

ERC proposal preparation:

Timescale

Tasks

Time management



Maria Lugaro HUN-REN CSFK Konkoly Observatory

Timescale

Now

January
2026

Expected
submission
deadline

StG
October 2026

CoG
January 2027

Timescale

Now

1st workshop

2nd workshop

January
2026

March 20th

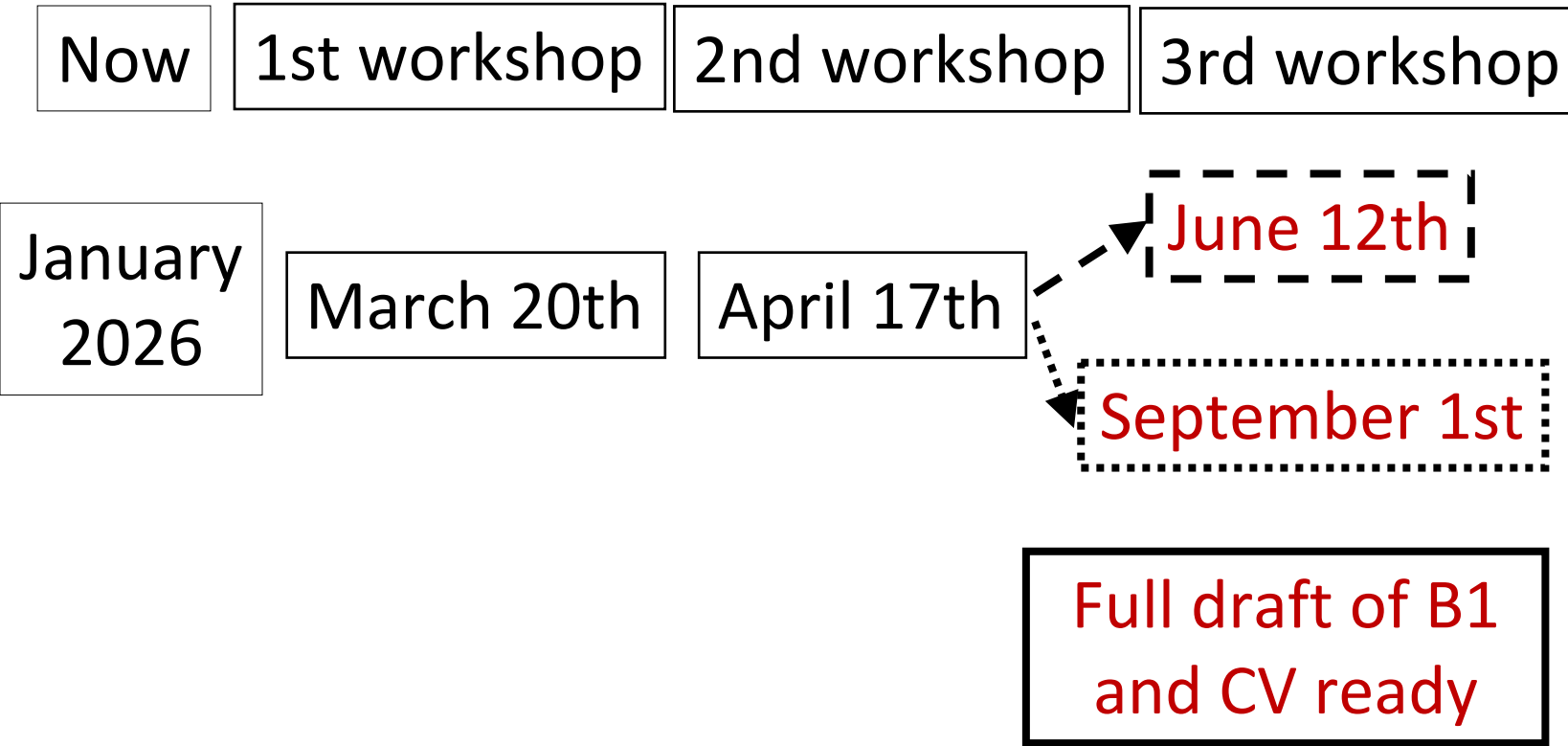
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and CV ready

Full draft of
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Why so early?

What do I have to do?

(Period 1)

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Why so early? What do I have to do? (Period 2)

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Why so early?

What do I have to do?

