



# Inclusive Gender Equality in European R&I

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# European Commission's political leadership for 2024-2029: Ursula von der Leyen

**Ekaterina Zaharieva (Bulgaria)**, Mission letter for the [Commissioner-designated for Startups, Research and Innovation](#).

**Hadja Lahbib (Belgium)**, Mission letter for the [Commissioner-designate for Preparedness and Crisis and Commissioner-designate for Equality](#).

**Roxana Mînzatu (Romania)**, Mission letter for the [Executive Vice-President-designate for People](#).

**Henna Virkkunen**, Mission letter [for Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy](#)





European  
Commission

#HorizonEU

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**THE EU  
RESEARCH & INNOVATION  
PROGRAMME**

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2021 – 2027

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**HORIZON  
EUROPE**

**Indicative budget: EUR 93.5 billion**

Research  
and  
Innovation

# Gender equality: a strengthened priority in Horizon Europe



**Gender Equality Plan: Eligibility Criterion** for public bodies, research organisations and higher education establishments from Member States or Associated Countries to access funding

→ See details [here](#), including FAQ



**Integration of the gender dimension into R&I content** is mandatory by default unless specified otherwise in the topic description.

→ See methods and case studies [here](#)



**Gender and geographical diversity among researchers: a Ranking Criterion** – for ex aequo proposals





+ researchers declare their gender along three categories [woman](#), [man](#), [non-binary](#)

**Article 7(6)** and **Recital 53** of the [Framework Regulation](#); **Articles 2(2)(e)** and **6(3)(e)** of the [Specific Programme](#).

For more on gender equality requirements in Horizon Europe see this [webinar](#).



# Monitoring

|   | Horizon 2020<br>(2014-2020) | Horizon Europe<br>(2021-2027)<br>(preliminary results)   |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Women <b>expert evaluators</b> in evaluation panels | 42%                         | 43.5%  1,5% |
| Women participating in <b>expert groups</b>         | 43%                         | 48.7%  5,7% |
| Women <b>coordinators</b> in projects               | 23%                         | 31%  8%     |
| Women <b>researchers</b> in projects                | 37%                         | 37.6%  0.6% |

The representation of women varies according to the different funding programme.

## In addition

- Specific funding for **actions supporting the development of inclusive gender equality plans (GEP)** in research and innovation organisations, under the **Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area Programme Part**.
- Specific funding will also be allocated to **gender studies and intersectional research**, in particular under Pillar II, **Cluster 2 - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society**.
- Measures and activities for **promoting gender equality** are introduced under Pillar III, in particular through the **European Innovation Council (EIC)**, including a target of **40% women-led companies invited to pitch their projects** in the Accelerator instrument, **a target of 50% women among members of EIC advisory structures**, a dedicated initiative to support **women-led deep-tech startups**, and the continuation of the **EU prize for women innovators**.

# The European Research Council

## Inclusive excellence at the ERC

Actions and results of sustained measures to ensure  
fairness in the evaluation process



**European Research Council**

Established by the European Commission

# ERC at a glance

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The **ERC**, set up by the European Union in 2007, is the **premier European funding organisation for excellent frontier research.**

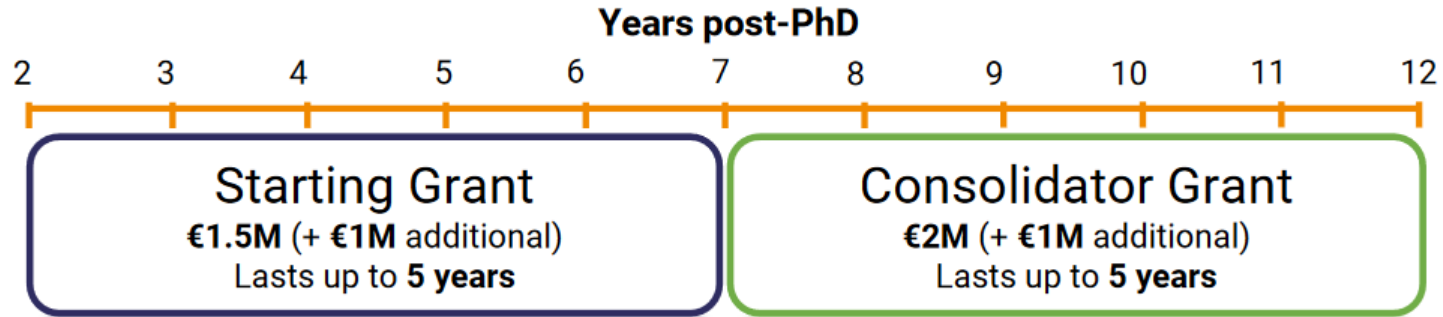
It funds creative researchers of any nationality and age, to run groundbreaking projects based across Europe.

