

# Information for Applicants to the Proof of Concept Grant 2020 Call



**European Research Council**  
Executive Agency

Established by the European Commission



**Horizon 2020**  
**European Union Funding**  
**for Research & Innovation**

## **European Research Council (ERC)** **ERC Proof of Concept Grants**

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This document is published by the ERC Scientific Council on the [ERC website](#). It can also be downloaded from the [Funding and tender opportunities portal \(F&T Portal\)](#).

## IMPORTANT TO NOTE

The present document is based on the legal documents setting the rules and conditions for the ERC frontier research grants, in particular:

- the [ERC Work Programme 2020](#)<sup>1</sup>,
- the revised ERC Rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures relevant to the Specific Programme of H2020 – the Framework programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020)<sup>2</sup> (hereinafter [ERC Rules for Submission](#)), and
- the [H2020 ERC MGA PoC Lump Sum Pilot - Multi & Mono](#) (Multi-Beneficiary Model Grant Agreement for ERC Proof of Concept Lump Sum Pilot).

This document does not supersede the afore-mentioned documents, which are legally binding. Should there be any discrepancies between the aforementioned legal documents and this document, the former will prevail.

The European Commission, the ERC Executive Agency or any person or body acting on their behalf cannot be held responsible for the use made of this document.

Applicants can also consult the [ERC-2020-PoC FAQs](#), available on the Funding & tender opportunities portal.

The [Guide for ERC Peer Reviewers](#) – applicable to Proof of Concept Grants, provides practical information on the evaluation process.

National Contact Points (ERC NCPs) have been set up across Europe<sup>3</sup> by the national governments to provide information and personalised support to ERC applicants in their native language. The mission of the ERC NCPs is to raise awareness, inform and advise on ERC funding opportunities as well as to support potential applicants in the preparation, submission and follow-up of ERC grant applications. For details on the ERC NCP in your country please consult the [ERC website](#) or the SEDIA Funding & tender opportunities portal.

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<sup>1</sup> C(2019) 4904 of 2 July 2019.

<sup>2</sup> C(2017) 4750 of 12 July 2017

<sup>3</sup> This applies to EU Member States and Associated Countries. Some other countries also provide this service.

## Highlights of important new features related to proposal submission and evaluation for the ERC Proof of Concept grant in 2020

**The Part B template has been modified.  
The PoC grant remains a lump sum grant.**

### Abbreviations

**AC** – [Associated Country](#)

**ADG** – [Advanced Grant](#)

**COG** – [Consolidator Grant](#)

**EU MS** – EU Member States

**ERC WP** – [ERC Work Programme 2020](#)

**ERC panel** – ERC Evaluation panel

**ERC NCP** – [ERC National Contact Points](#)

**ERCEA** – European Research Council Executive Agency

**F & T Portal** – Funding and tender opportunities (Single Electronic Data Interchange Area)

**H2020 FP** – Horizon 2020 Framework Programme

**HI** – Host Institution

**PI** – Principal Investigator

**PM** – Panel Member

**PIC** – [Participant Identification Code](#)

**PoC**– [Proof of Concept Grant](#)

**SEP** – Submission and Evaluation of Proposals

**STG** – [Starting Grant](#)

**SYG** – [Synergy Grant](#)

## Content

### ERC PROOF OF CONCEPT GRANT INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

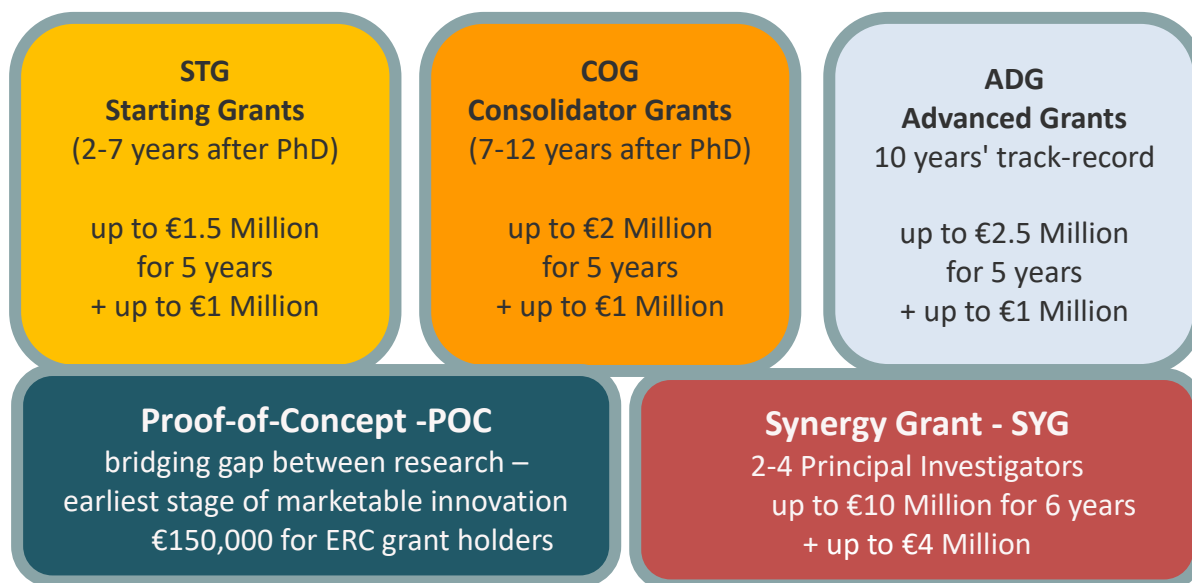
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HISTORY OF CHANGES		
Version	Publication date	Changes
1.0	16.10.2019	▪ Initial version
1.1	19.11.2019	▪ Correction (clerical error): the submission cut-off dates foreseen.

## 1. ERC PROOF OF CONCEPT GRANTS 2020

### 1.1 ERC POC FUNDING PRINCIPLES 2020

The [ERC Work Programme 2020](#) sets out the Objectives and Principles of ERC funding. The ERC's Proof of Concept Grant is an add-on grant only on offer to Principal Investigators that already benefit from an ERC main research grant (Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant, Advanced Grant or Synergy Grant). PoC Grants are therefore on offer only to PIs whose proposals draw substantially on their ERC funded research.



