



European Research Council
Scientific Council

Established by the European Commission

ERC Scientific Council Gender equality plan 2021-2027

ERC gender policy and objectives

The promotion of gender equality in research and innovation is a commitment, enshrined in the core documents establishing Horizon Europe ¹ with the following gender-relevant operational objective identified:

- To strengthen the gender dimension across the Specific Programme;

Also, at the level of implementation and programming it is noted that *"... the implementation of the Specific Programme shall be facilitated by a multiannual Strategic Plan of R&I activities, also promoting consistency between the work programmes, EU priorities and national priorities... The Commission shall adopt the Strategic Plan by means of an implementing act... This Implementing Act shall contain the following elements, relating to the period covered: ... specific issues, such as ... gender equality, including the integration of gender dimension in the R&I content²."*

In this context, the ERC aims at taking into account and confronting structural gender differences, so that it can fulfil its mission to support excellent frontier researchers across Europe, irrespective of nationality, gender or age.

Following the ERC gender equality plan established for Horizon 2020, the *ERC Scientific Council's Gender Issues Working Group*³ will pursue the following objectives for the duration of the Horizon Europe programme:

- i) To continue raising awareness about the ERC gender policy among potential applicants;
- ii) To improve the gender balance among researchers submitting ERC proposals in all research fields;
- iii) To raise awareness about the benefits of gender balance among researchers within the ERC teams;
- iv) To continue identifying and removing any potential gender bias in the ERC evaluation procedure;
- v) To continue monitoring possible differences in gender specific careers and academic posts, following the ERC grants;
- vi) To embed gender awareness within all levels of the ERC processes- from creating awareness about the ERC to grant signing- while keeping the focus on excellence.
- vii) To strive for gender balance among the ERC peer reviewers and other relevant decision-making bodies, aiming at a minimum participation of the underrepresented gender while taking into account the situation in the field of the action. Also, the proportional representation of genders should be at least

¹ COUNCIL DECISION (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU, Article 2, Page 3

² COUNCIL DECISION (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU, Article 6, Page 6

³ The Gender Issues Working Group is a permanent structure under the ERC Scientific Council. It was created in July 2008 to monitor gender equality throughout the entire ERC process.

equal to that of the applications by the underrepresented sex in the Advanced grants in the same area, aiming at the level of 40% in the future;

Implementation of ERC Scientific Council gender equality plan

The subsequent sections list actions to advance the ERC towards its gender objectives.

Awareness and submission rates

Submission patterns of women and men will be continuously monitored. Measures will be taken to increase the awareness about the ERC among top-researchers of underrepresented gender and encourage them to apply for ERC grants. The ERC will also create a broad awareness about its gender equality work and strategy.

Steps to achieve objectives:

- Publish the ERC gender equality plan on the web: <https://erc.europa.eu/thematic-working-groups/working-group-gender-issues>
- Continue monitoring submission rates of women and men by country, research domain and panel;
- Continue taking active part in gender equality networks and workshops;
- Continue making targeted visits to scientific meetings and workshops addressing gender topics, to inform about open ERC calls. Also promoting the importance of taking into consideration gender differences from the earliest stages of the research project;
- Continue including gender statistics and ERC's work to achieve gender balance in all general presentations on the ERC;
- Continue including successful grantees of both genders as role models in communication activities, such as brochures, posters, videos, etc.;
- Continue raising awareness about consideration of sex and gender dimension in the design of research projects;
- Identifying ambassadors in various countries and research domains to encourage more applications to ERC grants from underrepresented groups of researchers.

Evaluation processes and granting

A gender fair evaluation process is essential to the ERC, ensuring that the best researchers get funded irrespective of their gender. Any potential sources of gender bias in the evaluation process will be challenged together with and at the level of the review panels. A substantial part of the ERC grants are used to support post-doctoral fellows and PhD-students, thus contributing to the training of future generations of researchers. This wider impact of the ERC grants should also be enclosed in the gender statistics.

Steps to achieve objectives:

- Continue ensuring eligibility and evaluation criteria are designed to encompass the situation of both women and men in research;
- Continue monitoring success rates and granted amounts for women and men and publish gender statistics from ERC evaluations in long term time series and by ERC domain. In particular, *submission rates* and *requested amounts* should be compared to *granting rates* and *granted amounts* for women and men respectively;
- Sensitise ERCEA staff, ERC panel members and external reviewers to *gender issues*;

- Raise gender awareness during briefings of the ERC panel chairs and at the beginning of the evaluation panel meetings;
- Raise awareness about implicit bias in the evaluation process;
- Include reference to the ERC Scientific Council gender equality plan in the ERC Guide for peer reviewers;
- Continue collecting and analysing gender data on PhD students, post docs and any other researchers funded through ERC grants;
- Address gender-related topics during visits to Principal Investigators in the course of their project;
- Address gender-related topics during visits to Host Institutions (e.g. child care, moving with a family etc). Highlight good practice and 'role model' host institutions;
- Analyse long term effects of the ERC presence and practice on gender structures in research careers and academic posts;
- Encourage the collection of gender data in different countries and institutions so as to better define the existing pool of researchers and its evolution in time.

Gender balance among ERC peer reviewers

The ERC peer reviewers are panel members (including panel chairs) and external referees (who can be remote or members of other panels). The medium term goal is to achieve gender balance in each ERC evaluation panel as well as among the panel chairs. This may take time, and will also depend on the overall gender balance in particular research fields. In a first step, the ERC will aim at a better gender proportionality in each ERC evaluation panel as compared to that panel's relevant scientific communities.

Steps to achieve objectives:

- Set up panel specific goals for gender balance, based on information from relevant scientific communities and/or the ERC pool of applicants⁴;
- Monitor the gender balance of each ERC panel. If the panel specific goal has not been reached this should be reported, together with an analysis on how the situation can be improved. Publish the corresponding data per year and per call.

⁴ The pool of ERC applicants may not necessarily reflect the actual proportionalities of women and men in each and every scientific community; however it yields panel specific reference points.