

UKRO Horizon 2020 Condensed

ERC Post-Award Factsheet

FAQs

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1. What are the reporting requirements for ERC grants?

Principle Investigators (PIs) need to submit **scientific reports** at the mid-term and the end of the project. The host institution also needs to submit **financial reports** every 18 months. For FP7 projects, the ERC have produced a **visual guide to reporting** and the **ERC Guide for Grant Holders**. Whilst for Horizon 2020 projects, the ERC have produced a separate **guide to financial reporting**. There is also a **list of documents on the ERC website relevant to grant holders**.

The ERC oversees projects in order to:

- Monitor project progress and achievements
- Monitor the work being carried out (not the scientific results themselves)
- Check whether progress is consistent with the description of action in Annex 1
- Check for signs of underperformance of the PI

Project monitoring is *not*:

- A scientific re-evaluation of the project
- A peer review of the scientific output
- An assessment of the scientific quality of the project outcomes

2. In what instances is a grant amendment required?

A grant amendment is required in the following instances:

- Addition or removal of a Beneficiary
- Addition or removal of a Third Party
- Modification of banking details
- Modification of Annex I (Description of Action - DoA) - change in methodology and/or scientific objectives
- Addition or removal of tasks to be subcontracted

- Modification of a reporting period
- Modification of the duration of the project
- Reinstatement of work after a suspension
- Change of Host Institution
- Addition, removal or modification of special clauses (FP7)
- Modification of contact person (FP7)

This list is not exhaustive. If you are in any doubt, please contact the UK ERC NCP helpdesk at UKRO or your project officer to discuss further, or check the **Horizon 2020 Amendment Guide**.

PIs have flexibility to manage their own budget for the project. No amendment is required for transfers of budget between activities and beneficiaries as long as the work is carried out as foreseen in Annex I (Description of Action).

3. What is the process for requesting a grant amendment?

Requirements for requesting and submitting amendments vary between FP7 projects and Horizon 2020 projects. In general FP7 projects will require paper submissions whilst much of Horizon 2020 documents may now be submitted either via the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal or via e-mail to the Project Officer. Both process are detailed below, however, point (f) below will be especially pertinent if you are preparing an Horizon 2020 amendment.

- The first step is to contact your project officer. There is also a functional mailbox for grant amendments **ERC-C2-amendments@ec.europa.eu**.
- Following an exchange of emails, the ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA) will provide you with the appropriate templates to complete to formally request an amendment.
- The host institution then submits a formal request and any supporting documents required, using the templates provided by the ERCEA.
- The ERC will assess all valid requests within 45 days. For most requests it will only be around 12 days until a response is given.
- The ERC will either issue an amendment letter (if the request has been successful) or a rejection letter (for unsuccessful requests).
- For all H2020 ERC Grants signed after Feb 2017, the process for both contacting the project officer and for signing/submitting the relevant documentation is now exclusively conducted online using the online Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal. An online guide including information on how to initiate and manage an amendment is now available here: **http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/grant-management/amendments_en.htm**
- Multiple amendments can be requested in the same request, but if any individual amendment is refused, the whole request will be rejected and will have to be resubmitted.

4. When are payments received?

The first payment made to the host institution is the pre-financing. Pre-financing is an advance payment, made only once and within a maximum of 45 days following the date the ERC Grant Agreement enters into force (unless a special clause stipulates otherwise). The pre-financing remains the property of the European Union until the last payment. The purpose of pre-financing is to allow beneficiaries to have a positive cash-flow during (most of) the project.

Interim payments are made after approval of the periodic financial reports and are calculated on the basis of accepted eligible costs. The amounts paid correspond to the accepted eligible costs. However, the total amount of pre-financing and interim payments is limited to 90% of the maximum EU contribution.

The final payment is made after the approval of the final reports (both scientific and financial).

