽³⁶⁾ Considering its bottom-up nature, the ERC also contributes to the other parent DG’s GOs and SOs. More details in Part 3.

Part 4 – A modern and sustainable administration: main outputs for 2026

A. Human resource management

Objective: The ERCEA employs a competent and engaged workforce and contributes to gender equality at all levels of management to effectively deliver on the agency's priorities and core business.

Main outputs in 2026:

Output	Indicator	Target
Female representation in middle management	Number and percentage of female representation in middle management (source of data: Sysper2 data)	50%
Staff engagement index	The ERCEA staff engagement index (source of data: European Commission staff survey or European Commission pulse survey, data provided by DG HR)	At least 75%
To support the ERCEA's core business by providing the required number of staff on time	Occupation rate at year end	98%
Follow-up action plan in response to the 2025 corporate staff satisfaction survey	Adoption of action plan	Q3 2026

B. Digital transformation and data management

Objective: The ERCEA is using innovative, trusted digital solutions for better policymaking, data management and administrative processes to create a digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven Commission.

Main outputs in 2026:

Digital Transformation

Output	Indicator	Target
Agency units that submitted AI-adoption proposals during the year, reflecting adoption of an innovative mindset.	Number of agency units	12
AI projects (as proposed by agency units in the AI Working Group) that have been selected, reported to the IT Steering Committee, and initiated during the year.	Total number of suggested use case on the list of ERCEA AI Working Group proposed priorities	16

Output	Indicator	Target
Evaluate the application portfolio to identify systems or modules suitable for migration to the cloud, advancing the organization's cloud transformation and long-term digital modernization goals.	% of applications assessed for cloud migration suitability	50%

Data Management

Output	Indicator	Target
Knowledge Management (KM) repositories	Newly created Knowledge Management (KM) repositories decided by the ERCEA Knowledge Management Steering Committee for both organizational and scientific streams	KM repository creation rate (yearly completion) 2026: 80%
Enhance data collection on innovation	Include PoC in Innovation Radar tool	Q3 2026

Data Protection

Output	Indicator	Target
Staff awareness in data protection	% of staff who attended a training/info session on data protection	100% of newcomers 50% of staff in the past two years
Update of the register of processing operation	Number of records reviewed in the last two years	50%

C. Sound financial management

Objective: The authorising officer by delegation has reasonable assurance that resources have been used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and that cost-effective controls are in place which give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of underlying transactions.

Main outputs in 2026:

Output	Indicator	Target
Effective controls: Legal and regular transactions	Estimated risk at payment and at closure	For H2020 and HE: remains below 2% of relevant expenditure ⁽³⁷⁾

⁽³⁷⁾ For the Research, industry, space, energy and transport family, it is necessary to make a distinction between Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe since they have different materiality criteria. A common approach among the relevant departments should be applied.

Output	Indicator	Target
Effective controls: Safeguarded assets	Yearly physical inventory control of items – furniture and equipment - % of scanned items vs permanent inventory (ABAC Assets)	96%
Effective controls: Ensure adequate quality and consideration of specificities of ERC grants in HE/H2020 audit results	Review of preliminary / draft audit reports (PARs/DARs) by the ERCEA	100% of PARs/DARs submitted by the Common Audit Service reviewed by the ERCEA Audit Liaison Officers
Efficient controls	Budget execution and timely payments	Remains 100% of payment appropriations and becomes 100% of payments (in value) made on time
Economy of controls	Overall estimated cost of controls	Becomes between 3 % to 4% of funds managed

D. Fraud risk management

Objective: The risk of fraud is minimised through the application of effective anti-fraud measures and the implementation of the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS) ⁽³⁸⁾ aimed at the prevention, detection and correction ⁽³⁹⁾ of fraud.

Main outputs in 2026:

Output	Indicator	Target
Participation in the Fraud Prevention and Detection Network (FDPNet) and the Fraud and Irregularities in Research (FAIR) Committee meetings	Participation rate	100%
Anti-Fraud training sessions for Agency newcomers	- Number of annual trainings - Percentage of Agency newcomers trained	- 2-3 trainings year - 85% of newcomers trained

⁽³⁸⁾ Communication from the Commission ‘Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy: enhanced action to protect the EU budget’, COM(2019)176 of 29 April 2019; Communication from the Commission ‘Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy Action plan – revision 2023’, [COM\(2023\)405](#) of 11 July 2023 – ‘the Communication on the 2023 revision’, and the accompanying revised action plan, [SWD\(2023\)245](#)–‘the revised Action Plan’.

⁽³⁹⁾ Correction of fraud is an umbrella term, which notably refers to the recovery of amounts unduly spent and to administrative sanctions.

