



# ERC PoC

## Reflections from an evaluator

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# What I (we) look for

Core: The ERC PoC funds the transition from excellent ERC research to real-world use.

1. Show innovation potential beyond academia (not just further research)
2. “Innovation” in SSH can mean:
  - Policy tools or frameworks
  - Cultural, social, or institutional change
  - New methods adopted by practitioners or communities
3. Key question from an evaluator: Who could realistically use this, and why would they care?

# Excellence, Innovation & Feasibility

## Excellence with three faces:

- **Innovative idea**  
What is genuinely new compared to current practice or thinking?
- **Credible pathway to use**  
Concrete steps toward uptake: piloting, validation, stakeholder testing, market/policy exploration
- **Feasible PoC plan**
  - Clear objectives and work packages
  - Realistic timeline (up to 18 months)
  - Awareness of risks and mitigation

Evaluators want confidence that this *can be tested and advanced*, not perfected.

# Strong SSH Proposals: What Makes Them Convincing

- Clear **societal, cultural, or policy relevance**
- Early and meaningful **engagement with users or stakeholders**
- PI shows **ownership and leadership** of the innovation process
- Ethics and responsibility treated as **integral**, not an afterthought

A strong PoC proposal tells a believable story of how excellent SSH research leaves the academic sphere and starts to make a difference.



# Practical Takeaways

- ✓ Clearly articulate what makes your idea innovative and distinct
- ✓ Describe a credible pathway from concept to real use or influence
- ✓ Ground your proposal in your ERC research, but go further
- ✓ Show stakeholder engagement and potential relevance in SSH contexts
- ✓ Present a feasible timeline and risk-aware strategy
- ✓ Demonstrate your capacity to lead the transition process



# Why This Matters for SSH Applicants

In SSH, the *innovation might not always be technological.*

It can be:

- new frameworks for understanding social processes,
- tools for policy reform,
- cultural productions with societal reach,
- methods that transform practice in communities.

*Innovation is broad, but the pathway to impact must be clear and believable.*

Ultimately, the focus remains:

**excellence and real potential for use/impact beyond academia.**