The ERC PoC Grants aim to maximise the value of the excellent research that the ERC funds, by funding further work (i.e. activities which were not scheduled to be funded by the original ERC frontier research grant) to verify the innovation potential of ideas arising from ERC funded projects.

The objective is to provide funds to enable ERC-funded ideas to be brought to a pre-demonstration stage where potential commercialisation or societal opportunities have been identified.

Innovations can be commercialised through licenses to a new or existing company or through a venture funded start-up, depending on the nature of the invention/idea, its potential markets, and the inventor's plans for future involvement in the commercialisation. Innovations can also feed into ventures aimed at addressing social and environmental goals including by social entrepreneurs and the voluntary and not-for-profit sectors.

This action is open to PIs already benefitting from an ERC frontier research grant (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced and Synergy) of any nationality who intend to conduct their Proof of Concept activity in any EU Member State<sup>4</sup> or Associated Country<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Please consult the [list of EU Member States](#).

<sup>5</sup> Please consult [the list of Associated Countries](#). Please also check section international cooperation of the [online manual](#) for up-to-date information on the current position for Associated Countries.

The ERC PoC Grant would help among others:

- establishing viability, technical issues and overall direction
- clarifying IPR position and strategy
- providing feedback for budgeting and other forms of commercial discussion
- providing connections to later stage funding
- covering initial expenses for establishing a company

The financial contribution will be awarded as a lump sum of EUR 150 000 for a period of 18 months. The ERC expects that normally proof of concept projects should be completed within 12 months. However, to allow for those projects that require more preparation time, projects will be signed for 18 months. Given this initial flexibility, extensions of the duration of proof of concept projects may be granted only exceptionally.

The lump sum offered will cover the beneficiaries' eligible costs for the project (including indirect costs).

## **1.2 ELIGIBILITY**

### **Eligible proposals**

All proposals must be complete and submitted by eligible PIs before the relevant call deadline. Please see section 2.1 for an overview of a complete ERC proposal.

Eligible proposals must demonstrate the relation between the idea to be taken to proof of concept and the ERC frontier research project (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced or Synergy) in question.

All applications and the related supporting information are reviewed to ensure that all eligibility criteria are met. The proposal's content should be related to the objectives of the relevant ERC call and must meet all its eligibility requirements. Where there is a doubt about the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a final decision by the eligibility review committee. The fact that a proposal is evaluated in such circumstances does not constitute proof of its eligibility. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met (for example, due to incorrect or misleading information), the proposal will be declared ineligible and not considered any further.

### **Eligible Principal Investigator**

All PIs in an ERC frontier research project, that is either ongoing or has ended<sup>6</sup> less than 12 months before 1 January 2020, are eligible to participate and apply for an ERC PoC Grant.

This action is open to PIs already benefitting from an ERC frontier research grant (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced and Synergy) of any nationality who intends to conduct their Proof of Concept activity in any EU Member State or Associated Country.

### **Eligible Host Institutions**

The Host Institution (HI) must engage the PI for at least the duration of the project, as defined in the PoC grant agreement. It must either be established in an EU Member State or Associated Country as a legal entity created under national law, or it may be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) or any other entity created under EU law. Any type of legal entity, public or private, including

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<sup>6</sup> Where the duration of the project fixed in the ERC Grant Agreement has ended.

universities, research organisations and undertakings can host PIs and their teams. The ERC welcomes applications from PIs hosted by private for-profit research centres, including industrial laboratories. Normally the PI will be employed by the HI, but cases where, for duly justified reasons, the PI's employer cannot become the HI, or where the PI is self-employed, can be accommodated. The specific conditions of engagement will be subject to clarification and approval during the granting procedure or during the amendment procedure for a change of HI.

As part of the application, the HI must provide a binding statement according to the template annexed to this document (see Section 4. Annex), proving its engagement to the PI for at least the duration of the PoC project. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be ruled ineligible and not considered for evaluation.

The PI can submit the PoC proposal with a different HI than the one where the ERC Frontier Research Grant is currently being implemented, providing that this other HI complies with the eligibility criteria as stipulated in the [ERC Work Programme 2020](#).

### **Submission and eligibility restrictions**

The restrictions for submission under the [ERC Work Programme 2020](#) are set out below. The Scientific Council may decide in the light of experience that different or comparable restrictions will apply in subsequent years.

The year of an ERC call for proposals refers to the Work Programme under which the call was published and can be established by its call identifier. A 2019 ERC call for proposals is therefore one that was published under the Work Programme 2019 and will have 2019 in the call identifier (for example ERC-2019-PoC). Ineligible or withdrawn proposals do not count against any of the following restrictions (please consult the [ERC Rules for Submission](#), section 2.2).

- PIs may submit only one proposal under Work Programme 2020. If multiple submissions are made at different cut-off dates under the Work Programme 2020, only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated.
- A PI whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity in the calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2018 or 2019 may not submit a proposal to the calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2020.
- More than one PoC Grant may be awarded per ERC funded frontier research project, but only one Proof of Concept project may be running at any one time for the same ERC frontier research project.

### **Research Integrity**

Cases of scientific misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or misrepresentation of data<sup>7</sup> may result in rejection of the proposals in accordance with section 3.11 of the [ERC Rules for Submission](#). Please also note that plagiarism detection software is used to analyse all submitted proposals to detect similar proposals submitted by different PIs. A procedure has been put in place to assess alleged or suspected cases of scientific misconduct. Scientific misconduct may result in the

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<sup>7</sup> For example if in the list of publications, the order of authors does not appear as indicated in the original publications.

rejection of the proposal from the current call and in a possible restriction on submission of proposals to future calls, as provided in the relevant ERC Work Programme<sup>8</sup>.

### 1.3 EVALUATION PROCESS

The ERC's evaluation process has been carefully designed to identify excellence irrespective of gender, age, nationality or institution of the PI and other potential biases. The evaluations are monitored to guarantee transparency, fairness and impartiality in the treatment of proposals.