The ERC offers 4 core grant schemes: **Starting Grants, Consolidator Grants, Advanced Grants** and **Synergy Grants.**

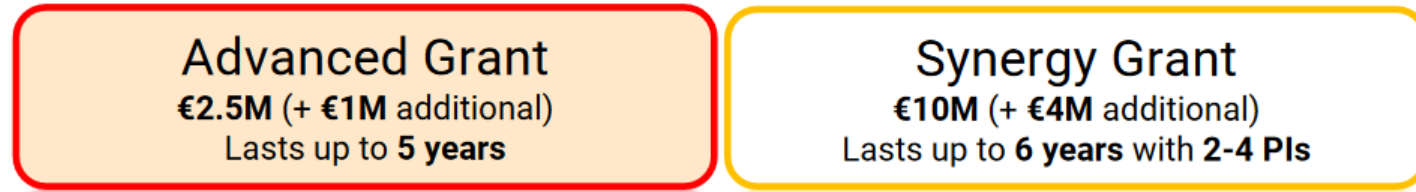
To deliver its mission fully, the ERC must **promote equality of opportunities** and **prevent any form of discrimination** in its structures and operations, in line with Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 10 and 19 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union



# ERC funding grants



## No PhD Requirements



**Extensions of the track-record period  
is possible due to a series reasons**

# Extensions to eligibility windows

The **eligibility periods can be extended** beyond 7 and 12 years for the Starting and Consolidator Grants, respectively, for the following properly documented circumstances:

- **Maternity**
- **Paternity**
- **Long-term illness or Disability**
- **National service**
- **Clinical training**
- **Natural Disaster**
- **Seeking Asylum**
- **Impacts due to gender-based and other violence** **NEW**



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission



# ERC in figures



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



Over **100,000**  
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



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



Over **950** research institutions hosting  
ERC grantees – universities, public or  
private research centres in the EU or  
Associated Countries



**93**  
nationalities of  
grant holders

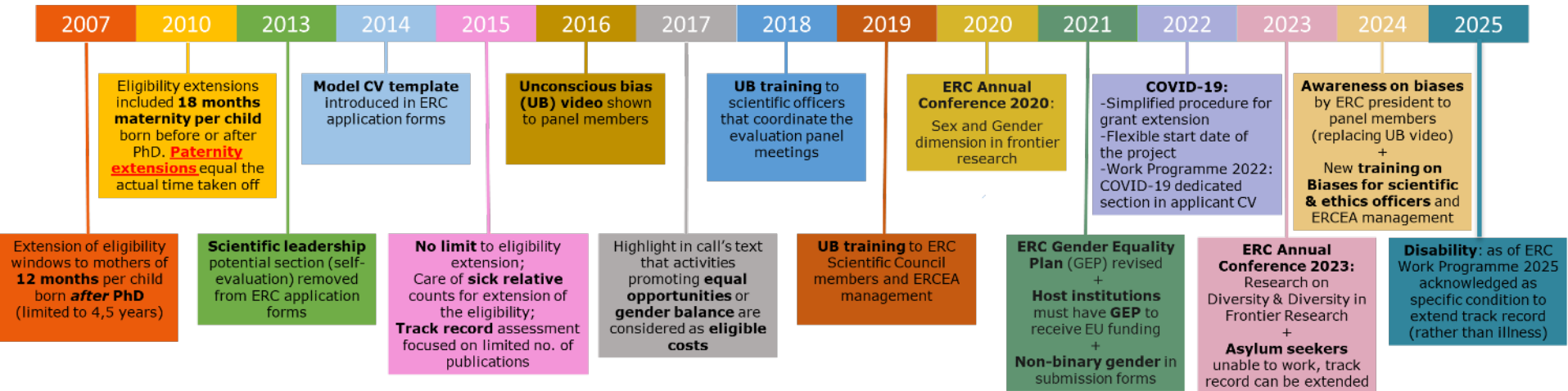


**14** Nobel Prizes, **6** Fields Medals, **11** Wolf Prizes  
and other prizes awarded to ERC grantees

The mere possibility of **biases** affecting the **fairness of grant peer review process** is a matter of serious concern by funders

# MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY: ACTIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION  
(gender, country of institution, nationality, research experience, etc.)