5. Can the PI change their time commitment on an ERC grant?

On ERC grants, PIs are required to make a minimum time commitment to the grant. Up to and including the 2015 calls, PIs must spend at least 50% of their total working time on their ERC Starting and Consolidator grant projects. However, for Consolidator Grants awarded from the 2016 call onwards, PIs must dedicate at least 40% of their total working time to the ERC grant. For Advanced Grants and Synergy Grants this figure is 30% of the PIs' total working time. The ERC monitor the PI's time commitment via the financial reports, and the host institution is expected to keep timesheets to demonstrate this time commitment.

The PI's time commitment calculation is averaged across the duration of the project and does not have to be the same every year – provided that the overall average time commitment is met. Short term interruptions to a PI's commitment to the project may be accepted (e.g. sabbatical, dual affiliation, etc.) but the ERC expect the time commitment to be fairly evenly spread throughout the course of the project. Supervision gaps (0% commitment) of more than 6 months are not acceptable.

All requests to reduce the time commitment on the grant by more than 10% are evaluated by the scientific department to determine the impact on the project. A grant amendment is needed for all decreases higher than 10%.

6. What happens if the PI is offered a position outside of the EU?

In addition to the time commitments specified in point 5 above, PIs are also required to spend at least 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country. If a PI wants to move outside of Europe and continue their ERC grant then they need to consider the following:

- The PI must comply with the time commitment obligations, both in terms of the project and for time spent in EU/AC (see above with regards to time commitment and working patterns)
- The PI must always keep an affiliation with their Host Institution (HI) in an EU Member State or Associated Country – this could mean they will need to have dual affiliation. This must be provable by an acceptable contract (employment, collaboration, etc.)
- The PI must present an acceptable long distance supervision plan (endorsed by the HI and by the Third Country institution)
- The PI's periods of direct supervision on the premises of the HI and the ones abroad must alternate. Periods away from the HI and direct supervision of the team should not be longer than 6 months at a time.
- A grant amendment is needed

As with other grant amendment requests, the PI needs to contact their project officer to discuss any plans to accept a position in a third country and therefore amend their ERC project. If the PI is unable to commit to the minimum time commitment requirements then the grant will be terminated, since the PI on an ERC grant cannot be changed.

7. What happens if the PI wants to move institutions?

ERC grants are portable. If the PI wishes to change Host Institution (to another HI within an EU Member State or Associated Country) then the first step is to inform the ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA) prior to the effective change. The ERCEA will then provide the necessary templates for the amendment, and arrangements between the initial HI, the new HI and the PI will need to be made. Once all requested documents have been submitted, the ERCEA will assess the formal request within 45 days.

After the transfer has taken place, the remaining funds are transferred from the initial HI to the new HI. The initial HI submits a financial report that covers the costs up to the transfer date and the ERCEA assesses the eligibility of the costs reported. The new HI will begin their first reporting period from the date of transfer.

8. Can I request a 'no-cost' extension to my ERC grant?

Yes, a PI can contact their project officer to request an extension to the duration of their ERC project. Extensions are only allowed in exceptional cases and can be granted only once per project (except in the case of parental/maternity leave). Grounds for extension are either well justified scientific grounds and demonstrated high scientific value, or due to events which were not reasonably foreseeable.

Extensions can only be requested after the submission of the scientific mid-term report and before the last 6 months of the grant agreement. Extensions may be for up to a maximum of 12 months (or 6 months for Proof of Concept grants). For Proof of Concept Grants awarded during Horizon 2020 it is very unlikely that an extension will be awarded as the grant agreement is signed for 18 months, with the ERC expecting the work to be completed within 12 months.

9. What happens if a PI or team member goes on parental leave?

The PI and team members can go on parental leave and issues concerning parental leave will be decided case by case by the ERC.

The rules related to the costs of the parental pay apply to all the "persons who are directly carrying out the project", therefore not only to the PI but also to the team members. Costs relating to parental leave that cannot be claimed back from the UK Government are eligible so long as they are part of the Host Institution's usual practices. The percentage of the PI or team members' salary that can be claimed depends on their actual percentage time commitment to the project.

The duration of a project may be extended due to the PI going on parental leave; in order to request an extension the PI will need to get in touch with their ERC Project Officer.

There is further information on the ERC website in their [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section.