The PoC call is a continuous call with three cut-off dates; an applicant may submit only one application per call. Ineligible and withdrawn proposals do not count against this limit.

The PoC call has a single-stage submission and single-step evaluation procedure.

ERC grant applications can be submitted only in response to a 'call for proposals'. Calls announced in the [ERC Work Programme 2020](#) are published on the [ERC website](#) and the [F & T Portal](#). The announcement of the calls is published in the [Official Journal of the European Union](#). The provisional timing of evaluation will be updated on a regular basis on the [ERC website](#).

Please note that the foreseen submission deadlines could be modified after the publication of the calls. You are therefore invited to periodically consult the [F & T Portal update](#) where any modifications of the submission cut-off dates are indicated.

**The submission cut-off dates foreseen are:**

**ERC-2020-PoC-1: 21<sup>nd</sup> January 2020, 17.00 (Brussels local time)**

**ERC-2020-PoC-2: 23<sup>th</sup> April 2020, 17.00 (Brussels local time)**

**ERC-2020-PoC-3: 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020, 17.00 (Brussels local time)**

The evaluation will be conducted by independent experts. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel on the application of the evaluation criteria for selection of proposals for PoC Grant (as described in the [ERC Work Programme 2020](#)).

The evaluation criteria for selection of proposals for PoC Grants are:

- Excellence in Innovation potential
- Impact
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Quality of the proof of concept plan)

Reviewers will evaluate independently each eligible proposal and mark it as "very good", "good" or "fail" for each of the three evaluation criteria.

In order to be considered for funding, proposals will have to be awarded a pass mark ("very good" or "good") by a majority of independent experts on each of the three evaluation criteria.

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<sup>8</sup> For the restrictions due to breach of research integrity under the ERC Work Programme 2020 please see section Submission restrictions above.



A proposal which fails one or more of the criteria will not be ranked and will not be funded.

If there is not enough budget to fund all the proposals which pass all three evaluation criteria, those proposals which pass all three evaluation criteria will be ranked according to the marks (very good, good and fail) which they received from reviewers sorted by the following order: criterion 1 (Excellence - Innovation potential), criterion 2 (Impact), and finally by criterion 3 (Quality and efficiency of the implementation). Proposals will be funded in order of this ranking. If necessary, the reviewers will meet as an evaluation panel in order to determine a priority order for proposals which have the same ranking. PIs and applicant legal entities are provided with feedback on the outcome of the evaluation through an information letter and an evaluation report. The evaluation report indicates whether the proposal is retained for funding or not, and provides the “very good, “good” or “fail” status for each of the three criteria, with corresponding comments given by the reviewers.

**Please, note that the comments by the individual experts may not necessarily be convergent – controversy and differences of opinions about the merits of a proposal are part of the debate and are legitimate.**

#### **No Contact with Peer Reviewers**

Please, note that in accordance with section 3.2 of the [ERC Rules for Submission](#), **any direct or indirect contact about the peer review evaluation of an ERC call between an applicant legal entity or a PI submitting a proposal on behalf of an applicant legal entity, and any independent expert involved in the peer review evaluation under the same call, in view of attempting to influence the evaluation process, is strictly forbidden.** Such contact can constitute an exclusion situation and, if this situation is established in accordance with Article 136 of the Financial Regulation, **will result in the decision of the ERCEA to reject the proposal** concerned from the call in question, in line with Article 141 of the Financial Regulation.

## **1.4 ETHICS REVIEW**

Please see Annex A to [the ERC Rules for Submission](#) for a detailed description of the ERC Ethics Review procedure.

The ethics review process concerns all projects funded by the ERC in Horizon 2020. The applicants should pay particular attention to the ethical aspects of the proposed work and should submit all ethics documentation available for their proposal.

The process is aimed at ensuring that the Article 19 of [Horizon 2020 Framework Programme](#), and Articles 13 and 14 of the [Rules for Participation](#) are implemented and, in particular, that all the research and innovation activities under Horizon 2020 comply with ethics principles and relevant national, Union and international legislation, including the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) and the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) and its Supplementary Protocols.

The main areas that are addressed during the ethics review process include:

1. Human protection (including study participants and researchers)
2. Animal protection and welfare
3. Data protection and privacy
4. Environment protection
5. Participation of non-EU countries
6. Malevolent use of research results

When submitting their proposal, applicants must complete the Ethics Issues Table which is section 4 of the online proposal submission forms and submit an ethics self-assessment (separate annex) if they answer yes to one or several questions in the Ethics Issues Table. Please see the [Ethics Self-assessment step by step](#) document for guidance.

If the proposal is retained for funding, further to the outcome of the ethics review process, the Host Institution and the Principal Investigator receive a copy of the ethics report (the document is unsigned so as to preserve the anonymity of the experts).

Please include any supporting documentation, such as any authorisation you may already have. This will allow a more effective ethics clearance and an accelerated granting process<sup>9</sup>. Please upload any related documents or annexes in PPSS Step 5 'Edit Proposal'.

Applicants should be aware that no grant agreement can be signed by ERCEA prior to a satisfactory conclusion of the ethics review procedure.

If a proposal is rejected because of ethics considerations, the applicant is informed of the grounds for such a decision and the means to address enquiries and complaints.

The European Commission has set up a [dedicated website](#) that aims to provide helpful information on ethics issues.

## 1.5 MEANS OF COMPLAINT

Please see the section 3.9 of the [ERC Rules for Submission](#) for a detailed description of the enquiries and complaints and evaluation review procedures.

Upon reception of the information letter with the evaluation report or with the results of the eligibility review, the PI and/or the HI (applicant legal entity) may introduce a **complaint against the rejection on the grounds of ineligibility** or a **request for an evaluation review**, if there is an indication that the results of the eligibility checks were incorrect or that there has been a procedural shortcoming or a manifest error of assessment.

A complaint can be made if the PIs and/or the HI consider that the assessment of the eligibility and/or evaluation of their proposal has not been carried out in accordance with the procedures set out in the Rules for Participation, the relevant ERC Work Programme, call for proposals or the ERC Rules for Submission. The evaluation review procedure is not meant to call into question the scientific judgement made by the peer review panel. It will look into procedural shortcomings and – in rare cases – into factual errors.