E. Sound environmental management

Objective: Reaching climate neutrality by 2030 and a reduced environmental footprint for the Commission.

Main outputs in 2026

Output	Indicator	Target
I. Reducing emissions from staff and expert's business travel and reducing CO₂ and other atmospheric emissions		
Actions to reduce emissions from staff professional travel	CO ₂ emissions from executive agency's staff missions ⁽⁴⁰⁾	Reduction of CO ₂ travel emission by 50% from the ERCEA staff business travels (compared to 2019 baseline).
Emissions from experts' travel	Revision of the Frequent Asked Questions (FAQ) and leaflet for reimbursement to promote sustainable travel choices and provide clear information on green travel options for experts' traveling for on-site meetings	Q2 2026
II. Reducing resource use in buildings and workspace (energy)		
More efficient use of resources (energy)		
Participation in corporate energy saving actions, by closing down the ERCEA's buildings within Winter and Summer BEST initiative and/or optimisation of the temperature in EC buildings	% of Agency buildings participating in the BEST summer and end of year energy saving actions	100% of the ERCEA participation to BEST corporate initiatives
III. Organise sustainable events		
The ERCEA events in hybrid mode to reduce CO ₂ impact of travels	Number of green events	5
IV. Circular economy (public procurement (GPP), waste, biodiversity and sustainable food		
Waste Management & Recycling in Catering Services	% of catering service actions following a sustainable waste management	Ensure 100% of public procurement related to catering follows sustainable waste management practices

⁽⁴⁰⁾ % reduction in emissions from staff professional travel (tCO₂eq), data available from PMO's QlikSense dashboard.

Output	Indicator	Target
V. Staff awareness		
Percentage of staff informed via staff awareness actions to reduce waste, energy, paper and water consumption in the framework of EMAS/greening corporate campaigns	% of staff informed	100%
Staff awareness actions on reducing GHG emissions (such as actions on sustainable commuting during EU mobility week and Velomai corporate events) and/or raise staff awareness on sustainable commuting in collaboration with OIB (e.g. availability of bike parking facilities, lockers and showers, promote the reduction of parking spaces' use amongst staff)	Number of actions	1
	% of staff informed	100%
Cycling contribution scheme (financial contribution covering part of the cost of commuting to and from work by bicycle) aiming at increasing the number of staff members choosing this means of transport and therefore contributing to reducing pollution and easing urban traffic congestion in Brussels.	Number of staff participating in the scheme	Maintain the same staff participation level as in 2024 ⁽⁴¹⁾ . This means 10% of the ERCEA staff

⁽⁴¹⁾ Due to the change of contribution scheme for cycling in 2025, related data are expected from PMO as of 2026 including for year 2025.

ANNEX 2: Resources: staff and budget

A. Administrative budget

Programmes	Title 1 (€ million)	Title 2 (€ million)	Title 3 (€ million)	Total				Grand total
				EU Budget	EFTA/ EEA	Third countries contrib.	Next Generation EU	
Horizon Europe	69.424	8.670	1.526	65.000	1.690	12.931	0	79.621
Total per source of financing within each Title	69.424	8.670	1.526	65.000	1.690	12.931	0	79.621
Total per Budget Title	69.424	8.670	1.526					79.621

B. Human resources

Programmes	Staff (EU budget)					Staff from other fund sources				Total all staff
	TAs	Of which seconded officials	CAs	SNEs	Total staff EU budget	TAs	CAs	EFTA/EEA, Third countries contributions		
Horizon Europe & H2020										
Total operational staff for the Programmes	113	9	300	16	429	26	78	104	533	
Total management and administrative support staff for the Programmes	11	11	43	0	54	3	8	11	65	
Total	124	20	343	16	483	29	86	115	598	

C. Delegated operational appropriations

Budget lines		Commitment appropriations (€ million)					Payment appropriations (€ million)				
		EU Budget	EFTA/ EEA	Third countries contrib.	Next Generation EU	Total	EU Budget	EFTA/ EEA	Third countries contrib.	Next Generation EU	Total
Horizon Europe											
Budget line	XX/2026/ERCEA<RTD/E.01020101/ HORIZONEU_21_27/	2 305.72	58.04	560.78	0	2 924.54	2 210.74	57.47	560.78	0	2 828.99
H2020											
Budget line	/2026/ERCEA<RTD/E.01029901.01/ H2020_14_20/	0	0	0	0	0	336.99	7.38	0	0	344.37
Total of operational appropriations managed by the Executive Agency		2 305.72	58.04	560.78	0	2 924.54	2 547.73	64.85	560.78	0	3 108.51