

1. Quanto pesa la partnership internazionale tra più enti di ricerca? Se sì qual è il numero di partners internazionali "ideale"? **How important is the international partnership involving more than a single research institution? If it is important, what's the "ideal" number of international partners?**

Contrary to other funding programmes within the Horizon Europe Framework Programme, the majority of ERC grants are individual grants. Applications for a Starting Grant, Consolidator grant, or Advanced grant are submitted by a single Principal Investigator (PI), together with, and on behalf of, their Host Institution, which can be any public or private research organization established in one of the EU Member States or Associated Countries. Typically, ERC grantees carry out their research programme with a team of researchers (team members), who can be located at the same or another host institution. PIs have full flexibility in terms of the size and composition of their team; they select team members in view of the scientific needs of the research programme. ERC Synergy grants support projects carried out by a group of two to four individual scientists, who can be located at the same or at different host institutions. One of the PIs can be hosted by an institution outside of the EU or Associated Countries. The number of PIs and choice of host institutions for a given proposal is fully up to the applicants; from ERC side there are no preferences or constraints. Successful ERC Synergy proposals are highly diverse in terms of the team structure chosen.

2. E' interesse dei giovani avere papers in OA, per aumentare il loro citation index e quindi H-Index. Perché dunque le resistenze sul Plan S? Non sa di vecchio? **It's in the young people's best interest to have papers in OA journals, to increase their citations and thus their h-index. Why then the resistance to Plan S? Isn't it "old-fashioned"?**

The ERC supports the principle of open access to the published output of research as a fundamental part of its mission. The ERC Scientific Council is committed to implementing full and immediate Open Access and supports the principles underlying Plan S.

However, the ERC considers that the timeline foreseen for the implementation of Plan S is unrealistic and is likely to lead to significant negative consequences, not only for its own grantees but also many other researchers. In particular, the ERC Scientific Council fears that if fees for publications in hybrid venues were to become ineligible for reimbursed from research grants as of 1 January 2021 (as foreseen by Plan S), this would be detrimental in particular for early career researchers, and for researchers working in countries with fewer alternative funding opportunities or working in fields in which Open Access policies are more difficult to implement.

Currently, many of the most prestigious journals are published under the hybrid model. They usually allow self-archiving of the author's accepted manuscript only after an embargo period and under a restrictive licence, so that this path is generally not a viable alternative to paying a fee for full and immediate open access. It will still take several years (possibly until the end of Horizon Europe) before a significant number of high quality fully open access journals will be available across all disciplines, which would allow researchers to move away completely from hybrid venues.

3. ERC sta valutando di introdurre nuovi bandi per i giovani che non sono più ammissibili per ERC Consolidator e non sono ancora pronti per competere su ADV? **Is the ERC evaluating the possibility of introducing new grants for those young people that can no longer participate in CoG but also are not yet ready to compete for an AdG?**

The ERC Scientific Council constantly monitors data on submitted proposals and awarded grants to determine whether there is a need to fine-tune the boundaries of eligibility windows or to introduce a new scheme. So far, data show that there is no gap, and indeed rather a continuum, between the Consolidator and Advanced grants in terms of submissions and awards. The success rate is flat across funding schemes and age/career stage of applicants.

4. Quale sarà l'orientamento rispetto alle proposte di carattere multidisciplinare afferenti a più panel? **What will the attitude be, regarding the multidisciplinary proposals relative to more than one panel?**

Once all proposals have been submitted to a given panel, the panel chair decides on the assignment of reviewers to each proposal, based on the scientific expertise required for their evaluation. Most ERC evaluation panels cover several disciplines by themselves, and proposals touching upon those disciplines will be evaluated within the panel. In case a proposal falls between two or more panels, the respective chairs will be consulted and members of those panels will be assigned to the proposal, at both step 1 and step 2 of the evaluation; they may also be asked to suggest specialist reviewers for step 2 of the evaluation. Applicants can indicate a secondary panel in addition to the primary one to which they submit their proposal; in this case they are asked to justify their choice in part B1 of the application. Panel chairs look at these justifications before deciding on the assignment. They may decide that a reviewer from another panel is needed even if the applicant has not indicated a secondary panel or keywords referring to a secondary panel. The assignment of reviewers to proposals is always done with a view to ensuring the best possible evaluation of all proposals, within or across panels.