The information letter will provide a link to be used by the PIs and/or the HI to introduce a complaint. The letter will specify a deadline for the receipt of any such complaints, which will be 30 days from the date of receiving the information letter<sup>10</sup>.

Complaints must be:

- related to the evaluation process, or eligibility checks, for the call and grants in question;
- set out using the online form, including a clear description of the grounds for complaint;

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<sup>9</sup> A full description of the Ethics Review is provided in the [ERC Rules for the submission](#) of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures relevant to the H2020 Specific Programme.

<sup>10</sup> Communications are generally considered to have been made on the date and time sent by the ERCEA.

- received within the time limit specified in the information letter;
- sent by the PI and/or the HI.

An acknowledgment of receipt will be sent to complainants no later than two weeks after the deadline for submitting the complaint. This acknowledgement of receipt will indicate the estimated date of a definitive reply.

A redress committee may be convened to examine the eligibility or evaluation process for the complaint. The redress committee will bring together staff of the ERC Executive Agency with the requisite scientific, technical and legal expertise. The committee's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of requests, and fair and equal treatment of applicants. During the evaluation review procedure, the committee itself, however, does not re-evaluate the proposal. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the committee may review the evaluation report, the individual comments, examine the CVs of the experts. The committee will not call into question the judgement of appropriately qualified experts. In light of its review, the committee will recommend a course of action. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated. Otherwise, the committee will uphold the initial outcome.

Please note:

- a re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the quality assessment of a proposal. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed anyway on the other criteria;
- the evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score;
- only one request at a time for evaluation review per proposal will be considered by the committee;
- all requests for evaluation review will be treated in confidence.

The above procedure does not prevent the applicants from resorting to any other means of seeking redress such as lodging an appeal to the Commission in accordance with Article 22<sup>11</sup> of Council Regulation 58/2003, or filing an action for annulment under Article 263<sup>12</sup> of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) before the Court of Justice of the European Union for a decision affecting adversely a person or legal entity. PIs and applicant legal entities will have to choose either one or several of these means of redress, and they are not obliged to pursue one before another. These channels are also available to applicants who wish to register a complaint after the deadline mentioned above.

Applicants are asked not to take more than one formal action at a time. They are asked to wait for the final decision of the Agency/Commission before taking any further action. Deadlines for further action will start to run from when applicants receive the reply to their complaint (final decision) .<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> 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 (OJ L 11, 16.01.2003, p. 1)

<sup>12</sup> Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 47–390).

<sup>13</sup> Please be aware that, as per Article 22 of Regulation 58/2003, reaching a final decision on an Article 22 request may generally take more than 30 days. Therefore, if you first file an Article 22 request you may not be able afterwards to submit an evaluation review request within the 30 days deadline.

## 1.6 QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE CALL

An extended set of [Frequently Asked Questions for the ERC calls](#) is available at the ERC website. Questions can be filtered by category and programme , and they consist of answers to the most common questions on how to prepare and submit an ERC application.

For additional questions related to the call, please contact the Proof of Concept Call coordination team:

[ERC-PoC-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ERC-PoC-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu)

For questions related to the compilation of the Ethics issues of the proposal, please contact the Ethics Support team: [ERC-ETHICS-REVIEW@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ERC-ETHICS-REVIEW@ec.europa.eu)

For questions on Open Access please see Article 29.2 of the H2020 Model Grant Agreements: H2020 ERC MGA PoC Lump Sum Pilot – Multi & Mono or contact [ERC-OPEN-ACCESS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ERC-OPEN-ACCESS@ec.europa.eu).

## 2. COMPLETING AN APPLICATION

### 2.1 OVERVIEW OF AN ERC PoC APPLICATION

An ERC PoC application is composed of:

- the administrative submission form (Part A);
- the proposal (Part B);
- supporting documentation (HI support letter, and any documentation needed on ethics issues).

### 2.2 THE SUBMISSION FORM

The submission form is accessed via the call submission link in the [F & T](#) Portal. The electronic form has 5 sections (approximately 15 pages in total), which need to be completed before a submission can take place. Many fields are mandatory and specific to the ERC calls and we therefore advise you to create your draft proposal well in advance of the submission deadline. **All mandatory fields are marked with in red if left empty. Failure to fill in any mandatory field will block submission.**

**Section 1 – General Information** contains information about the PoC proposal, including the title, acronym, project duration, end date and ID reference number of the related ERC project, as well as the panel under which the original ERC grant was funded. Furthermore, in this section you will provide an abstract that should give clear understanding of the objectives of the PoC proposal and how they will be achieved. The abstract will be used as a short description of your PoC proposal in the evaluation process. Please note that, in case your proposal is funded, this abstract will be published. It must therefore be short and precise and should not contain confidential information. This section also contains general declarations related to the proposal and participation in H2020<sup>14</sup>.

**Section 2 – Participants & contacts** contains information about the PI and the HI, one section appearing for each. The name and e-mail of contact persons including the PI and HI contact are **read-only**. Further details such as ORCID number, researcher ID, other ID, last name at birth, gender, nationality etc., should be filled for the PI as well as the address and telephone number of each contact person.

**Section 3 – Budget** contains information about the requested EU contribution standard lump sum pre-fixed by a [European Commission decision](#)<sup>15</sup> at 150 000 EUR. Do not include other financial information here. In case of several beneficiaries, the applicants must provide a breakdown of the lump sum showing the share per beneficiary (and any linked third party). This estimated lump sum breakdown by beneficiary will become part of the grant agreement Annex 2<sup>16</sup>.

**Section 4 – Ethics issues** serves to identify any ethical aspects of the proposed work. This table has to be completed even if there are no issues (simply confirm that none of the ethical issues apply to the proposal). Please note that, in case you answer YES to any of the questions, you are requested to provide an Ethics Self-Assessment and additional ethics documentation – if applicable, as detailed in the [Ethics Self-assessment step by step](#). Please refer to section [1.4](#) of this document for further details.

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<sup>14</sup> Please note that the ERCEA may at any time during the evaluation process request the applicants to provide the written consent mentioned in the declarations. These consents should not be submitted with the application, but the applicant must ensure the written consent from all participants prior to the call submission deadline.