2026 extension of eligibility accepted for victims of gender-based and other violence (just approved!)

(modified from C. Jesus-Rydin et al., 2020)

<https://adgeo.copernicus.org/articles/53/87/2020/>

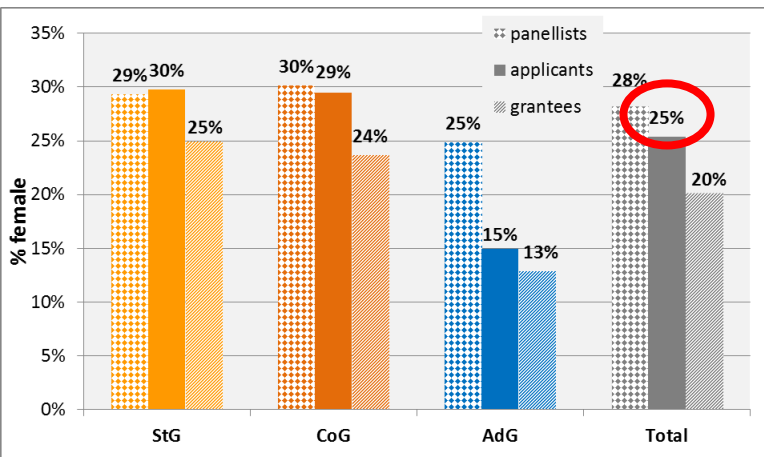
## ERC President's presentation on bias (as of 2024)

These slides are to be accompanied by a spoken narrative during briefings

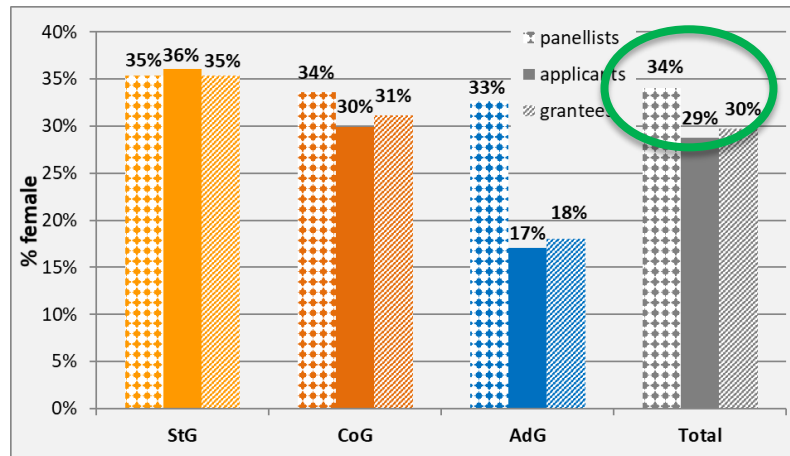
A **bias** is a tendency, inclination,  
or prejudice toward or against something  
or someone.\*

