



European Research Council
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Highlight:

The ERC at the Gender Summit 2012 – Promoting top women in frontier research

28 November 2012

As part of its efforts to encourage more top women in frontier research, the European Research Council (ERC) will participate in the [European Gender Summit](#) 2012 on 29 and 30 November in Brussels. From the ERC, Scientific Council member Professor Teresa Lago will speak on the integration of gender equality recommendations into the ERC's practices. The theme at this year's summit is 'Aligning Agendas for Excellence'.

On this occasion, Professor Teresa Lago, who also chairs the ERC Scientific Council gender balance working group, said: *"The imbalances between men and women researchers in Europe in general are unfortunately, but not surprisingly, mirrored in the ERC competitions. This is a matter of concern to the ERC Scientific Council and we monitor this issue carefully. Recent figures show considerable differences between countries when it comes to how well women do in our calls. We encourage countries to spare no efforts in inspiring female talent to apply for ERC grants and reviewing the opportunities for women to develop successful research careers."*

The ERC is continually monitoring the gender balance amongst its applicants and grantees. Whilst keeping to its core principle of funding excellence alone, without any quotas, the ERC wishes to see more excellent women researchers participate and succeed in its grant competitions. There are marked variations in terms of gender balance, not only between the ERC schemes (Starting Grants and Advanced Grants) and across domains, but according to the latest figures also between countries.

After the completion of ten ERC calls, around a fifth of over 3,000 ERC grantees are women, with a substantially higher share in the Starting Grant scheme (early-career researchers) - on average 24% women grantees - compared to 12% in the Advanced Grant competitions (senior researchers). These relatively low percentages are partly due to the lower proportion of women applying to the ERC calls. To date, women applicants represent an average of 29% for the Starting Grants and 14% for the Advanced Grants. The gender balance in the two ERC schemes corresponds to the situation in science, both for early-career and senior researchers, in Europe. These figures can nevertheless be seen as encouraging, as they point to a demographic shift towards a greater contribution of women to frontier research.

Yet, a closer analysis reveals quite considerable variations between countries in terms of male and female applicant performance in the two ERC schemes. In certain countries, such as Germany, Austria and Finland, female Advanced Grant applicants outperform their male colleagues in terms of success rate (the proportion of applications selected for funding). However, the opposite is observed in the case of the Starting Grants for these countries. Furthermore, the success rate for women in the Starting Grant calls is lower overall than that of the male applicants. The difference was also more striking than in the Advanced Grant calls.



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Regarding the gender balance in the research teams set up by the ERC grantees, recent estimates show very positive figures; around 38% of team members are women. On average, ERC grantees employ six team members, and in this way, the ERC contributes to the training of a new generation of excellent scientists.¹

The ERC at the Gender Summit

Organised by the European Science Foundation (ESF), the Gender Summit brings together top-level researchers, leaders in science, and policy-makers to examine gender-related issues that impact the implementation of the [European Research Area](#), the [Innovation Union](#) and the next EU research Framework Programme '[Horizon 2020](#)'. Amongst the prominent speakers are Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Professor Anne Glover, Chief Scientific Adviser to the European Commission President, and Professor Teresa Lago.

[Programme details](#)

29 November 2012 at 14.30 – 16.00 at the European Parliament, Brussels:

Professor Teresa Lago, ERC Scientific Council member, speaks on 'Integrating Gender Equality Recommendations into Practices at the ERC' during Session 2.

Background

The **European Research Council (ERC)** is the first pan-European funding organisation for frontier research. It aims to stimulate scientific excellence in Europe by encouraging competition for funding between the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age. The ERC (the "Ideas" specific programme) was set up by the EU under the Seventh EU Research Framework Programme. It has a total budget of € 7.5 billion (2007-2013). Last year, the European Commission proposed a substantial increase in the ERC's budget for 2014 to 2020 under the new Framework Programme ('Horizon 2020').

The ERC consists of a governing body, the independent Scientific Council, and an Executive Agency. The Scientific Council is concerned with gender balance in all phases of the ERC calls and hence set up a Gender Balance Working Group in 2008, which published a [Gender Equality Plan](#) in February 2011. The ERC is funding two studies; one on gender mainstreaming and one to assess differences in career paths and working environments for women and men, which may account for the greater challenges faced by women scientists in competing for ERC grants.²

¹ By the end of FP7, it is estimated that the ERC will have funded over 4,000 grantees, and will have also supported over 24,000 team members, including nearly 6,800 doctoral students and nearly 9,000 postdoctoral researchers.

² Currently ongoing study; ERCAREE "Capturing career paths of ERC grantees and applicants". Next year; study on "The ERC Proposal submission, peer review and gender mainstreaming".



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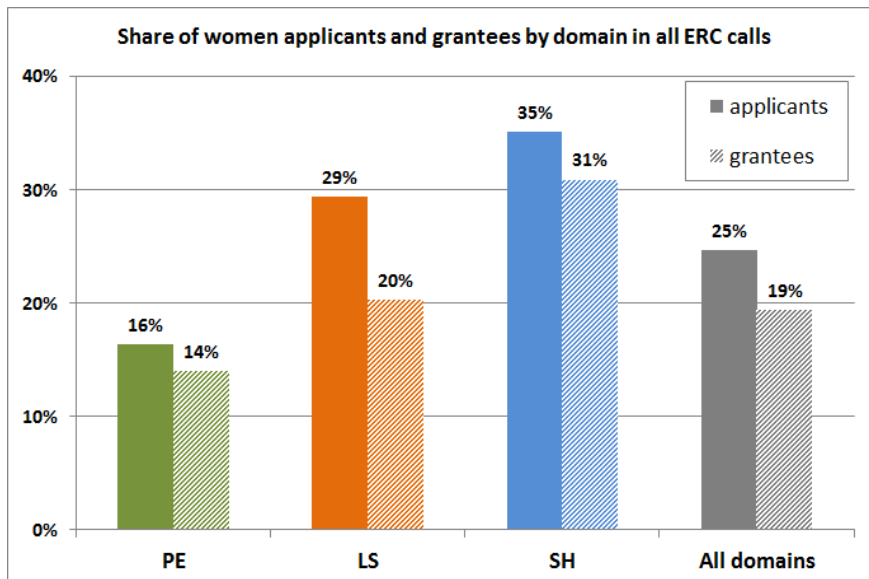
Links

[ERC website](#)

[Prof. Teresa Lago's biography](#)

[ERC Scientific Council Press Release on the Gender Equality Plan \(Feb. 2011\)](#)

Annex



(Source: ERC data)

PE = Physical Science and Engineering

LS = Life Sciences

SH = Social Sciences and Humanities