<sup>15</sup> C(2018)5960 of 18.9.2018

<sup>16</sup> [H2020 Model Grant Agreements: H2020 ERC MGA PoC Lump Sum Pilot – Multi & Mono](#)

**Section 5 – Call-specific questions** contains the explanation of the relation between the existing ERC frontier research grant and the proposed PoC (answer to this question is compulsory and will be used for eligibility review) and declarations related to eligibility and permission statements on data-related questions and data protection. The data-related consents are entirely voluntary.

## 2.3 THE POC PROPOSAL

The PoC proposal has to be presented in the form of the so-called "Part B" following the template provided in the submission system and its use **is strongly recommended**. Each proposal page shall carry a header presenting the **PI's last name** and the **acronym** of the proposal.

**Important Notice:** Please be aware that there is only one evaluation step. The "Part B" must contain all the information required to evaluate your proposal.

In fairness to all applicants, the page limits of 7 pages will be strictly applied. Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated (external experts will only be asked to read the material presented within the page limits, and will be under no obligation to read beyond them).

The following parameters **must** be respected for the layout:

Page Format	Font Type	Font Size	Line Spacing	Margins
A4	Times New Roman Arial or similar	At least 11	Single	2 cm side 1.5 cm top and bottom

The activities to be funded should draw substantially on the ERC-funded research project (whose ID number has to be indicated in the submission form 'Part 1. General Information'), but they should not aim at extending the original research or predominantly concerned with overcoming technical obstacles. The grant will cover activities at the very early stage of turning research outputs into a value creation process, i.e. the initial steps of pre-competitive development of innovation potential.

### **Part B - Sections 1, 2, and 3:**

**Please, use the online word template provided in the F&T Portal submission page for the call. The Action description and references do not count towards the page limits.**

#### **Section 1. The idea – Excellence in Innovation potential (max. 2 pages)**

This section shall describe the idea to be taken to proof of concept in a few words (abstract) and the innovation potential of the proposed idea. The structure helps the PI to outline the problem addressed in the proposal and to propose a solution to solve it. It will be used to assess the evaluation criterion 1: Excellence in innovation potential.

##### **1a. Brief description of the idea to be taken to proof of concept**

**1a.1 The problem:** Describe the problem or the need that the idea is aiming to solve or alleviate.

**1a.2 The solution:** Explain how the idea will solve or alleviate the problem or the need and the meaning that this will make. A clear value proposition should be included.

Explain: 1) how the idea solves users' problems or improves their situation; 2) why potential users or sponsors should pay for this solution and not for other existing ones.

Give an "abstract-like" description of your project, explaining the idea and the expected outcomes of the project. This description should be understandable for a non-specialist in your field.

### **1b. Demonstration of Innovation Potential**

Describe in detail how the project outcomes will be innovative or distinctive. This section should include a clear explanation of why the solution proposed is new or improved, when compared to already existing solutions.

### **Section 2. Expected Impact (max. 2 pages):**

This section shall describe the expected impact of the Proof of Concept project. It will be used to assess the evaluation criterion 2: Impact.

Describe in detail the following:

**2a. Identification and description of any effect or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy/services.**

**2b. Outline of the value creation process** (*plans for the knowledge transfer, the commercialisation or any other process foreseen to generate the above listed benefit*)

This should include proposed plans to:

- **assess and validate the effectiveness of the project's outcomes** (*testing, technical reports or any other form of validation to confirm that the solution is effective, efficient, sustainable, or just*) (where applicable);
- **clarify the IPR position and strategy<sup>17</sup> or knowledge transfer strategy** (where applicable);
- **set up contacts with industrial partners, societal or cultural organisations, policy makers or any other potential users or sponsors of the projects' results** (where applicable).

**Important:** Point (b) states "*where applicable*", this does not mean you should skip these points if not applicable. In this case, please explain why it does not apply to the project (is it out of scope or has it already been achieved?) in order for the evaluators to understand why this issue is not addressed in the frame of the Proof of Concept project.

### **Section 3. The proof of concept plan (max. 3 pages. Action description 3c does not count towards the page limit).**

This section shall describe the planning of the proposed activities, the project-management plan and the team that will conduct the activities. It will be used to assess the evaluation criterion 3: Quality and efficiency of the implementation.

You should demonstrate the relevance of the approach chosen for establishing the technical and commercial/societal feasibility of the project:

#### **3a. Project-management plan, including risk and contingency measures**

**3a.1** Describe the organisational structure and the decision-making process and explain why they are appropriate to the complexity and scale of the project.

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<sup>17</sup> Any application for funding of IPR activities under the ERC Proof of Concept will not discharge beneficiaries from their prior obligations under their pre-existing ERC Grant Agreement in respect of protecting IPR capable of industrial or commercial application. If any foreground was potentially protectable in the pre-existing ERC project, beneficiaries had the legal obligation to seek for adequate and effective protection according to the [Rules for Participation](#) and the [ERC PoC Lump Sum Pilot Model Grant Agreement](#).

**3a.2** Describe what can go wrong and present a plan for the identification and acceptance or off-setting of possible risks linked to the project idea (e.g. what about if an experiment fails?).

**3a.3** Present a plan for unforeseen non-scientific events, including back-up procedures, emergency response and ex-post recovery (e.g. if a key person of the team leaves or you cannot access a facility).

Description of the risk	Proposed risk-mitigation measures
•	•
•	•
•	•

### 3b. Description of the team

Describe the size and nature of the team, indicating, where appropriate, the key team members and their roles. The participation of team members engaged by another host institution should be justified in relation to the additional resources this may impose to the project.

**3b.1** Describe your team, their achievements and experience in relation to the approach you will be taking.

**3b.2** Describe the roles of the team within your project. What is the role of the PI? What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the team?

### 3c. Plan of the Proof of Concept – Action description (this section does not count towards the page limit of Part B)

Grants to be awarded under this action (Proof of Concept), shall exclusively take the form of a standard lump sum pre-fixed at **150 000 EUR**<sup>18</sup> by a European Commission decision<sup>19</sup>.

