

4.4 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR THE PHD REFERENCE DATE AND EXTENSION REQUESTS

The date of the first PhD considered for the calculation of the eligibility period is the date of the successful defence of the PhD degree.

The eligibility periods set out in the table above can be extended beyond 7 and 12 years for the Starting and Consolidator Grants respectively for the following properly documented circumstances⁵⁷, provided they started before the call deadline:

- **Maternity:** 18 months extension for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree. If the applicant can document a longer total maternity leave, the eligibility period will be extended by the documented amount of actual leave(s) for all children taken before the call deadline.

- **Paternity:** extension by the documented time of paternity leave taken before the call deadline for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.

- **Long-term illness⁵⁸ or national service:** extension by the documented amount of leave taken by the Principal Investigator before the call deadline for each incident which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.

- **Clinical training:** extension by the documented amount of clinical training received by the Principal Investigator **after** the reference date of the first eligible degree and before the call deadline, **up to a maximum of 4 years.**

- **Natural Disaster⁵⁹:** extension by the documented time of a Principal Investigator's inability to work⁶⁰ before the call deadline due to a natural disaster, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.

- **Seeking Asylum:** extension by the documented time of the Principal Investigator's inability to work before the call deadline due to seeking asylum⁶¹, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.

In case the PhD certificate does not show the date of defence of the PhD, the PI should provide an official confirmation from the awarding institution of the successful defence date of their PhD.

In case the defence did not take place, the PI should provide an official confirmation from the awarding institution that no defence/viva was required (was not part of the PhD programme) and a date when the PhD was approved (typically this should be an approval date before the PhD was awarded, similar to a defence date).

The official transcript of the PhD course noting any of the dates above is also acceptable.

⁵⁷ For applicants whose first eligible degree is their medical degree such incidents can be considered from the date of completion of their medical degree.

⁵⁸ Over 90 days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

⁵⁹ Large-scale geological or meteorological events that have the potential to cause the loss of life or property.

⁶⁰ For a minimum of 30 days.

⁶¹ The possible period of extension runs from the start date of asylum/refugee application to the date of decision on the applicant Principal Investigator's refugee status and/or receipt of specific residence permit.

All applicants are entitled to an extension of their eligibility window if properly documented and related to the specific circumstances defined in the annual ERC work programme⁶². Please note that any such circumstance must have started before the call deadline. The reference date for calculating the eligibility window is the reference date of the first eligible degree according to the national rules of the awarding country⁶³. The extension time is calculated based on the supporting documentation submitted with the application. There is no limit to the total extension timeframe. Please note however, that a maximum of 4 years have been introduced for extensions due to clinical training. The individual extensions for different periods are additive and the total extension time can thus be based on several reasons.

Maternity leave

For maternity⁶⁴, a flat rate of 18 months extension is granted for each child born **before or after** the PhD defence. In case of one child, if a maternity leave or the combined maternity and parental leave was longer than 18 months, an extension will be granted for the documented leave actually taken. In case of more than one child, if the maternity leaves or the combined maternity and parental leaves were longer than the total flat rate, an extension will be granted for the documented leave(s) actually taken. The same principle also applies for child adoption.

Supporting documents: any official document that links the mother and the child(ren), i.e. birth certificate(s) or passport(s) of the child(ren) or family book. For extension requests above the flat rate, an official signed document⁶⁵ from the employer certifying start and end dates of the individual leave(s) must be submitted. Any document should mention the reason for the leave. If the leave was conducted as a part-time leave, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the time off work happened over several periods.

A couple of examples are provided below to further clarify the guidance for maternity leave-based extension requests:

Example 1:

A PI has two children. She took a maternity leave of 4 months for the first child and 6 months for the second child. She also took part-time parental leave at 50% during two years. In this case, the total documented leave would be 4 months + 6 months + 12 months (2 years * 50 %) = 22 months. The flat rate, which is 18 months per child born before or after the PhD award, would be 2 * 18 months = 36 months. As the flat rate gives a longer extension than the accumulated documented leaves taken, the PI would be given the 36 months of flat rate as an extension to the eligibility reference date.

Example 2:

A PI has two children. She took a maternity leave of 6 months for the first child and 10 months for the second child. She also took full-time parental leave during two years. In this case, the total documented leave would be 6 months + 10 months + 24 months = 40 months. The flat rate, which is 18 months per child born before or after the PhD award, would be 2 * 18 months = 36 months. As the total documented leaves taken corresponds to a longer extension than the flat rate, the PI would be given the 40 months of documented leaves taken as an extension to the eligibility reference date.