5. Storia del ricercatore e qualità della proposta: quale sarà il peso relativo di questi 2 indicatori nel nuovo programma quadro in ambito ERC? **Within the new framework programme, what will be the relative importance of the PI's CV and the quality of the proposal in the ERC context?**

Generally, the ERC evaluation policy is characterised by continuity also across Framework Programmes; changes may occur but they are not necessarily linked to the change of Framework Programme. As regards the relative weight of the PI's CV and the research programme, no change is currently foreseen. Both weigh 50%, but the research proposal is the first element to be evaluated, following a decision taken a few years ago by the Scientific Council to reverse the original order of the CV followed by the research project, with the aim to signal in an implicit way more prominence of the project as compared to the CV, while purposefully not changing the relative weight of the two elements. This subtle change was one of several measures done in the context of the ERC gender equality plan.

6. Si potrebbe pensare di realizzare una guida volta ad indicare il panel più indicato in funzione delle parole chiave/topic della proposta? Sarà dunque possibile sottoporre lo stesso progetto di ricerca a più panel? **Would it be possible to put forward a guide indicating the most relevant panel based on proposal keywords/topics? Would it then be possible to submit the same proposal to more than one panel?**

All ERC evaluation panels and all topics are equally relevant. Panel budgets are calculated based on the amount of budget requested in the proposals submitted to a panel in a given call. Funding decisions are taken solely on the basis of scientific quality of the proposals submitted, without considering the relevance of topics or any other thematic priorities. The ERC panel structure is not intended as a comprehensive classification or as a reflection of priority areas, but merely as a guide for applicants, describing the remit of the individual panels. No keyword weighs more than another,

and this includes keywords or topics that are not even explicitly listed in the panel structure. Applicants are free to submit their proposal to a panel of their choice. Resubmitted proposals are treated as 'new proposals'; they can be submitted to the same or to another panel. Exceptionally, a proposal may be transferred to another panel than the one indicated by the applicant, if the panel chair determines that another panel would be better suited to evaluate the proposal. A transfer is carried out only in exceptional cases and only if the chairs of both panels agree. A proposal can be submitted only to one panel in a given call.

7. Negli ultimi anni il peso della valutazione etica (e dei conseguenti requisiti etici) è aumentato notevolmente. Qualisono le prospettive in HE? **The weight of a proposal's ethical implications has considerably increased in the last years, and so have ethical requirements. What's the perspective in HE?**

Horizon Europe establishes that the actions carried out under the Programme shall comply with ethical principles and relevant national, Union and international legislation, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols (Article 15 of the HE Framework Programme). This article also establishes the elements that entities participating in the action shall provide. It should be stressed that ethics is not an evaluation criterion but a compliance check. As in Horizon 2020, within this new framework, ERC will continue monitoring ethics compliance based on a trust-based approach as well as providing the best possible support to grantees.

8. Al di là della nuova struttura di panel, si sta pensando a novità sulle modalità di valutazione? **Is there any discussion going on regarding a renewal or improvement of the evaluation criteria/procedure, beyond the panel's new structuring?**

The ERC Scientific Council does not foresee any change to the single evaluation criterion, which is scientific quality ('excellence'), assessed at the level of the research project and of the applicant's CV. As regards the evaluation procedure, two changes have been decided to be introduced in the 2021 calls: the introduction of interviews with the applicants in the Advanced grant evaluation, and the replacement of numerical scores by a qualitative three-option score for reviews submitted by specialist reviewers at step 2 of the evaluation. As regards future developments, the Scientific Council considers the possibility of extending the principle of dynamically formed evaluation panels, as they are used in the Synergy Grant evaluation, to the other funding schemes. However, such a move can be envisaged only once complex simulations have been carried out successfully and a thorough feasibility assessment has been concluded. The related work is currently in progress at the ERC Executive Agency, with an open outcome.

