

Fragmented projects in ERC

ERC grant funds frontier research which distinctly focuses on challenging novel concepts. The [typical expectation in ERC](#) is to present large-sized projects. Such projects justify a fairly high budget for a typical duration of 60 months (or 72 months for Synergy Grants). In this context, we wish to highlight a recurring phenomena regarding ERC projects that are rejected by the reviewers on the basis of being “fragmented projects”. “Fragmented projects in ERC” is an issue that tends to be overlooked. This is especially true when it comes to conceptualizing the narrative and scope of the ERC project. This article shines a spotlight on ERC project proposals which are rejected on the basis of fragmentation. Further, it explains how to avoid such project presentations.

What is a fragmented project? What are the steps to assessing if a project is fragmented?

Typically, a “fragmented project” is a project presented as an accumulation of several sub-projects without a clear “backbone” that *glues* all sub-projects together. Since “an accumulation of several sub-projects” can describe many large-sized projects, it is important to clearly define what makes for a fragmented project. How can this be assessed?

The key is in the ‘*glue*’.

In order to properly assess a fragmented project:

First, look at the overall structure of the project and all of its building blocks. These include sub-projects, components, segments, work packages, major tasks, and more. Assess the ‘*glue*’ that holds all of these together. How are they interlinked?

The fundamental focus lies in the end result acquired when removing any one of the building blocks. Meaning – will the structure hold if one of the building blocks is removed? Will it be possible to execute the project if one of the building blocks is dropped?

If the answer to these questions is ‘**Yes**’- then a “fragmented project” is at hand. This means that despite the attempt to present one large-sized project, these building blocks (all/some of them) are not glued together strongly enough. On the contrary, they are isolated and can

therefore be executed separately. This kind of project presentation is typically less favored in ERC grants. Most importantly, it may lead to rejection on the grounds of being a fragmented project.

If the answer to the questions is '**No**' – congratulations! There is direct relation and strong interdependence between the project's building blocks. The full execution of the project depends on all the building blocks together.

How to avoid presenting fragmented projects in ERC?

In order to present an ERC project that is not a fragmented project, first try to address the overall conceptual approach of the project. Ensure that all of its parts are '*glued*' strongly together. This means that they are chained together and each link has a significant role in achieving the project's objectives and the leading research question. The link between them should be demonstrated at the methodology level and in the work plan. We recommend to add an explicit explanation that describes the project's concept and approach in a way that demonstrates the inter-linkage and interdependence between the project's building blocks. Explain how each part contributes to achieving the overall goal.

In conclusion, it is important to successfully avoid fragmented projects in ERC. This can increase chances for competitiveness and success. Since ERC looks to fund such highly novel ideas, fragmented projects can find themselves left behind and marked down by the reviewers. Follow the above steps and if any further assistance is needed, simply contact us!