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

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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

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**
  - 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**
  - new title to make it explicit that both stem cell and regeneration biology fields are addressed

- **LS5 – Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System**
  - 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