The new European Research Council –

It's aims, objectives and implementation

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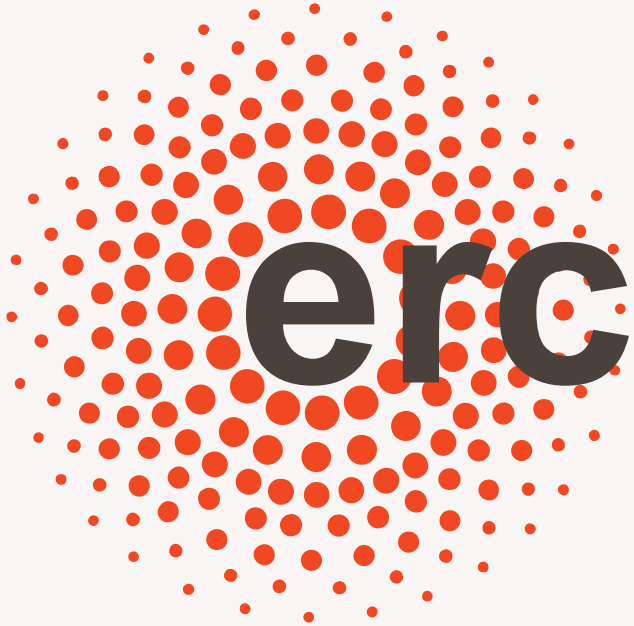
ERC/European Commission
RTD, Directorate S



FEAST Europe Strategy Days, March 17 and 18, 2008

What is ‘new’ about the ERC

The European Union has a long tradition of research funding

- Few percent of total European RTD activity
- Mostly ‘**collaborative projects**’ , i.e. involving several organisations from >2 countries
- Mostly in strategic areas: energy, environment, space, health, aeronautics, security, industrial technology, …

Union research programmes are open to global collaboration

- Research addresses global problems
- Enabling projects with world-wide participation
- Provide funding to organisations in certain countries

What is ‘new’ about the ERC

The European Research Council is a new policy initiative

- Aimed at strengthening European excellence in ‘basic’ research and technology – *creativity and dynamism*
- Improve the attractiveness of Europe as a great place to do research – *reverse the brain-drain*

It’s main features

- Focus on, and responsibility for the ‘individual researcher’ – the PI
- Open to **all areas of science** – fully investigator-driven
- Enhance research excellence through competition rather than through collaboration – 1 scientist, 1 country is enough
- Scientific management by an autonomous Scientific Council

Organisational structure

European Union

- Legislation
- The budget
- Accountability

Scientific Council

- Scientific strategy
- Methodologies
- Oversight and quality control
- Connection with scientific community

Executive Agency

- All implementation tasks
- Evaluation, granting, payments, reviews
- Administrative responsibility

The Scientific Council

- 22 top European scientists
- One Chair: **Prof. Fotis Kafatos**
- Two Vice-Chairs: **Prof. Helga Nowotny** and **Dr Daniel Estève**

The budget

Multi-annual budget allocated by the European Union

- €7.51 B for the period 2007 – 2013
- Hence €1 B per year, but weighted towards later years

Corresponds to some 4000 / 5000 grants

The ERC grants: common features

Any field of science, technology, scholarship

Proposal is made by a PI – of any nationality

The PI must have the commitment of a **European** host organisation, **conditional upon the proposal being successful**:

- To conclude an employment contract
- To provide 'services' – space, equipment, administration, …

The grant can cover 100% of the cost of the project

- Salaries, equipment, travel, …
- 20% of which covers the overheads of the host organisation

The ERC grants: common features

Grants are portable between European host organisations

The PI can build a team consisting of staff from his / her own host or other organisations

- No restrictions on nationality of the people
- No restrictions on the countries of the organisations
- Organisations from certain countries may share in the grant

Two types of grants exist

- Starting Grants – StG, to absorb about a third of ERC budget
- Advanced Grants - AdG

European Research Council

ERC Starting Grant
(ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grant)

- Support researchers at the beginning of their career, **establishing or consolidating their own independent research team**
- Provide a structure for transition from working under a supervisor to an independent research leader
- Addresses a 'European problem of slow development of independence' of researchers
- PI must be 3 to 8 years after PhD – *some extensions possible relating to maternity / paternity, military service, …*

up to 5 years, up to €2 million per grant

~1400 Starting Grants over 7 years of FP7 (2007-2013)

Deadlines in autumn

European Research Council

ERC Advanced Grant
(ERC Advanced Independent Researcher Grant)

- Support excellent investigator-initiated research projects by **established independent research leaders**
- PI must have an 'impressive' track-record
  - *CV, publications, conferences, monographs, expeditions, prizes*

up to 5 years, up to €2.5 million per grant[1]

~2000 Starting Grants over 7 years of FP7 (2007-2013)

Deadlines in spring

[1] *In some special cases up to €3.5 million*

Opportunities for Australian scientists

European Research Council

Australian scientists are welcome to compete

For **StG**, one must fit the eligibility window (3 – 8 yrs)