In this section you should present a detailed project plan including a narrative description of the resources<sup>20</sup> planned for each activity and clearly identified objectives of the project, and a description of work. The description of work (Proof of Concept action) must demonstrate that the resources are appropriate for the implementation of the project.

NB: The action description (objectives and description of work) can be as long as necessary to explain the activity and does not count towards the page limits.

<sup>18</sup> The lump sum is deemed to cover ALL eligible (direct and indirect) costs for the action and it can NOT be increased or decreased. The ERC PoC lump sum has been designed to cover 100% of the eligible direct and indirect costs. Please note that the overall value of the PoC action can be higher than the lump sum if covered by additional contributions.

<sup>19</sup> [Commission Decision C\(2018\)5960](#) authorising the reimbursement on the basis of a lump sum for ERC Proof of Concept actions under Horizon2020.

<sup>20</sup> Examples of resources: e.g. the type of project staff working on a task and the estimated effort (person-months), type of equipment and consumables required for the project implementation, staff travel requirements, etc. The resources should NOT be described financially. This means that no cost figures should appear. The applicants should be able to justify the good use of the lump sum for the resources described.



Where appropriate, break down the work into activities e.g. validating results, testing in real world contexts, clarifying IPR or knowledge transfer position and strategy, competitive/market analysis, plans for contacts with commercial and/or societal partners etc.

Provide a narrative description of the resources planned for each activity. Examples of resources: the type of project staff working on a task and the estimated effort (person-months), type of equipment and consumables required for the project implementation, staff travel requirements, etc.

Do NOT present any breakdown of the lump sum with cost figures per category. This means that no cost figures should appear. Applicants should be able to justify the good use of the lump sum for the resources described.

The description of work must demonstrate that the resources are appropriate and necessary for the implementation and feasibility of the project and are properly justified. The evaluation panels assess the described resources carefully.

Specify briefly your commitment to the project (how much time you are willing to devote to the proposed project). Please note that for PoC Grants, there is no minimum commitment percentage of the working time required to the PI. However, in the grant agreement, PIs must enter a minimum of their working time, as the ERC PoC project shall be performed under their guidance. It is essential that the cumulative percentage commitment that the PI spends on the ERC PoC action and on the main ERC StG/CoG/AdG/SyG Grant (if still ongoing) does not exceed 100%.

For all types of third party involvement (purchases, in kind contributions, subcontracts and linked third parties), the **costs** are **ALL covered** by the lump sum. NO other costs will be reimbursed.

The rules on subcontracting for ERC POC Lump Sum Pilot actions are in principle the same as for the General MGA (see Articles 8 and 13 [H2020 General MGA](#)).

The [ERC PoC Lump Sum Pilot MGA](#) however, has the following **specificities**:

The tasks to be subcontracted must still be indicated in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement (Action description) as it happens in the General MGA. However, the estimated costs for subcontracting should NOT be included in Annex 1. Annex 2 is the lump sum for mono-beneficiary action or the lump sum breakdown (in percentage for each beneficiary) for multi-beneficiary actions).

Article 13 of the ERC PoC Lump Sum Pilot MGA specifies the subcontracting. The principles of best value for money and no conflict of interest are not explicitly mentioned in Article 13. Nonetheless, they must still be complied with and confirmed by the beneficiaries at granting stage.

The ERC supports the principle of open access to the published output of research, including research data and data related products. The terms and conditions laid down in the ERC MGA address how scientific publications must be made available through Open Access. Applicants should be aware that it will be mandatory to provide Open Access (free of charge, online access for any user) to all peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to results from ERC projects funded through this call. This includes long-text publications such as monographs and book chapters. Open Access can be ensured through green or gold Open Access-routes, and Open Access must in any case be ensured through a repository at the latest 6 months after publication (12 months for publications from the Social Sciences and Humanities). Please see Article 29.2 of the ERC PoC Lump Sum Pilot MGA for more details, or contact [ERC-OPEN-ACCESS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ERC-OPEN-ACCESS@ec.europa.eu).

The ERC PoC lump sum can include the provision of immediate Open Access to publications (article processing /book processing) that occur during the lifetime of the project. When drafting the Plan of activities, it is highly advisable to consider describing this. In addition, the ERC recommends that all

funded researchers follow best practice by retaining files of research data produced and used, and are prepared to share these data with other researchers when not bound by copyright restrictions, confidentiality requirements, or contractual clauses.

## 2.4 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

**Any additional annexes, including the HI support letter (and where relevant in case of ethical issues) should be provided and uploaded as separate pdf documents. These annexes do not count towards the maximum page limit for Part B.**

A scanned copy of the following supporting documentation needs to be submitted with the proposal by uploading them electronically in PDF format:

- The HI (applicant legal entity) must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the PI. As part of the application the HI must provide a binding statement that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the PI if the application is successful. The HI support letter is part of the zip-file available in the submission system, or can be found in Annex 4 to this document. The letter needs to be printed on the paper with the official letterhead of the HI, originally signed, stamped and dated by the HI's legal representative. **Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be declared ineligible.**
- Any additional supporting documents which may be required following the indications provided in this document (i.e. ethical self-assessment and supporting documentation for the ethics review procedure).

Copies of official documents can be submitted in any of the EU official languages. **Document(s) in any other language must be provided together with a certified translation into English or into any other official EU language.**

Please, provide only the documents requested above. Unless specified in the call, any hyperlinks to other documents, embedded material, and any other documents (company brochures, supporting documentation, reports, audio, video, multimedia etc.) will be disregarded.

