

# Scientific Freedom and Research Excellence

## Gender Dimension in Research, An ERC perspective

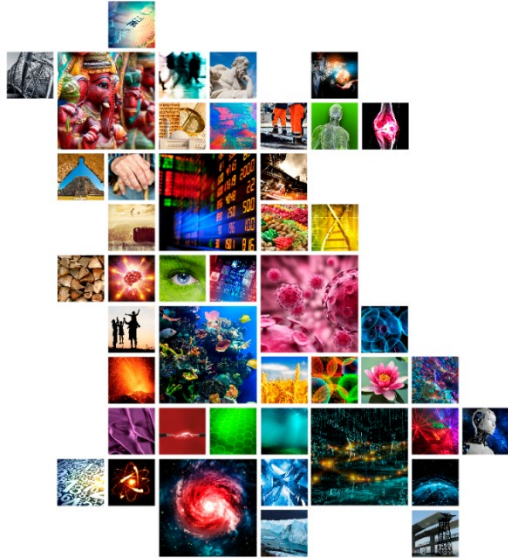
Jesper Svejstrup, ERC Vice-president  
17 May 2023



**European Research Council**

Established by the European Commission

# ERC funds Scientific Excellence



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHERS  
FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD  
**LONG TERM  
GRANTS**  
PIONEERING PROJECTS  
IN ANY FIELD OF FRONTIER RESEARCH



Life Sciences



Physical Sciences and Engineering



Social Sciences and Humanities



# ERC in Figures



Over **14,000**  
top researchers funded since  
the ERC creation in 2007



Over **90,000**  
researchers and other professionals  
employed in ERC research teams



Over **2,400**  
patents and other IPR applications  
generated by ERC funding



Over **400**  
start-ups identified as founded  
or co-founded by ERC grantees



EUR **36,5 billion**  
ERC budget 2007-2027  
EUR **16 billion** for Horizon Europe



Over **220,000**  
articles from ERC projects published  
in scientific journals



Over **900** research institutions hosting  
ERC grantees – universities, public or  
private research centres in the EU or  
Associated Countries

**12** Nobel Prizes, **6** Fields Medals, **11** Wolf Prizes  
and other prizes awarded to ERC grantees



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# Why Basic Science Matters for Economic Growth

Public investment in basic research will pay for itself.

*“Basic research is not tied to a particular product or country and can be combined in unpredictable ways and used in different fields. This means that it spreads more widely and remains relevant for a longer time than applied knowledge”*

IMF 2021



# The impact of curiosity-driven research on innovation

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**44%** of all ERC projects generated research that was later cited in patents

ERC projects cited in patents: **61%** in Life Sciences, **46%** in Physical Sciences and Engineering and **7%** in Social Sciences and the Humanities

***Real innovation*** always comes from the base layer, -  
from curiosity-driven basic science.



# ERC Is Different

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## Scientific Freedom

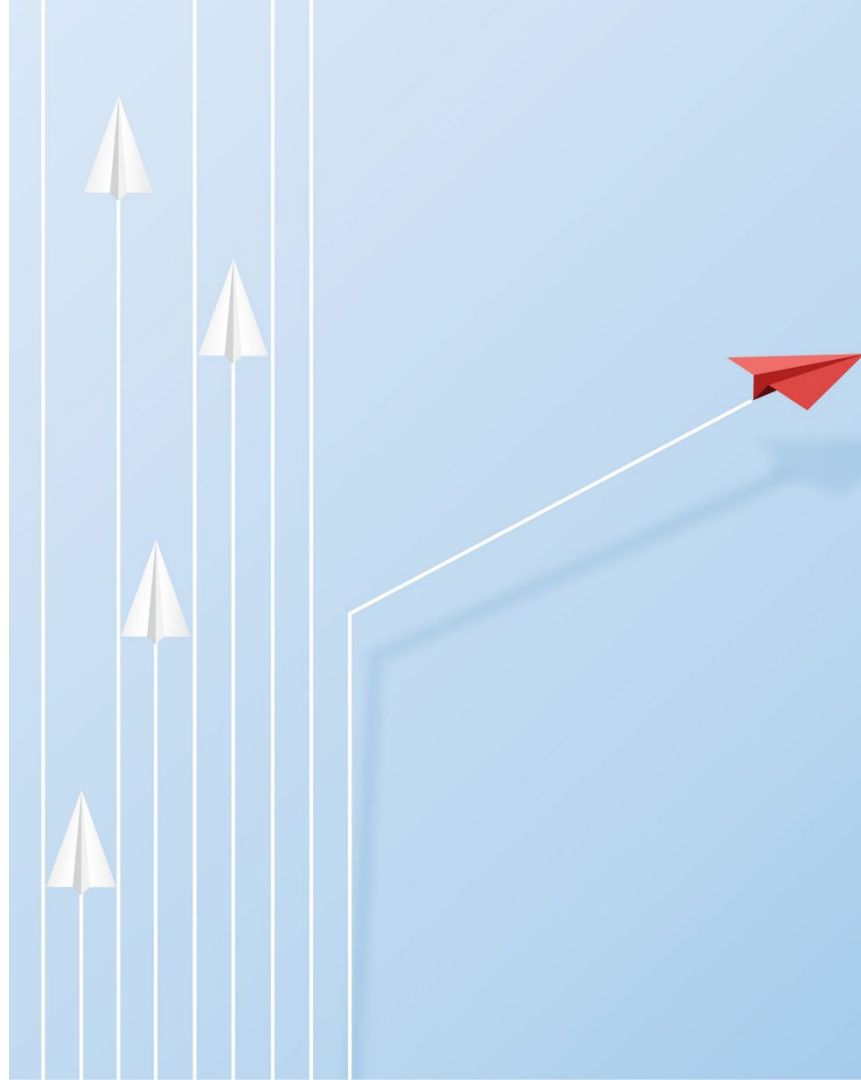
- Scientific excellence as the only criterion
- Support to the individual scientist, not large consortia
- No predetermined subjects – bottom-up approach
- Support to frontier research in all fields of science and the humanities
- International peer-review – panel and external
- ***No rules for what constitutes good gender research***