They must be motivated to come and work in Europe for some years

They must obtain the – conditional – support of a European university or research organisation

Proposal submission

Electronic submission system

- Information on the PI and track-record
- Scientific description of the project
- Information on requested resources
- Statement of support of the host organisation

Total some 30 pages

Peer review

Peer review follows a classical format

- Proposals are assessed remotely by reviewers
- Panels meet to make decisions on the ranking of proposals
- Panels set grant-levels for successful proposals

A two-step elimination procedure is used

- Increasing the depth of assessment in the 2nd step

A final meeting of Panel chair-persons

- Decisions on a limited number of inter-disciplinary proposals
- Any remaining difficult cases

Panel structure

There are 25 panels

- 10 in Physical Sciences and Technologies
- 6 in Social Sciences and Humanities
- 9 in Life Sciences

Panels need to make judgement on science that does not always coincide with its expertise – generalist approach

Referees, and members of other panels, supply the necessary specialist expertise, including multi-disciplinary expertise

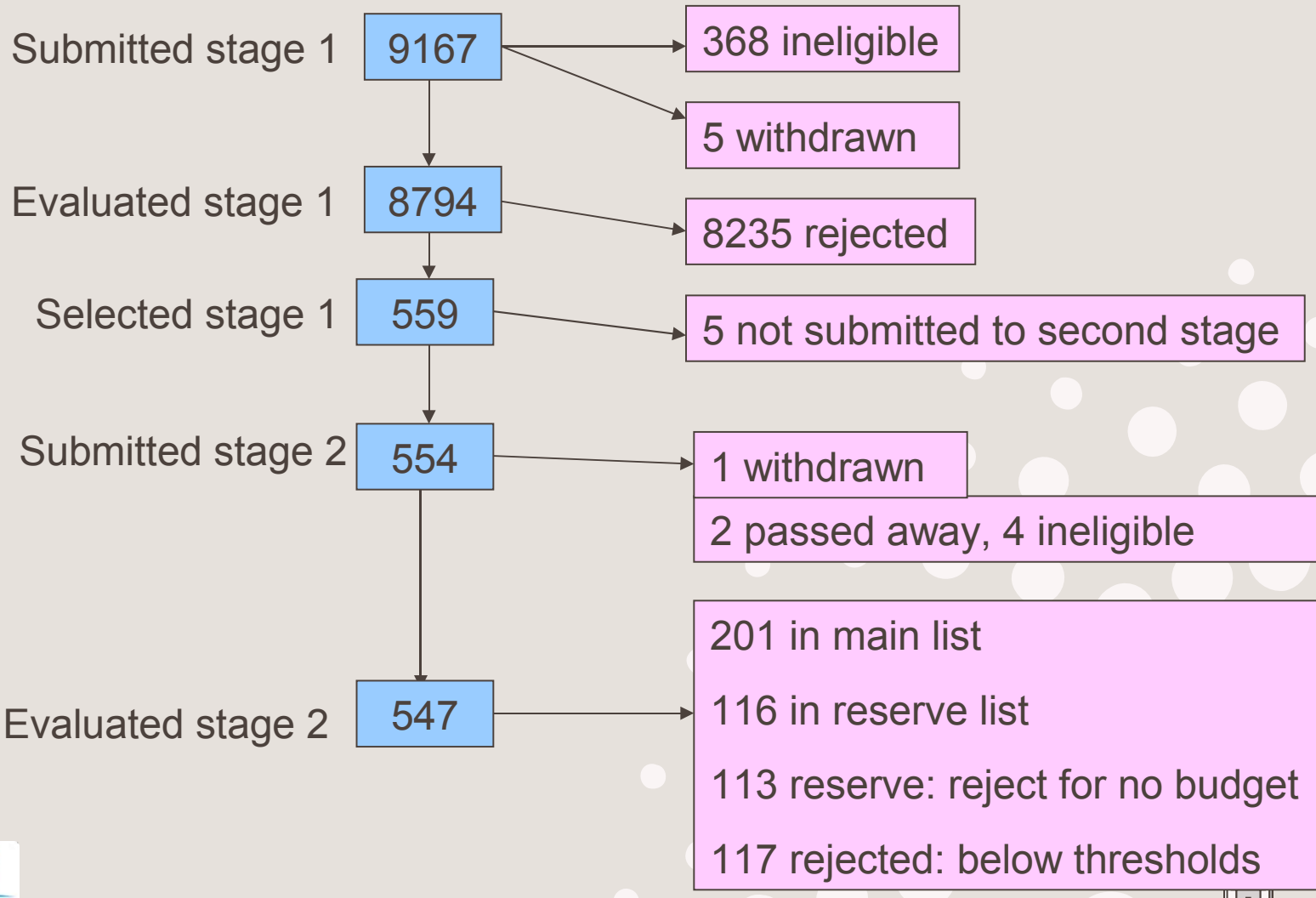
For Starting Grant: interviews

The Starting Grant applicants will often not yet have a very extensive track-record

Therefore, a interview with the panel is organised for every applicant in the 2nd step