# Women participation by call, progress since 2007

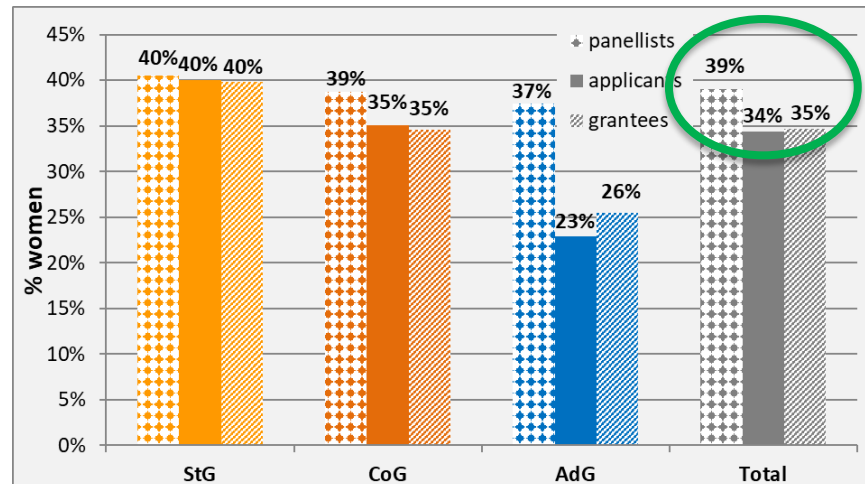
## ERC Calls FP7 2007-2013



## ERC calls H2020 (2014-2020)



## ERC Calls 2021-2023 (Horizon Europe)

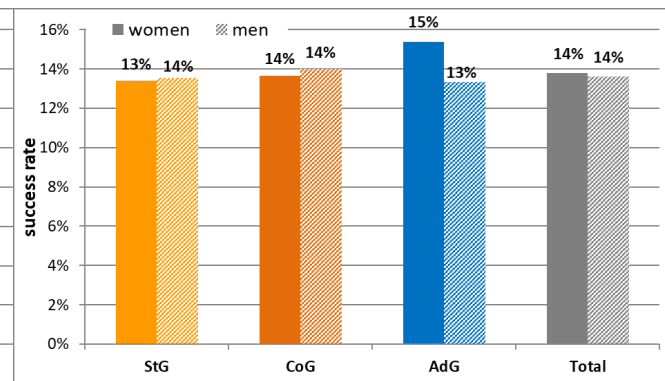
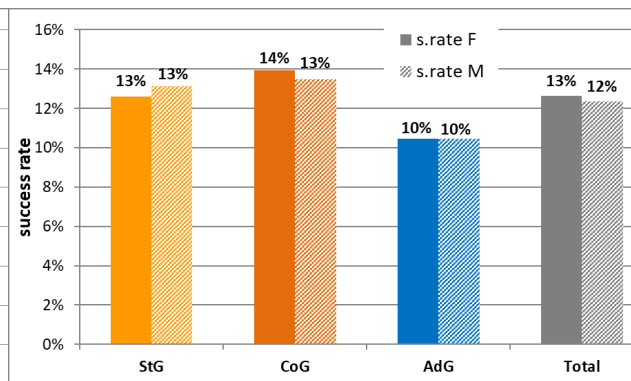
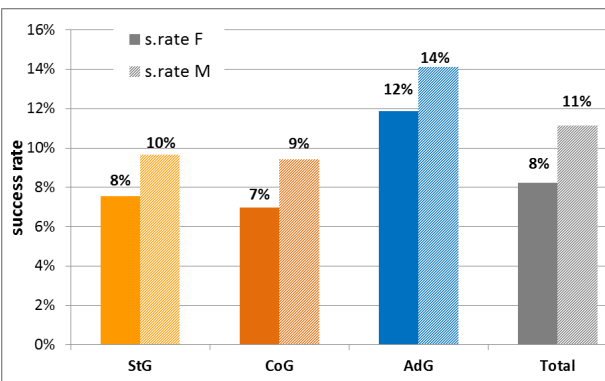


# Success rate by type of call: men and women \*

## ERC Calls 2007-2013 (FP7)

## H2020 (2014-2020)

## Horizon Europe (2021-2023)

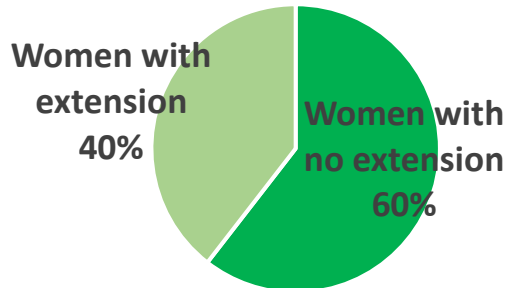




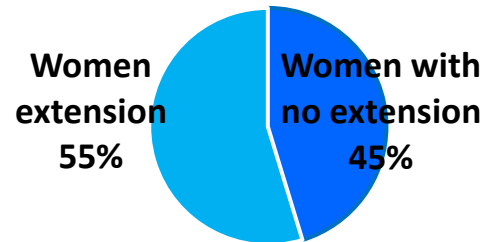
## Grant share with and without extensions (2018-23)

The extensions of eligibility windows have a significant impact on the participation of women in ERC grants.