## Scientific Governance

- Independent Scientific Council with 22 members with full authority over funding strategy
- Support by a dedicated implementation structure: ERC Executive Agency



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# ERC Experts evaluate Excellence in all dimensions

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**Expert  
Panels**

**Excellence**  
is the sole evaluation criterion



**International  
reviewers**

## Excellence of the Research Project

- Groundbreaking nature
- Potential impact
- Scientific Approach, *including gender*

## Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

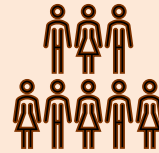
# Excellence in the Gender Dimension

## ❑ Scientific Approach

Gender and fairness  
in the digital society



Gender in medicine  
and medical care



Gender, demographics  
and behaviour

See <https://erc.europa.eu/event/sex-and-gender-dimension-frontier-research>



# Selection of ERC-funded Gender Dimension Projects



- **Judi Mesman: [SH – StG 2009]** Boys will be boys?  
Gender differences in the **socialization** of disruptive behaviour in early childhood
- **Ted Morrow: [LS-StG 2011]** Sex-specific genetic effects on **fitness** and human **disease**
- **Nello Cristianini: [LS – AdG 2013]** Patterns in **Big Data**: Methods, Applications and Implications
- **Iñaki Permanyer:[SH – StG 2014]** Equalizing or disequalizing?  
Opposing socio-demographic determinants of the spatial distribution of **welfare**.



- **Sandra Ponzanesi: [SH-CoG 2015]** **Digital Crossings** in Europe: Gender, Diaspora and Belonging
- **Nabila Bouati-Naji: [LS-StG 2016]** Investigating fibROmuscular dysplasia and spontaneous coronary Artery dissection using genetic and functional genomics to decipher the origin of two female specific **cardiovascular Diseases**
- **Irene Miguel-Aliaga: [LS – AdG 2017]** Sex differences in **intestinal plasticity**
- **Claudia Allemani: [LS – CoG 2017]** Women’s **cancers**: do variations in patterns of care explain the world-wide inequalities in survival and avoidable premature deaths?
- **Krishna Gummadi: [PE – AdG 2017]** Foundations for Fair Social **Computing**
- **Nathalie Bajos: [SH-LS – SyG 2020]** Gender and Health **Inequalities**: from embodiment to health care cascade



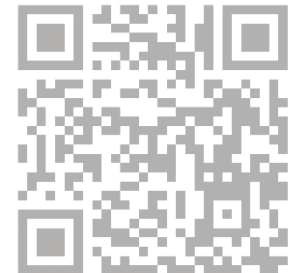
**“Policy-makers and funders, as well as individual researchers, all have their own part to play in ensuring that sex and gender are appropriately fed into the design of cutting-edge research programmes, and that fairness in the award of such grants is maintained, with constant vigilance over each stage of any process.**

**Dame Athene Donald,**  
ERC Scientific Council Member (2013-18)  
Chair of the Athena Forum (2009-13)



## **2020. ERC Workshop on Sex and Gender Dimension in Frontier Research**

- ❖ **Innovative approaches**
- ❖ **Raised awareness**
- ❖ **Policy Dialogue**



<https://erc.europa.eu/event/sex-and-gender-dimension-frontier-research>

“I cannot underline enough how crucial it is for Europe to keep investing in top researchers driven by sheer curiosity!”



Maria Leptin  
ERC President

**Thank You!**

More information: [erc.europa.eu](https://erc.europa.eu)

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# Annexes. ERC Gender Equality Plan

# ERC Gender Equality Plan

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- The ERC Scientific Council adopted an **ERC Gender Equality Plan** which is periodically revised.
- The document sets the ERC gender policy and objectives and the implementation plan.
- The document is available to the general public on the ERC website.



[ERC\\_ScC\\_Gender\\_Equality\\_Plan\\_2021-2027.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

# ERC Gender Equality Plan

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- **Raise awareness about the ERC gender policy** among potential applicants
- **Improve gender balance** among applicants to ERC funding
- Stress **gender balance benefits** for researchers in ERC teams
- **Monitor gender specific careers** following ERC grants
- **Striving for gender balance** among the ERC peer reviewers
- **Identify and remove** any potential **gender bias** in the ERC evaluation procedures
- **Embed gender awareness** within all levels of the ERC processes - while keeping focus on **excellence**



# ERC Gender Equality Plan

## Responsibility of the Host Institutions

Not necessary at submission stage

Necessary before signature of grant agreement

Mandatory requirements are listed in Annex 5 of Work Programme 2023

### Gender Equality Plan

Does the organization have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) covering the elements listed below?

Yes  No

#### Minimum process-related requirements (building blocks) for a GEP

- **Publication:** formal document published on the institution's website and signed by the top management
- **Dedicated resources:** commitment of human resources and gender expertise to implement it.
- **Data collection and monitoring:** sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students for establishments concerned) and annual reporting based on indicators.
- **Training:** Awareness raising/trainings on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.
- **Content-wise, recommended areas to be covered** and addressed via concrete measures and targets are:
  - o work-life balance and organisational culture;
  - o gender balance in leadership and decision-making;
  - o gender equality in recruitment and career progression;
  - o integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content;
  - o measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