## 3. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

### 3.1 IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Regularly consult the [F & T Portal](#) call page for updated information on the calls.
- Make sure that the personal information added in the Submission Form is accurate as this information is used to personalise the communications to applicants and the Evaluation Reports.
- In case of technical problems with the submission system please contact **DIGIT-EFP7-SEP-SUPPORT@ec.europa.eu** or get in touch with the **helpdesk** directly on **+32 (2) 29 92222** to receive immediate assistance.
- Registration and submission via the F&T Portal submission system should be done as early as possible and well in advance of the call deadline. Applicants, who wait until shortly before the close of the call to start uploading their proposal, take a serious risk that the uploading will not be concluded in time and thus the 'SUBMIT' button will not be active anymore in order to conclude the submission process.
- Only the person creating the draft proposal will have the right to manage the access rights of other people to the proposal. The person who creates the proposal will be able to modify any parts of the proposal and to submit it. Further contacts will only be able to edit the parts related to their personal data.
- Be aware that only one person should work on the forms at any given time. If two persons work on the forms at the same time, in case of a save conflict, the last save wins, which means that you risk overwriting changes made by another person if you are working in parallel. We therefore recommend that you give 'read-only' access to your partners/additional contact persons (other contacts) unless it is absolutely necessary to grant full access. Please remember that the Main administrative contact person has full access – it is not possible to grant them 'read-only access'.
- Up to the call deadline, it is possible to re-edit, download or withdraw a proposal. **ONLY the last version of your proposal submitted before the deadline will be evaluated**; no later version can be accepted and no earlier version can be recovered from the submission system. Once the deadline has passed, no further additions, corrections or resubmissions are accepted. However, a read-only access to the submitted proposal is available for 90 days after the call deadline.
- **Do submit your proposal as early as possible** (at least 48 hours prior to the deadline of the call) to avoid being confronted with last issues shortly before the call deadline. There is no reason in delaying the submission for confidentiality concerns as the system does not allow any access to the proposals before call deadline (other than to selected data that is part of the Submission and Evaluation of Proposals Assent Disclaimer).
- In some rare occasions, the proposal may be altered while converted into a PDF file. Before uploading the file, please check that everything is correct. Additionally, please download and verify all uploaded files in due time before the submission deadline.

Submission is deemed to occur only if the sequence described in point 3.2 below has been followed and not when the applicant starts uploading the proposal.

## 3.2 HOW TO APPLY

ERC grant applications can only be submitted in response to a 'call for proposals' and only via the Electronic Submission Service. Calls announced in the ERC Work Programme 2020 and in the [Official Journal](#) of the European Union are published on the [ERC website](#) and the [F & T Portal](#).

### USER GUIDANCE

- proposals must be submitted electronically using the electronic submission system of the web-based [Funding and tender opportunities](#) portal<sup>21</sup>
- the [user guide](#) of the Submission Service is available online;
- the ['IT HOW TO'](#) wiki site provides an online IT manual with screenshots;
- the H2020 [Online Manual](#) describes the standard process of proposal submission.

The submission of an ERC proposal includes 6 steps. For each submission step please find below links to a short guide including a quick demo<sup>22</sup>.

#### [Step 1 and 2](#) – Logging in and Selecting a Topic

To be able to submit a proposal and, in general to login to the F & T Portal, you must first register an EU Login account (step 1). Each time you access the proposal for editing, this user ID is requested. The same user ID is used for all later interactions with the ERCEA, including notification of the results of the evaluation<sup>23</sup>. Under 'Search Topics' you may search for 'ERC' to select an open ERC call (step 2). Soon after the opening of the call you may access the Electronic Submission Service via the PP call page. The 'Start Submission' button is available in the 'Submission Service' section of the call. When you click 'Start Submission' and confirm the call selection, you will arrive to Step 3 – Create a Draft proposal.

#### [Step 3](#) – Create a draft proposal

At this step, you fill in pre-registration data for the proposal. These details will be used by the ERCEA in order to plan the evaluation. You will not have access to this page again once it is completed and you have progressed to Step 4, but certain data, such as Acronym and Short Summary (abstract) can be modified at a later stage (at step 5, when editing the administrative form). **Be careful to choose the correct Participant Identification Code (PIC) number for your Host Institution.** An [online tool](#) is available to search for existing PICs and the related organisations. Organisations not yet having a PIC must self-register (via the same page) before submitting the proposal.

#### [Step 4](#) – Manage your related parties and/or Edit contact details

At this step you MUST enter the name and e-mail of the PI and the Main Host Institution Contact person<sup>24</sup>. You may also add the LEAR as a contact person (e.g. as a team member with read-only rights). These data are saved into the administrative form where they cannot be edited. You may at

<sup>21</sup> In duly justified exceptional circumstances the ERCEA may authorise submission on paper.

<sup>22</sup> The Electronic Submission Service is used across all the funding schemes of the European Commission, thus the guidelines provided may contain a nomenclature which is not for the ERC funding schemes (e.g. there is no such a thing as 'Consortium' in any of the ERC grants funding schemes). Thus for the correct nomenclature, please refer to this document.

<sup>23</sup> Further details are available here: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/cas/eim/external/help.cgi>


<sup>24</sup> Be careful to type the correct e-mail address of the PI and all contact persons at this step. Please note that if the Principal Investigator and the administrative contact person is the same person (because the PI is self-employed), you must use two different e-mail addresses, as the system does not allow two identical e-mail addresses to be entered.

any point return to Step 4 of the submission to add or delete any contact person or to change the access rights. Remember to save your data before leaving Step 4. Once the coordinator saves the changes, an automatic invitation is sent to all contacts' e-mail addresses. The invited persons can access the proposal after logging in to the F & T Portal – with the EU login account linked to the given e-mail address – under the 'My Proposals' tab.

If they have not yet registered an EU login account, the PI or the applicant legal entity's contact person will receive an activation e-mail inviting them to activate their EU login account. Following to this first activation, the EU login account will be maintained for following communications or feedback.

In order to be able to submit your proposal after saving changes made in Step 4 (Parties), you have to re-open the administrative form ('Edit forms' button), revise the changes, validate and save the form. Failure to do so will prevent you from submitting your proposal. Further details are available in the Submission Service user manual.

### **Step 5 – Edit and complete the proposal**

This step is the core of the submission process, as from this step, you **can edit the online administrative proposal submission forms**, view the history, print the draft proposal, **download templates, upload files** and **submit** the proposal by clicking on the relevant buttons. Guidance on how to fill in the administrative forms is provided directly in the form as ghost text for the single entries or as additional help text hidden behind question-marks . Some parts of the form will be prefilled based on the data entered at pre-registration or in the Beneficiary Register. Please use the functionality '**Validate form**' button to check the validity and completeness of your data. Any warning or error will be listed at the end of the validated form.