(Period 1)

- **Read** all recent literature on the topic
- **Read** the Call Documents (Guidelines, Instructions for Applicants etc.)
- **Design** all the figures, flow charts, Gantt chart, these will need 5-10 editing
- **Combine** the budget with the project structure
- **Start writing**
 - See the pitfalls and problems
 - Have time for all the editing

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Why so early? What do I have to do? (Period 2)

- **Give the proposal to read** to mentors, collaborators, colleagues
- **Lots of editing**, starting from first drafts roughly
 - 4 of Part B1
 - 3 of the CV and
 - 2 of Part B2
- To be able to
 - Take care of all the **feedback**
 - **Reason** on it yourself
 - **Extra polish** of the writing
 - Add the **references** cleverly

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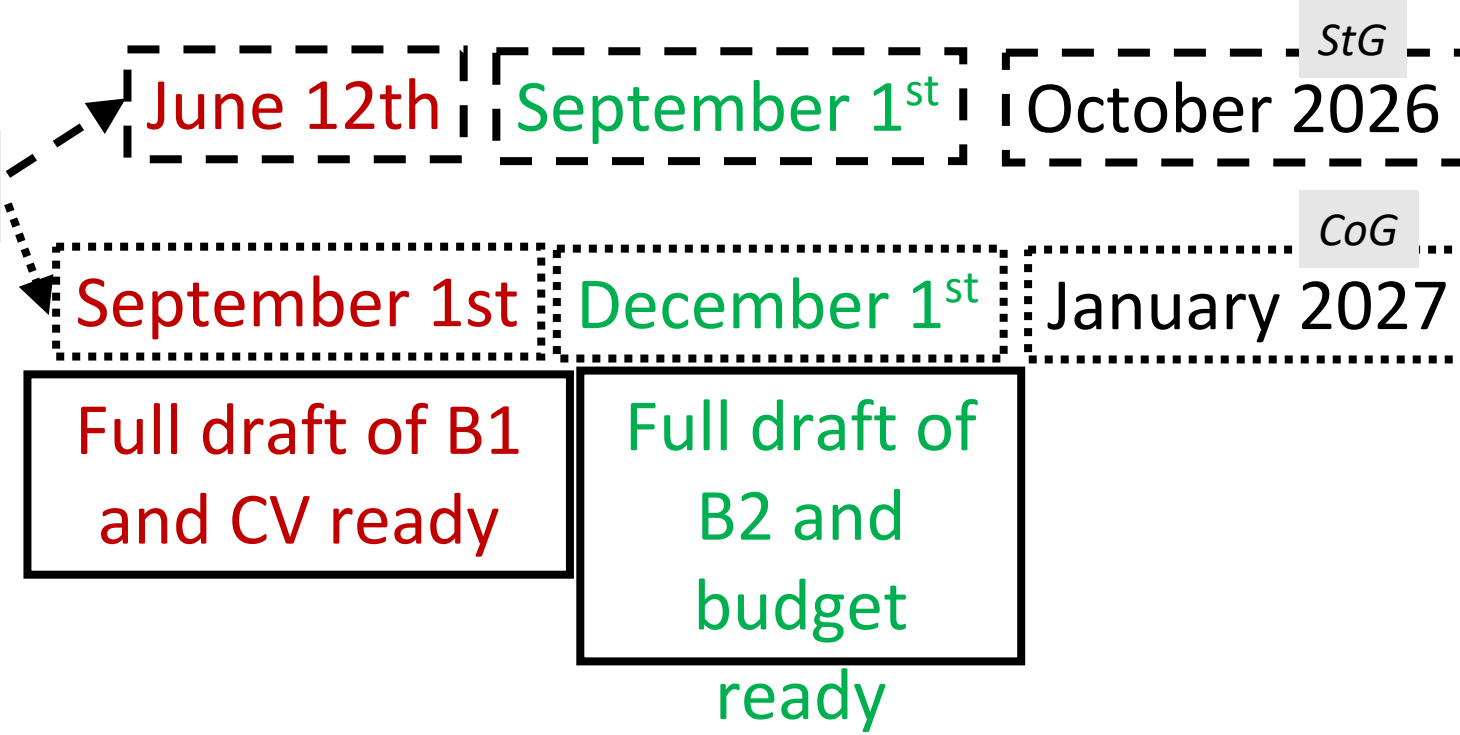
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At least 1-2 days/week to work on the proposal



