Gender perspectives from the ERC: From application to funding

Prof. Isabelle Vernos
Chair of the ScC Gender balance WG
What is ERC?

European Research Council

- An autonomous pan-European funding body set up by the EU in 2007 led by scientists after a long struggle
- **Mandate:** to encourage the highest *quality research* in Europe through competitive funding of *frontier projects*
- Funded through the EU Framework programmes for Research and Innovation
- For the period 2014-2020: **Horizon 2020**
ERC Research Grant Schemes

Starting Grants (StG)
- starters (2-7 years after PhD)
- up to €1.5 Mio for 5 years

Consolidator Grants (CoG)
- consolidators (7-12 years after PhD)
- up to €2 Mio for 5 years

Advanced Grants (AdG)
- track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years
- up to €2.5 Mio for 5 years
In 2008, the ERC Scientific Council established the Working Group on Gender balance to promote gender mainstreaming at each level of the ERC procedures, aiming at:

- informing and raising awareness among both male and female excellent researchers of the opportunities of the ERC grants;
- giving equal opportunities and treatment to men and women applying in all ERC grant competitions;
- monitoring gender distribution within the ERC’s peer review system;
- taking into account the gender dimension in all ERC grants.
Gender Equality Plan

Main objectives

✓ Raise awareness about the ERC gender policy;
✓ Identify and remove gender bias in evaluation;
✓ Improve the gender balance in ERC calls (PIs and teams);
✓ Monitor differences in gender specific careers;
✓ Keep gender awareness in ERC processes;
✓ Strive for gender balance among the ERC peer reviewers
Gender Equality Plan Implemented

Gender mainstreaming with focus kept on scientific quality

Take an active role in the gender debate, gender equality networks and workshops

Make targeted visits to scientific meetings and workshops addressing gender topics, to inform about open ERC calls

Highlight ERC women grantees as role models for potential ERC applicants

ERC Scientific Council Gender Equality Plan

- **Awareness**
  - Monitor submission rates of women and men

- **Submission**
  - Look at success rates of and granted amounts to women and men

- **Evaluation**
  - Ensure ERC evaluation criteria encompass the situation of both women and men in research

- **Granting**
  - Analyse relation between ERC grants and gender structures in research careers
  - Highlight good practice host institutions regarding coverage of family related costs (e.g. child care, moving with a family, etc.)
  - Achieve a better gender balance in each ERC evaluation panel as compared to that panel's relevant scientific communities

**Gender Equality Plan Implemented**

- Make targeted visits to scientific meetings and workshops addressing gender topics, to inform about open ERC calls
- Highlight ERC women grantees as role models for potential ERC applicants
- Ensure ERC evaluation criteria encompass the situation of both women and men in research
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ERC overview figures
Gender equality

- **Scientific Council members**
  Women share increased from 23% (in 2006) to 36% (in 2013)

- **Panel members**
  30% women in the panels

- **Evaluated**
  26% women applications: 15% Advance
  29% Consolidator
  31% Starting

- **Grantees**
  21% women funded: 13% Advance
  26% Consolidator
  26% Starting

- **ERCEA Scientific Officers**
  62% women coordinating the evaluations
ERC statistics

Applications
Female applicants to ERC

26% overall of the applications from women
Monitor submission rates of women & men by country
Share women **StG applicants** vs. women academic staff in Grade B, by country of host institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Men Grade B (%)</th>
<th>Women Grade B (%)</th>
<th>Women StG (%)</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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Grade B: "Researchers working in positions not as senior as top positions (A) but more senior than newly qualified PhD holders". *(She Figures 2012)*

In some countries only 2/3 or less apply

37% vs. 30%
Monitor submission rates of women & men by country
Share women AdG applicants vs. women academic staff in Grade A, by country of host institution

Grade A: "The single highest grade/post at which research is normally conducted." *(She Figures 2012)*
ERC Work Programmes
Evolution of gender-related issues 2007 - 2014

2007  StG introduced with 2 – 9 years eligibility and extensions possible including 12 months/child born \textit{after} PhD;

2010  Extension of StG eligibility window to 18 months/child born \textit{before or after} PhD award;

2013  
- Reversing the order of evaluation criteria: 1: project description; 2: PI track record;
- Scientific leadership potential (self-evaluation) \textit{removed}

2014  Model CV template included in application forms
ERC calls 2014
26 % of the applications from women
26 % of the grants to women
ERC statistics

Funding-Success rates
ERC Female grantees

26% of the applications from women
21% of the grants to women

Share of women and grantees by grant type in all ERC calls (2007-2015)
Comparing success rates of men and women by type of grant

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
All ERC Advanced Grants: Success rates per country of HI
All ERC Starting Grants: Success rates per country of HI
ERC New Work Programme
New features for WP 2015

✓ Effective limit on the number of children that count towards the eligibility extension for StG & CoG removed;

✓ Care of sick relative = reason for extension of eligibility Window for StG & CoG;

✓ Applicants now restricted to highlighting maximum 5/10 publications in their track record, but still sufficient freedom to be original in proposal
ERC evaluation panels
Female Panel Members and Applicants (FP7)

ERCEA Scientific Officers coordinating evaluations: 62% women
Women in panels vs female success rate

"Quotas are questionable", Isabelle Vernos, 7 March 2013, VOL 495, NATURE 39
Increase of women in panels 2014-2015

Share of female panel members

- 2007-2013
  - LS: 32%
  - PE: 21%
  - SH: 28%
  - All domains: 28%

- 2014-2015
  - LS: 35%
  - PE: 19%
  - SH: 42%
  - All domains: 30%
Evaluations
Training of the ERC evaluation panels

Briefing of panel chairs and panel members

- Outcomes of ERC calls in terms of gender balance
- Unconventional career paths
- Tackling unconscious bias in evaluation:
  - CV styles;
  - Role of women in research teams;
  - Female researchers and career breaks;
  - Regardless of whether evaluators are male or female.
ERC and gender funded research
ERC gender funded research

- 52 ERC projects on gender research (identified by keywords)
- Other projects with a gender dimension possibly not detected (limited keywords)

Most projects conducted by women (2/3)

Most projects funded in StG and CoG
Projects mainly funded in **SH2** and **SH3** (accounting for 6 out of 10 projects)
Gender perspectives from the ERC: From Application to Funding

ERC grantee presentation

Dr. Anne McMunn

*ERC project: Health Effects of Social Change in Gender, Work and Family*

ERC panel members presentations

Prof. Mieke Verloo (SH domain)

Prof. Conny Aerts (PE domain), also holder of 2 ERC AdG
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