The ERC’s recent changes to the evaluation of research proposals

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June 2024
Why the recent changes to research assessment?

July 2021: ERC endorses the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

From 2022 onwards: ERC Scientific Council reviews research assessment in general and considers possible changes to the ERC’s evaluation processes

Early 2023: ERC signs the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment

Mid 2023 Novelties introduced with the 2024 ERC Work programme
Novelties – Research Assessment

Combined and simplified CV and Track Record template:

• No prescriptive Principal Investigator profiles

• New Curriculum Vitae and Track Record template contains three sub-headings (maximum 4 pages):

  1. Personal details

    ➢ PI’s education and key qualifications, current position(s) and relevant previous positions they have held.
Novelties – Research Assessment

• New **Curriculum Vitae and Track Record** template:

2. **Research achievements and peer recognition**

*The applicant can provide a short, factual narrative on the significance of the listed achievements and recognitions in relation to the research field and the proposed project.*

- Research achievements (<=10 outputs)
- Peer recognition, such as prizes or awards
Novelties – Research Assessment

3. Additional information

Relevant additional information on their research career to provide context when assessing their research achievements and peer recognition.

- Career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
- Other noteworthy contributions to the research community
Novelties – Research Assessment

- Evaluation **primarily focused on** the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the proposed research project

- **No numerical scoring of the Principal Investigator**, instead an overall assessment of PI’s intellectual capacity and creativity

- Streamlined **evaluation questions**:
  - No explicit reference to ‘high-risk/high-gain’ and ‘novel methodologies’
    - Instead: ‘ground-breaking, ambitious, and feasible’. **The ERC will always encourage risky research.**
    - ‘Novel methodologies’ is an element that may be positive but is not strictly necessary for an excellent proposal.
Novelties – Evaluation

• No budget multiplier: **up to 44 proposals per panel in Step 2**

• New A-score at Step 1:
  
  — ‘A invited’ – *high quality proposals to pass to Step 2*
  
  — ‘A not invited’ – *high quality proposals exceeding the threshold for Step 2, but not subject to resubmission restrictions (only possible if the panel has more than 44 ‘A’ proposals)*
Novelties – Panel Reorganisation

• **New Panel – SH8 – Studies of Cultures and Arts**
  o combines cultural studies, art history, architecture, music, performing arts, museum studies, cultural heritage and other fields (from SH5) with social anthropology (from SH3)

• **LS3 – Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration**
  o new title to make it explicit that both stem cell and regeneration biology fields are addressed

• **LS5 – Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System**
  o new sub-title ("In humans and all other organisms") to make it explicit that the panel covers research in humans, as well as in other organisms