**Starting Grant 2018-23  
Women Grantees**



**Consolidator Grant 2018-23  
Women Grantees**



Women grantees in the extension window play a major role in the ERC achievements (i.e., comparable success rates between men and women):

- **Starting Grant** they make up for **40 %**
- **Consolidator Grant** they make for more than half: **55 %**

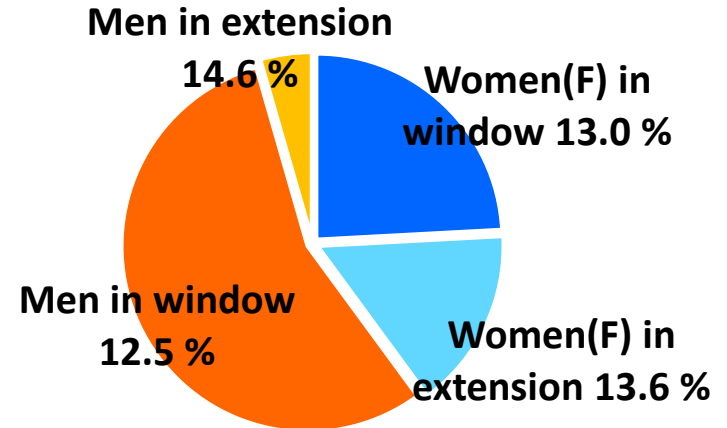
# Extensions and Success Rate (1/2)

## Starting Grant (2018-23)

The pie chart shows share and success rate of applicants with and without eligibility extensions disaggregated by gender.

The **success rate of women and men with and without the extension is comparable**, with only minor differences. Women 0.5% higher in window (13%) and 1% lower in extensions than men (women 13,6% and men 14,6%).

## Success Rate (SR) by gender and eligibility window



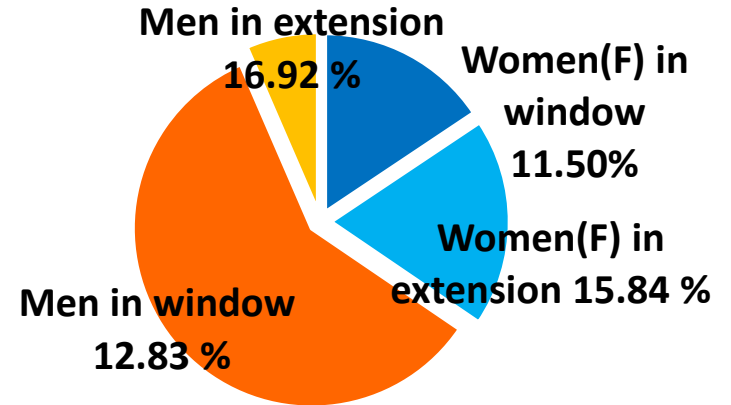
# Extensions and Success Rate (2/2)

## Consolidator Grant (2018-23)

The pie chart shows share and success rate of applicants with and without eligibility extensions disaggregated by gender.

The **success rate of women without** the extension is about **1.5% lower than men's**. **With the extension**, the success rate of men is the highest at about **17%**.

