

National support schemes for ERC applicants in Estonia

& Lessons learned

Riga, 6 Feb 2025

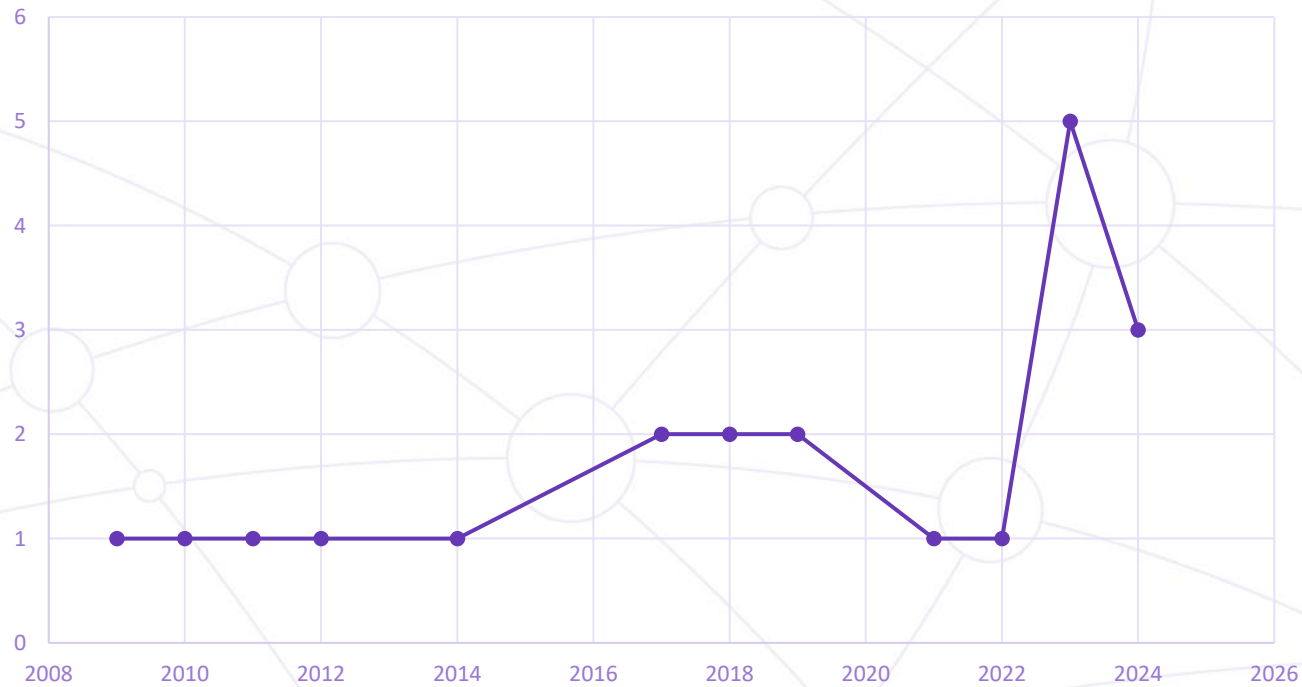
Kristin Kraav

Supporting ERC applicants in Estonia: how it started

- Very few applicants and few grants in FP7
 - A decision was made to specifically boost this FP area in H2020
- In 2015, ERC Scientific Council met in Tallinn
 - J-P Bourguignon: *"So far, a handful of ERC grantees are based in Estonia and we'd like to encourage more top talent here and in neighbouring countries to compete for ERC funding."*
- First support schemes for applicants launched in 2016 (ERDF funding)
 - Training sessions (for applicants & interview trainings)
 - Short study visits
 - Bridging grant for all applicants reaching step 2
 - Joint ERC events with Estonian universities
- Of course, also regular info days, consultations, etc.
 - ERC Library established with Uni. of Tartu

Numbers still very small and success rate low

No. of awarded ERC grants



Grant types



Supporting ERC applicants in Estonia: how it is going

- Current programme for supporting ERC applicants (ERDF and national funding)
 - Bridging grant for unsuccessful applicants with score A
 - ERC mentoring programme
 - Larger events for ERC applicants
- Lessons learned:
 - It is hard to assess impact of activities
 - Supporting is a (very) long-term process

Bridging grant: Supporting ERC (re-)application

- ETAG supports researchers who have reached the second round of the ERC Starting (StG), Consolidator (CoG), Advanced (AdG), or Synergy (SyG) Grant competitions, have received a score A, but have not been selected for funding.
- We offer an opportunity to continue their research in Estonia and enhance their proposal for resubmission in the next ERC grant application round. The new application must be submitted within two years (or three if applying for a different grant).
- Conditions:
 - Alignment with smart specialization fields encouraged;
 - Grade 'A' in the second round;
 - A PI can apply for a maximum of 2 times within the period.

Application process

- Signed letter of intent from the RD institution to the ETAG.
- ETAG opens the application round in the ETIS environment (personal form).
- The application must include project personnel, a brief summary, objectives, outcomes, impact, connection to Smart Specialisation areas, and other relevant information.
- ETAG does not conduct scientific evaluations of the applications, but perform a technical review. During this process, the application, institution, the PI, and other staff members are assessed for compliance with established requirements, as well as the project's contribution to Smart Specialisation areas.

Budget

- The support is provided based on a unit cost, which depends on the volume of the national Starting Grant Level III of the current year. In 2025, this is 117,000 euros per year.
- The support is granted for a maximum of 1.5 years per project.
- The unit price includes salary costs, research expenses, and overhead costs.
- The institution must ensure co-financing, which is 13.42% of the unit price.

Other support funding from ETAG

- **Mentorship Program:**

- The purpose of this activity is to support ERC applicants by providing an opportunity to receive guidance from international experts – (former) ERC panel members and grantees.
- Support can be provided both before submitting an ERC application and when preparing for interviews in the second round.
- Amount: €500 per mentorship.
- Application:
 - An official application signed by the institution to ETAG before involving the mentor.
 - <https://etag.ee/en/funding/mobility-funding/supporting-the-erc-applications/>

- **Project preparation support (*retroactive*)**

- Project preparation assistance is designed to recognize and stimulate the quality of Horizon Europe and COST applications.
- Submitted project applications above quality threshold are entitled to support; amounts differ per grant type
 - *ERC grants: 7000 €*
 - <https://etag.ee/en/cooperation/horizon-europe/project-preparation-assistance/>

Thank you!
Kristin Kraav,
kristin.kraav@etag.ee
ETAG