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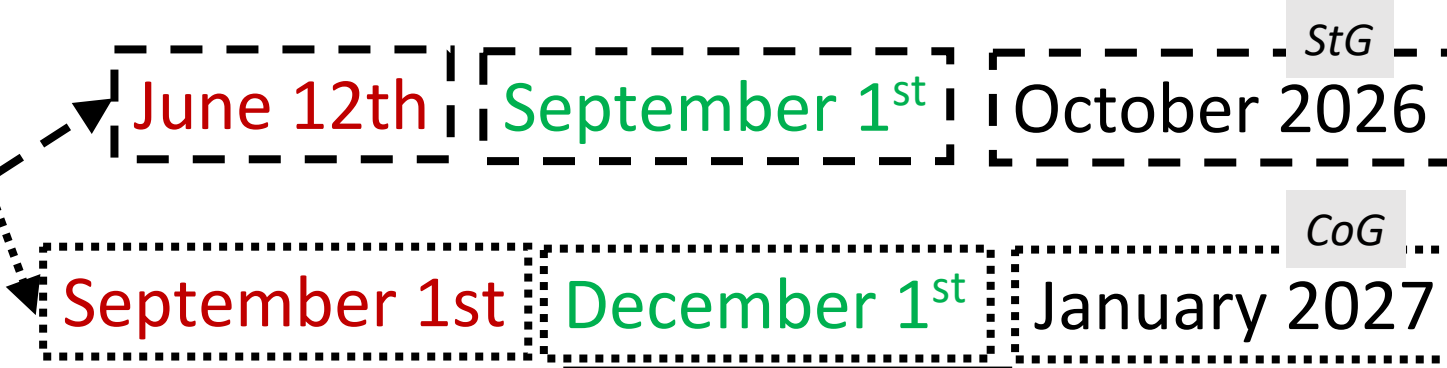
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TIP: Find a dedicated maybe unusual place to work on that



TIP: Have 1-2 weeks of holiday while people read B1+CV



Full draft of B1 and CV ready

Full draft of B2 and budget ready



From here: submission at least **3 days in advance**
work **almost exclusively** on the proposal

ERC Future Program

ERC Mentor Program at the
Research Centre for the Humanities
(former MTA, recently ELTE)

Sándor Horváth
Head of Dep. for Contemporary History
ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities
Institute of History

What is this program?

The **ERC Future program (since 2021)** helps **postdocs** and researchers to

- **improve the quality** of their research
- **develop** plans (competitive proposals) for **research projects**
- **find** international cooperation **partners**
- **maximize the groundbreaking perspectives** of research plans
- **enhance scientific autonomy** of the researchers
- provide **guidance on successful funding applications** (esp. ERC)
- **increase the use of research data** (ways of publications)

Why do we need this program?



Former experience: **Postdocs were not adequately supported** to design their own research with the highest impact and efficiency



Brain drain - low salaries (avg. €700/month net basic salary for junior researchers; **lowest in East Central Europe**) + **insufficient scientific support**



During the design and development process, researchers use **scientific methods to facilitate understanding of the design and development process**



Discuss and develop innovative projects that meet the highest international standards

How does the ERC Future Program intervene?

1) International mentoring program (online/offline) – assigning international mentors

2) Assigning permanent mentors at the research institute for regular in-person scientific consultation

3) Scholarships (supplementary allowance): participants can apply for:

- Articles published in prestigious international journals (€700/article);
- Books to be published by highly ranked international publishers (+€500/month for one year);
- Consultation with project coordinators who are PIs in international research consortia/ reviewers / panel members of the evaluation process of international funding bodies.

4) The core of the program is the bi-weekly training seminar led by the project coordinators.

Pillars of the training seminar

Publication: preparation for the norms expected by international scientific organs – to boost the impact of the publications.

Manuscript discussion: discussing formal/structural elements of manuscripts; effectiveness of scientific reasoning

Project proposal and design development - to effectively articulate research plans (structure, design, topics, etc.) – to enhance the scientific autonomy of researchers and to provide guidance on successful funding applications; mock-interviews

Invited speakers: researchers with significant experience of successful international research projects (in particular ERC proposals) share their knowledge of the proposal structure and the application process

The training is practice-oriented, building primarily on the individual interests, and knowledge of the participants.

Results achieved by the program so far



3 international research projects funded by ERC Consolidator Grant
(SmallSt, Sovereignty, Parish)



7 research proposals for ERC funding (to be evaluated)



8 contracted/published book projects



Several articles published in highly-ranked international journals.

Thank you for your attention!

(ERC) Mentor Program

How we roll at Rényi

Mentor Program

- Started after COVID (still has an effect)
- Every young researcher (PhD student + postdoc) is assigned a mentor
- Mentor is preferably not the advisor
- Responsibility = follow development / issues with a 2 month lag
- We talk to every young researcher every year, not compulsory
- More about academic plans / issues / opportunities
- Was effective, worked less with foreign students / postdocs

Standard Career Plan (Strictly in Math!)