This has proven a highly satisfactory procedure

First Staring Grant call: the numbers



First Starting Grant call
Stage 2: 559 proposals expected

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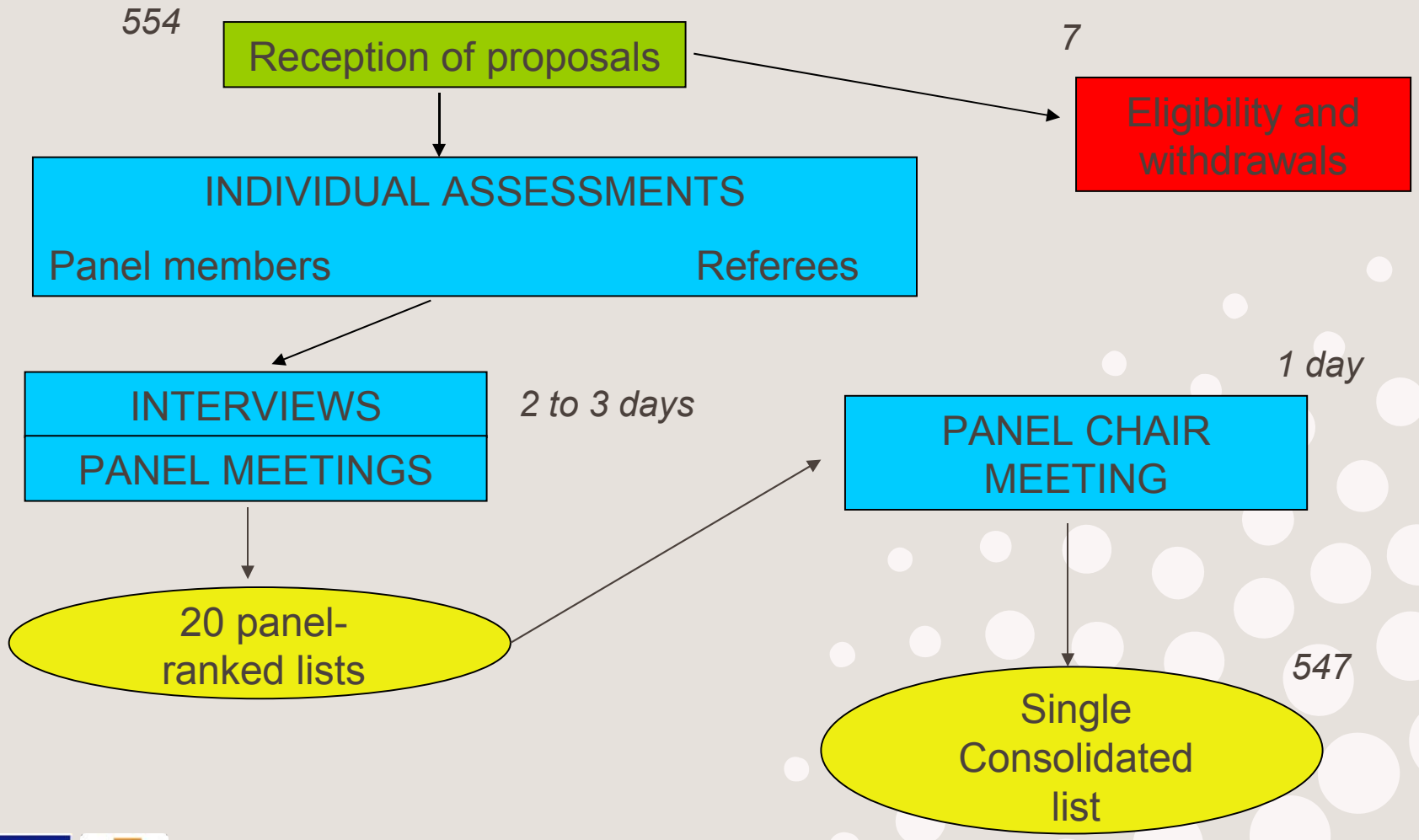

The Success rate problem

The number of Starting Grant applicants significantly exceeded expectations – success rate about 3%

Measures have been taken to reduce the over-subscription

For the first Advanced Grant call a success rate closer to 10% may be expected

First Starting Grant call: AU participation

European Research Council

AU Nationality

- Amongst 9167 stage-1 proposals: **28**
- Amongst 554 stage-2 proposals: **4**
- Amongst 201 successful proposals: **1**
- *This is proposal 207634 and the PI lives in Germany*

AU Residence

- Amongst 9167 stage-1 proposals: **15**
- Amongst 554 stage-2 proposals: **1**
- Amongst 201 successful proposals: **1**
- *This is proposal 203134 and the PI has Israeli nationality*

To know more or start …

erc.europa.eu – the ERC website

cordis.europa.eu – the EU research website, all programmes – *where the ERC is known as the 'IDEAS' programme*

Documents most needed:

- Work-programme = legal text, eligibility and evaluation criteria, may describe one or more calls
- Guide for applicants

Conclusions

ERC is a new institution

The first call has been successfully implemented

It offers opportunities for scientists of any nationality who wish to work in Europe

Thank you for your attention