Further information on the preparation of the application (the online administrative forms and Proposal Parts B) is given in [section 2](#) of this document.

- **All files must be uploaded in the submission system as PDF ('portable document format'). Other file formats will not be accepted by the system.** Irrespective of any page limits specified in this document, there is an **overall limit of 10 Mbytes to the size of each uploaded document (Part B and supporting documentation)**. However, it is advised to limit the size of Part B of 2 Mbytes each.
- Unless specified in the call, embedded material and any other documents (company brochures, scientific papers, reports, audio, video, multimedia, etc.) sent either electronically or by post to the ERCEA or uploaded directly in F & T Portal will be disregarded.

There are also restrictions to the name given to the Part B files: use alphanumeric characters; special characters and spaces must be avoided. You are advised to clean your document before converting it to PDF (e.g. accept all tracked changes, delete notes). Check that your conversion software has successfully converted all the pages of your original document (e.g. there is no problem with page limits or page view), and that captions and labels have not been lost from your diagrams.

**Completing the Proposal submission forms in the submission system and uploading all the necessary files does not yet mean that your proposal is submitted (mandatory files: Part B, Host Institution support letter and – if applicable: Ethical Self-assessment).** Once there is a consolidated version of the proposal, the '**SUBMIT**' button must be pressed. The system performs a limited automatic validation of the proposal. Any problems such as missing data, wrong file format or excessive file size will appear as a list of warnings and/or errors on the screen. You may submit your proposal with warnings (marked in yellow), but it is not possible to submit a proposal until all errors (marked in red) are corrected. Please note that the electronic checks by the submission system do

not replace the formal eligibility review and do not confirm that the contents of these files respond to the requirements of the call.

### **Step 6 – The Proposal Submitted page**

Reaching this step means that the proposal is submitted (i.e. sent to the ERCEA for evaluation). It does not mean that the proposal is valid, complete and eligible in all respects. Within a few minutes of submission your proposal will be available for download with an e-receipt in the system. You will receive a confirmation e-mail with the summary data of the submitted proposal. The mail can end up in the spam folder or be blocked by the anti-spam system of your organisation. This automatic message is not the official acknowledgement of receipt. In Step 6 you can re-edit the proposal, going back to Step 5. **You may continue to modify the proposal and submit revised versions overwriting the previous one right up until the call deadline.** The sequence above must be repeated each time. The last version of your proposal submitted before the deadline is the one which will be evaluated. No earlier version can be recovered from the submission system.

**Check if the proposal is complete.** Once submitted, it is recommended to verify the proposal and its content by downloading all the submitted files. We strongly advise that you **submit** a first version of your proposal **at least 48 hours in advance of the call deadline.** Incomplete proposals (where parts or sections of the proposal and/or the host institution's commitment statement are missing) may be declared ineligible and will not be evaluated<sup>25</sup>. The proposal must be submitted **before the relevant deadline of the call.**

**Warning: Please note that in the last hours prior to call closure, the download option of checking your submitted proposal may be disabled due to a high pressure on the system.** In this case the ERCEA will inform the applicants via the call page on the [F & T Portal](#) (under 'call summary') that the function has been disabled. **If the e-receipt and download option have been disabled, you may review your submitted proposal by going back to Step 5 to check the data in the administrative forms and click on 'View History' to verify which attachments have been uploaded.**

### **3.3 HOW TO WITHDRAW A PROPOSAL**

To withdraw a proposal before the call deadline use the "withdraw proposal" button from the 'My proposals' tab when logged in at the **F & T Portal**. After the call deadline proposals may be withdrawn at any moment **until** the day preceding the panel meetings where a final decision on the outcome of the evaluation of the proposal is established. A withdrawn proposal will not be considered for evaluation nor count against possible re-application restrictions as set out in the ERC Work Programme 2020.

To withdraw a proposal **after the call deadline**, please send an e-mail to the call-specific mailbox [ERC-PoC-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ERC-PoC-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu) and include a signed scanned letter requesting the formal withdrawal. In the case of two or more proposals submitted by the same PI, the ERCEA services may ask the PI to withdraw one or more of those proposals. In the case of absence of reaction by the PI to this request, only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated.

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<sup>25</sup> See also section 2.4 'eligibility check' in the [ERC Rules for Submission](#) and in the section "Proposal submission and description" of the [ERC Work Programme 2020](#).

## 4. ANNEX

### HOST INSTITUTION SUPPORT LETTER TEMPLATE 2020

*(Print on paper bearing the official letterhead of the host institution)*

#### **COMMITMENT OF THE HOST INSTITUTION FOR ERC 2020 POC Call** <sup>26, 27</sup>

The <<please fill in here the name of the legal entity that is associated to the proposal and may host the principal investigator and the project in case the application is successful>>, which is the applicant legal entity,

confirms its intention to host and engage the following 'principal investigator'  
<<please fill in here the name of the principal investigator>>

should the proposal entitled  
<<acronym>> :<<title of the proposal>> be retained.

**Performance obligations of the applicant legal entity that will become the beneficiary of the H2020 ERC Grant Agreement (hereafter referred to as the Agreement), should the proposal be retained and the preparation of the Agreement be successfully concluded:**

The applicant legal entity commits itself to host and engage the PI for the duration of the grant and to:

- a) implement the action, as it will be described in Annex 1 and in compliance with the provisions of the Agreement, and all legal obligations under applicable EU, international and national law;
- b) ensure that the work described in Annex 1 will be performed under the guidance of the principal investigator.

**For the host institution (applicant legal entity):**

Date

.....

Name and Function

..... ; .....

Email and Signature of legal representative

..... ; .....

Stamp of the host institution (applicant legal entity)

**IMPORTANT NOTE: In order to be complete all the above mentioned items are mandatory and shall be included in the commitment of the corresponding host institution.**

<sup>26</sup> A scanned copy of the signed statement should be uploaded electronically via the [Funding and tender opportunities](#) portal submission service in PDF format.

<sup>27</sup> This statement (on letterhead paper) shall be signed by the institution's legal representative and stating his/her name, function, email address and stamp of the institution.