Paternity leave

For paternity leaves, an extension will be granted corresponding to the documented time of paternity and/or parental leave actually taken for each child born **before or after** the PhD defence

⁶² E.g., no extension to the eligibility window can be accepted for periods of unemployment.

⁶³ Please see footnote 14.

⁶⁴ Different family and couple scenarios can be considered provided they are properly documented.

⁶⁵ The certificate should be issued by a person within the employing organisation empowered to certify the actual leave taken (i.e. an authorised officer from the HR Department).

(counting up until the call deadline). Both full time and part time leaves can be accepted if properly documented⁶⁶. The same principle also applies for child adoption.

Supporting documents: an official signed document⁶⁷ from the employer certifying start and end dates of the individual leave(s). Any document should mention the reason for the leave. If the leave was conducted as a part-time leave, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the time off work happened over several periods.

Long-term illness

For long-term illness (more than ninety days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member such as a child, spouse, parent or sibling), an extension can be granted corresponding to the documented time of leave actually taken after the PhD defence (counting up until the call deadline). Full time and part time leaves as well as reduced working capacity can be accepted if properly documented.

Supporting documents:

- For the PI: an official, signed document from the employer certifying start and end dates of the individual leave(s) or a medical record that indicates work incapability with the start and end dates of the illness period(s). Any document should mention the reason for the leave. If the leave was conducted as a part-time leave, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the time off work happened over several periods, as long as the leaves were related to the same illness or condition. Furthermore, the request should be supported by an official document explaining the long-term nature of the illness or condition (e.g. from a hospital, a doctor or an insurance company).
- For taking care of close family members: an official signed document from the employer certifying start and end dates of the individual leave(s). Any document should mention the reason for the leave. If the leave was conducted as a part-time leave, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the time off work happened over several periods, as long as the leaves were related to the same illness or condition. Furthermore, the request should be supported by an official document explaining the long-term nature of the illness or condition of the close family member (e.g. from a hospital, a doctor or an insurance company). The supporting documents should also prove the family relationship in case the extension request relates to caring for a seriously ill close family member.

National (military) service

For national military service, an extension can be granted corresponding to the documented amount of leave actually taken after the PhD defence (counting up until the call deadline).

Supporting documents: document signed by official authority with start and end date of the service.

Clinical training

For clinical training, an extension can be granted corresponding to the documented time of clinical training received by the PI after the award of the first eligible degree up to a maximum of 4 years (counting up until the call deadline). For applicants whose first eligible degree is a medical degree, clinical training can be accepted from the date of the completion of their medical degree. No extension will be accepted for serving as a house doctor or hospital doctor unless it is part of a clinical training programme. In case of part-time clinical training, the exact total training time will be accepted on a pro-rata basis to extend the eligibility window of the applicant.

Supporting documents: an official document signed by the employer (usually a hospital) certifying start and end dates of the individual training period(s). Any document should mention the type of

⁶⁶ An official document proving the PI's right to social paternity benefits can also be accepted.

⁶⁷ The certificate should be issued by a person within the employing organisation empowered to certify the actual leave taken (i.e. an authorised officer from the HR Department).

training. If the training was conducted part-time, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the training happened over several periods and for different clinical specialties.

Natural Disaster

An extension can be granted corresponding to the documented time of a Principal Investigator's inability to work for a minimum number of 30 days before the call deadline due to a natural disaster⁶⁸, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree. Please note that events other than natural disasters will not be considered (e.g. fire/flood in the building due to a human mistake or technical problem).

Supporting documents: An official, signed document from the employer certifying start and end date(s) of the inability/reduced capacity to work due to a natural disaster.

Seeking Asylum:

An extension can be granted corresponding to the documented time of the Principal Investigator's inability to work before the call deadline due to seeking asylum, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree. The possible period of extension runs from the start date of asylum/refugee application to the date of decision on the applicant Principal Investigator's refugee status and/or receipt of specific residence permit.

Supporting documents: an official, signed document from the competent authorities confirming the PI's inability to work due to seeking asylum indicating a start date of asylum/refugee application and a date of the decision on the applicant Principal Investigator's refugee status and/or receipt of specific residence permit. This information can be provided within several documents. An official document proving the Acknowledgement of receipt of the request/application for the asylum /refugee status could be also accepted.

⁶⁸ Large-scale geological or meteorological events that have the potential to cause the loss of life or property.