## Success Rate (SR) by gender and eligibility window



**No positive discrimination**

**No affirmative actions**

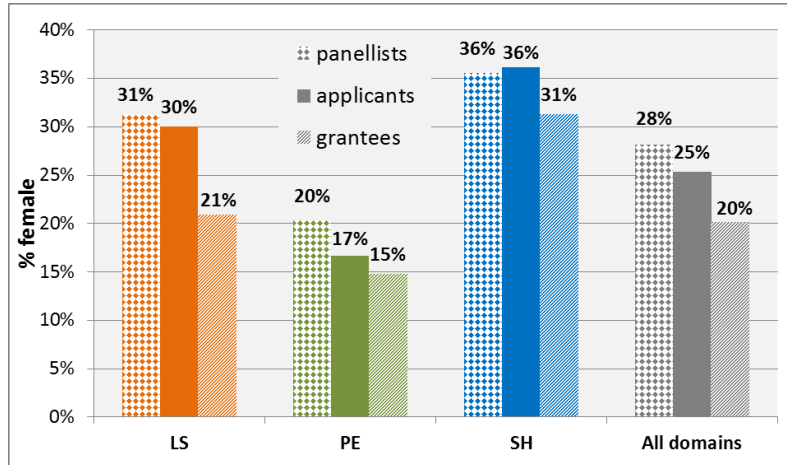
**No quotas**

**Every ERC awardee is selected based on  
EXCELLENCE only**

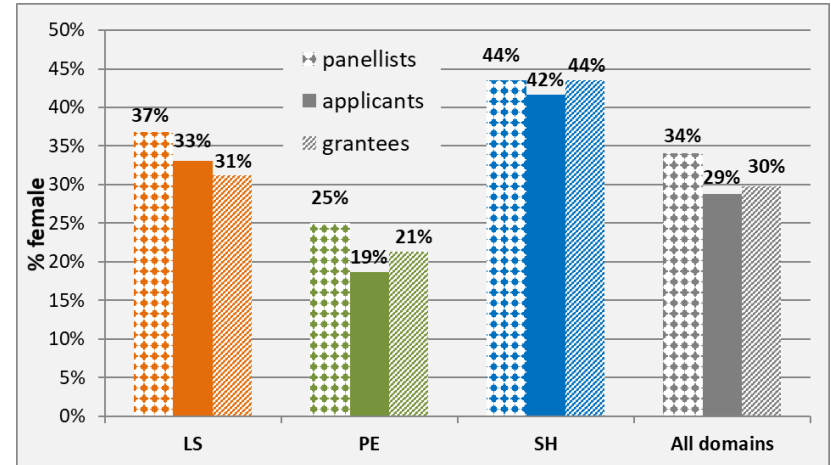
Thank you

## ERC calls by domain % women

### ERC Calls 2007-2013 (FP7)

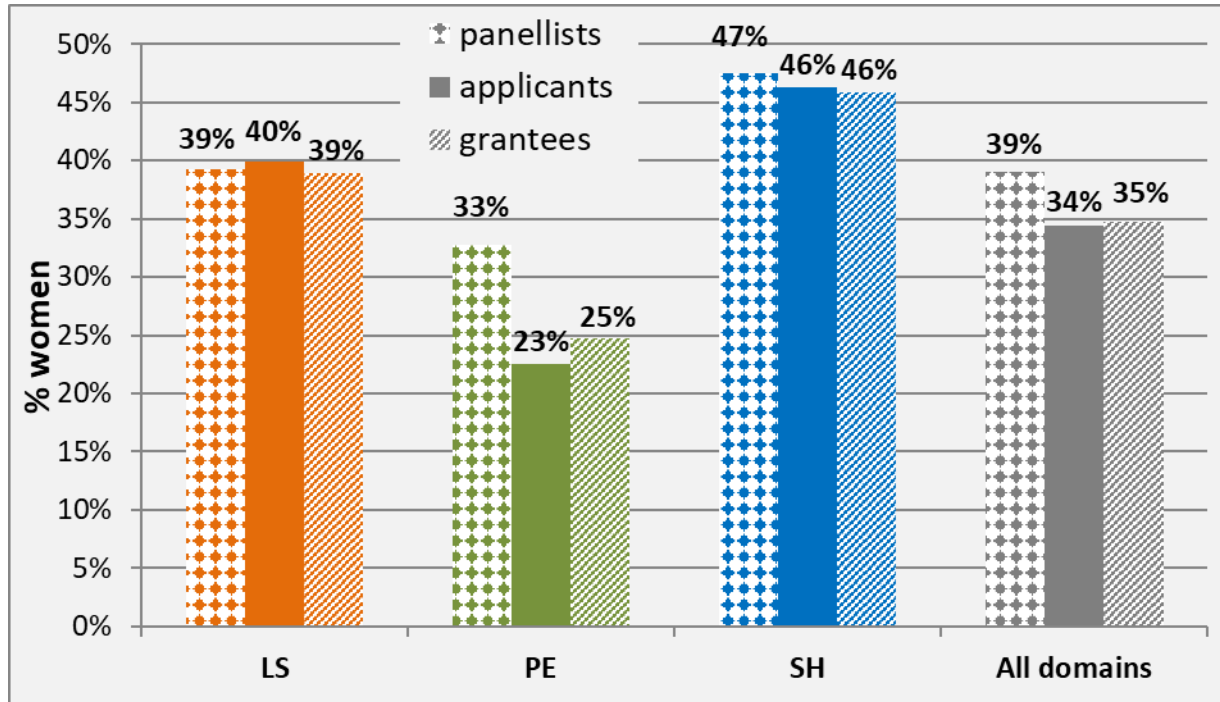


### ERC Calls 2014-2020 (H2020)



## ERC calls by domain % women

### ERC Calls 2021-2023 (Horizon Europe)



# Key learnings

- Positive results reflect a cumulative effect of various actions
- Potential candidates must trust the system and that they will have a fair chance – the work is never done
- STEREOTYPE THREAT is a challenge



# Stereotype threat

The diagram on the blackboard illustrates the concept of stereotype threat. It starts with 'Stereotype Threat' at the top, which leads to 'Negative Stereotype'. This negative stereotype results in 'Reduced Task Performance' and 'Exam'. A comparison is shown between 'Exam' and 'Equal' performance, with a downward arrow indicating 'Performance drops' for the 'Exam' side. A bracket groups 'Exam and Neg. Blue stereotypes'.

