

European Research Council
Scientific Council



ERC Scientific Council Gender equality plan 2007 – 2013

Implementation of ERC Scientific Council gender equality plan

The *ERC Gender Balance 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. The gender equality plan 2007 – 2013 has been formulated by the working group and was adopted by the Scientific Council on 16 December 2010.

The ERC Scientific Council and the Director of the ERC Executive Agency are together responsible for the implementation of actions foreseen by the gender equality plan. Gender statistics and measures taken will be reported in the Scientific Council annual report.

ERC gender policy and objectives

This gender equality plan is based on the ERC's view that women and men are equally able to perform excellent frontier research. The aim is to take into account and confront structural gender differences, so that the ERC can fulfil its mission to support excellent frontier researchers across Europe, irrespective of nationality, gender or age.

The gender equality plan takes its starting point in the principles of 'gender mainstreaming' and 'gender balance' with the focus kept on excellence.¹ By gender mainstreaming is meant that *each* process within the ERC – from creating awareness about the ERC to grant signing – is designed to include *both genders*, giving *equal opportunities* to men and women.

The ERC's gender objectives are:

- i) to raise awareness about the ERC gender policy among potential applicants and to improve the gender balance among researchers submitting ERC proposals in all research fields,
- ii) to identify and challenge any potential gender bias in the ERC evaluation procedure and to monitor possible changes in gender structures (careers and academic posts) following the ERC grants,
- iii) to achieve in the medium term gender balance among the ERC peer reviewers and other relevant decision making bodies², with a minimum participation of 40% of the underrepresented gender.

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.
- Monitor submission rates of women and men by country and research domain.
- Take active part in gender equality networks and workshops.
- Make targeted visits to scientific meetings and workshops addressing gender topics, to inform about open ERC calls.
- Include gender statistics and ERC's work to achieve gender balance in all general presentations on the ERC.
- Include successful grantees of both genders as role models in communication activities, such as brochures, posters, videos etc.

Evaluation processes and granting

A gender fair evaluation process is essential to the ERC, ensuring that the best researchers get funded irrespective of if they are women or men. 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 will support post-doc and PhD-students, thus 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:

- Ensure eligibility and evaluation criteria are designed to encompass the situation of both women and men in research.
- Monitor 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.
- Collect gender data on PhD students, post docs and any other researchers funded through ERC grants.
- Offer training in *gender mainstreaming* to the ERC Scientific Officers.
- Establish discussions on gender awareness with the ERC evaluation panels, in particular on how to evaluate career breaks and/or unconventional research career paths.
- Include reference to the ERC Scientific Council gender equality plan in the ERC Guide for peer reviewers as well as in the briefings before panel meetings.
- Initiate dialogue with host institutions of the ERC grantees to encourage coverage of family related costs (e.g. child care, moving with a family etc). Highlight good practice and 'role model' host institutions.
- Analyse long term effects of ERC grants on gender structures in research careers and academic posts.

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:

- Ensure that expert gender and frequency of reviewed proposals are easily traceable parameters in the ERC expert database.
- Set up panel specific goals for gender balance, based on information from relevant scientific communities and/or the ERC pool of applicants.³
- 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.

¹ Gender mainstreaming and gender balance in expert groups are part of the ERC legal framework:

- FP7 EC rules for participation (2006/1906/EC), 18/12/2006, articles 17 and 19 (<http://cordis.europa.eu/documents/documentlibrary/90798691EN6.pdf>)
- FP7 Specific programme "Ideas" (2006/972/EC), Council Decision of 19 December 2006, paragraph (21) (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:400:0243:0271:EN:PDF>)
- ERC Rules for the submission of proposals and related evaluation (2010/767/EU), as amended by the Commission Decision of 9 December 2010, Annex point 3.1.2 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:327:0051:0070:EN:PDF>)

² The members of the ERC Scientific Council are selected by an independent Identification Committee. The selection is made to "maintain an overall broad competence of the scientific and scholarly competences as well as institutional backgrounds, gender, and breadth of knowledge over the European space". (ERC Identification Committee, 15/01/2009)

³ 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.