9. **What is the feeling/orientation of ERC towards all those "small" research fields that, though fundamental, are not really "attractive"/"fancy"?**

The ERC was established in the spirit of the 'whole science' approach, encompassing all fields of research, whether small or large, 'fancy' or not, basic or applied, with the sole ambition to foster top quality research at the frontiers of knowledge. ERC evaluation panels are designed to have a broad remit, often covering several disciplines and thereby encouraging views that transcend disciplinary approaches. Panel members are chosen to represent such broad perspectives in their own research; and are asked to evaluate proposals as generalists (to be complemented by specialist

reviews at step 2 of the evaluation). All this is done with the aim to ensure that only the quality of a proposal counts, whatever the field, taking into account that major scientific advances can happen in any field at any time.

- 10.** Sistema dinamico panel: vuol dire che l'applicant non dovrà più assegnarsi un panel e che ci penserà poi l'IA? o riguarda i valutatori da assegnare ai panel? **With the dynamical-panel system, will the applicant be no longer required to select a panel because the AI will do it, or is it more about assigning evaluators to the panels?**

ERC is exploring the possibility of a dynamic approach to the conformation of panels in the scientific evaluation of research proposals. In this approach applicant will not select a panel. Once all proposals of a given call are submitted, the system will arrange groups of proposals and groups of panel members for those proposals. The system will also provide a recommendation for proposals assignment to panel members.

11. What is the ERC doing for gender balance?

The ERC Scientific Council continuously monitors gender balance in ERC calls. In 2008, the ERC Scientific Council set up a dedicated working group. Since then the Working Group on Gender Issues drafted the [ERC Gender Equality Plan 2007-2013](#) and the [ERC Gender Equality Plan 2014-2020](#), endorsed by the ERC Scientific Council. As part of the Gender Equality Plan, the Scientific Council is continuously raising awareness about the ERC gender policy among potential applicants and monitoring the statistics evolution, working towards improving gender balance among ERC candidates and within ERC-funded research teams, and identifying and removing any potential gender bias in the ERC evaluation procedures. The Scientific Council is also embedding gender awareness within all levels of the ERC processes, while keeping focus on excellence and striving for gender balance among the ERC peer reviewers and other relevant ERC bodies. In addition, the Gender Issues Working Group has to date commissioned two studies one on Gender aspects in career structures and career paths and another one on ERC proposal submission, peer review and gender mainstreaming. Also, the Working Group organised a Workshop in 2013 under the title "On the way to the top: providing equal opportunities for men and women in science and technology". What is more, the Working Group is involved in organizing an ERC Conference on 16 November 2020 on "Sex and Gender dimension in frontier research".

The ERC, under the guidance of the Gender Issues Working Group has introduced several concrete measures and practices over the years to improve gender balance. Those include the following:

- *A measure about parental leave whereby female applicants' eligibility window is extended by 18 months per child;*
- *The limit to eligibility extension has been removed (used to be 4.5 years so a 4th child would not be accepted);*
- *Female ERC grantees are often asked to explain their ERC experience and to showcase their ERC-funded research, to promote female participation in the ERC and encourage more women to apply for ERC calls by creating female role-models;*
- *Scientific leadership potential (self-evaluation) section has been removed from the application forms and the order of the evaluation criteria has been revised to first assessing the project and then the PI's track record;*

- *Model CV template has been included in the application forms to ensure equal treatment;*
- *Track record focus is on 5 out of 10 publications;*
- *Activities promoting equal opportunities or gender balance are eligible costs, clearly stated in the ERC Work Programme;*
- *ERC organizes awareness raising for its evaluators on unconscious bias through a video and gender statistics; and*
- *ERC organizes unconscious bias training for its Scientific Officers and Scientific Council members.*