Copy link

2:45 / 6:13

Situations in which people are aware they belong to the minority and this awareness negatively affects their performance.

Long-standing factor to racial and gender gaps in academic performance.

C.M. Steele and J. Aronson

**Note:** important to focus on 'hopeful' messages

<https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/individuals-and-society/discrimination/v/stereotypes-stereotype-threat-and-self-fulfilling-prophecy>

# GOALS

More women applying: especially in Advanced Grant

Ensure diversity in ERC panels in terms of **expertise**, **gender** (men's acceptance rate is higher than higher than women's), **geographical representation**, etc.

Maintain open dialogue with scientific community

## For the ERC "diversity and inclusion" means

"to contribute to a truly **inclusive European culture of competitiveness in science** by way of **strengthening the participation** of researchers in ERC calls from Europe less research-performing regions."

"Each process within the ERC (...) is designed to **give equal opportunities** to men and women."

**Monitor** diversity in pool of applicants and panel members: gender, nationality, current host institution, age, etc.

Diversity in scientific topics and approaches in research: **bottom up!**

# ERC activities supporting Equality Diversity and Inclusion: 3 categories

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- ✓ Category 1: Monitoring and transparency
- ✓ Category 2: Raising awareness
- ✓ Category 3: Enabling change

## Monitoring and Transparency

### Current situation

collect data

gender, nationality, country of birth,  
country of residence, and research  
experience of PIs

country of residence and gender  
composition of research teams

***not collected:*** age, disability, ethnicity,  
religion, sexual orientation, or belief  
*because of data protection*

ERC is exploring existing practice  
in other leading funding bodies

# Category 2

## Raising Awareness

### Current situation

briefing panel members

reduce bias in the review of proposals

### Ongoing Action

Showcase good practice in design, conduct, report of ERC research to place on ERC website (share film/ podcasts/ blogs, ERC Diversity Conference Nov 2023 material)

Showcase other D&I good practices

ERC research engaging with marginalized or minority communities

How Host Institutions enable diverse researchers to apply to ERC

Exchanges with NCP

Training for ERCEA officers on inclusive excellence and bystander intervention



# Category 3

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## Enabling change

### Current situation

Eliminate gender bias and inequalities

Promote equality between women and men (maternity and paternity leave)

Extension of eligibility

18 months for maternity leave

for paternity/parental leave

for applicants with a disability

Gender balance

in ERC evaluation panels (GEP)

among the panel chairs as  
medium-term goal

### Further possible actions

Extend gender balance requirements for  
external peer reviewers



# Shaping the Next European Commission

## • Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029

- Gender equality is a strengthened priority, including gender-based violence, empowering of women in politics and labor market (**new Gender Equality Strategy, Roadmap for Women's Rights and an updated strategies on LGBTIQ and anti-racism**)

## • European Union priorities 2024-2029 include:

- A free and democratic Europe (including upholding European values within the EU)
- A strong and secure Europe
- A prosperous and competitive Europe (including bolstering the EU's competitiveness)

## • European Council Strategic Agenda 2024-2029

## • EU competitiveness: Looking ahead (Draghi report, 9 September)

- Strong support of democracy and EU values
- Gender equality mentioned especially in relation to skills and education (STEM, IT) and:

*"The EU's efforts to hone its competitive edge need to be guided by European values, which should be further reinforced by its action. These encompass fundamental values, including human rights, the rule of law and democracy, but also values of specific relevance to research and innovation, such as academic freedom and independence, research integrity and ethics, transparency, diversity, inclusion, gender equality, open science and open access to scientific publications and research data. These values and principles should remain at the core of Europe's approach and constitute the strength of its model of excellent, collaborative research. Promoting these values makes Europe a more attractive place for researchers and businesses from around the world."*