- PhD in Hungary
- Postdoc abroad at the best place possible
- [Stay abroad, then keep in touch, send students there later]
- Come home with a Marie Curie
- Break away from thesis topic
- Apply for NKFIH (OTKA) / Lendület / etc
- Apply for ERC
- In the meantime, find a `home university' and teach there

What we do for ERC candidates

- Ideally starts at least 3 years before ERC submission
- We advise how to build up a good CV (e.g. organize events!)
- Imagine the panel: secret ingredient: nothing
- You need to tell a story in your proposal, with a strong vision
- We look at and criticize B1, but rarely B2
- Better if the helper is quite far mathematically
- Two mock interviews: first one is usually very bad

Thank YOU! 😊

(Don't write this in the interview)

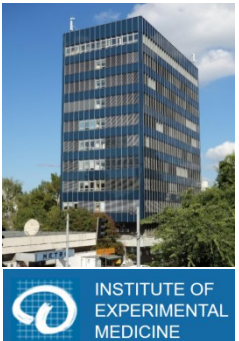
Considerations for LS proposals

Adam Denes

Laboratory of Neuroimmunology
HUN-REN Institute of Experimental Medicine
Budapest, Hungary

19.01.2026

Personal note: Please refrain from contacting me regarding LS5 CoG issues



Evaluation criteria:

1. Research Project: Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?

To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development across disciplines)?

Scientific Approach

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the proposed research?

Importance

Conceptual novelty

Methodological excellence
& advances

Feasibility

2. Principal Investigator: Intellectual capacity and creativity

To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?

To what extent does the PI have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

Independence (StG vs CoG)

Leadership

Vision

Feasibility

Considerations for LS proposals:

- Most panel members are not specialists in the topic, especially for multidisciplinary proposals
- CV: **why you?** Think of unique expertise, ideas, methodological skills, leading technologies
- Proposal: Reliance on advanced tools and approaches – are these (and relevant expertise) available?
- Collaborations are supported, but the PI should be able to execute most research objectives
- Does the ERC grant mean any added value to support technological/research excellence?
- In vivo animal work, clinical studies, human samples: special facilities, rules and ethics (impact and feasibility)
- Costs of personnel vs costs of consumables – finding a healthy balance is not easy
- Extra money asked for (**€1 million** for those already based in an EU Member State or associated country for relocation, field work or equipment) vs panel ranking and feasibility
- Increasing impact of the interview on final ranking – focus on excellence and impact, avoid complex methodological slides

Things to keep an eye on and changes in the Work Programme from 2026:

- **Assessment of the scientific excellence of the PI: Internationally visible papers are still important!**

But: Evaluators are instructed to assess research outputs qualitatively in relation to career stage and field-specific norms, rather than relying on quantitative, journal-based metrics - ERC has endorsed DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment)

- **Proposal structure**

B1: 5 pages (as earlier, but see new B2 rules and feasibility assessment)

B2: 7 pages (methodology, work plan, risk assessment, and justification of resources/budget)

- **Feasibility assessment of B1**

General rule: Reviewers should not comment on the lack of preliminary data in Step 1 to question feasibility

“Part I of the Scientific Proposal should not include details on the feasibility of the scientific approach but present a convincing overall research strategy.” Our experts can still comment on the ‘feasibility’ in the sense of “is the overall research strategy convincing?”. However, if some details are missing but they can reasonably be expected in part 2 of the proposal, one should not negatively evaluate a proposal because of the of feasibility.



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

ERC Mentoring program

2026-2027 submissions

Stipsicz András, Rényi Institute



HUN-REN
Magyar Kutatási Hálózat

About the program

Aim of the program: improve quality of ERC submissions



Focus: Starting and Consolidator grants



Consolidator
Grant



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

Starting Grant

Structure: Information days, then small group discussions and then personal mentoring



- Prepare future potential candidates
- ERC Grant is not only a personal success, but a joint one with the Home Institute
- Grants also provide stability in turbulent times
- Reward effort dedicated to grant writing
- Discuss aspects with specialists and with generalists
- Mock interviews
- Recycle unsuccessful proposals if possible (and needed)
- More information on the web page erc-mentor.renyi.hu



Timeline for 2026

1. **January 19 Kick-off meeting**, announce the program, expect applications with CV, track record and abstract (deadline for application: February 20) Apply through the form on the web page erc-mentor.renyi.hu
2. **March 20 (Friday)**: first meeting, discussing how to build a proposal, what should be included. We would give past winning proposals to everybody to evaluate (maybe more than one)
3. **April 17 (Friday)**: second meeting, with PI's and get further proposals to evaluate on the spot, also provide ERC evaluations – imitate panel discussions
4. **June 12 (Starting), Sept 11 (Consolidator)**: third meeting, here applicants come with their B1 (which should be submitted four weeks earlier). Applicants need to come with a pitch of their ideas
5. **Final meeting**: mock interviews for those who make Step2 (hopefully many)

Thank you!