

Perspectives from a panel member

Dries Bonte



'Life Science' panel 2021-2023-2025

Biology - Ecology & Evolution - LS8



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

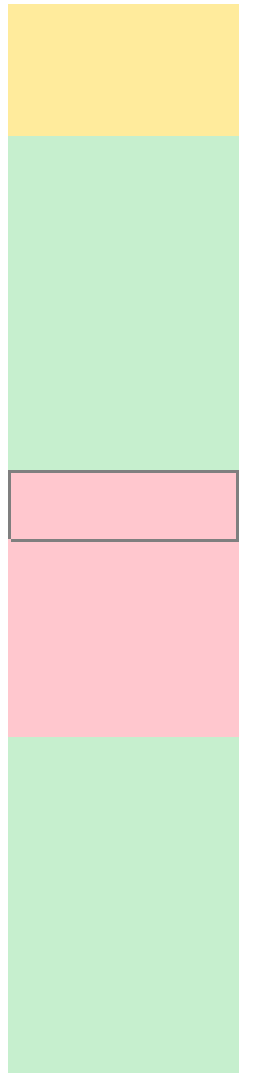
Panels are diverse !

LS1-Biophysics/LS6-Immunology	PE1 - applied mathematics and fluid mechanics	SH4 - Linguistics
LS1-Nucleic acid biochemistry	PE1 - pure mathematics	SH1 - Economics
LS1-Protein Biochemistry	PE1/PE6 - machine learning	SH1 - Economics
LS1-Structural biology/CryoEM/computational	PE10 - ecology	SH1 - Economics
LS2-Epigenetics	PE10 - geophysics and tectonics	SH2 - Legal studies
LS2-Genomics	PE10 - meteorology	SH2 - Political and legal philosophy
LS2-Human genetics	PE10 - oceanography	SH2 - Political science
LS2-Systems Biology/Synthetic Biology	PE11 - biomaterials	SH3 - Social Anthropology
LS3- Plant cell biology	PE2 - exp non linear optics	SH3 - Social studies of science and technology
LS3-Cell Biology	PE2 - high energy physics detectors	SH3 - Sociology
LS3-Developmental Biology	PE2 - Quantum Information & Technologies	SH4 - Clinical and health psychology
LS4-Cancer research	PE2 - theo high energy physics	SH4 - Social Psychology
LS4-Cardiovascular research	PE3 - Condensed matter physics and devices	SH5 - Cultural anthropology, ethnology
LS4-Metabolism	PE3 - nanophysics and quantum devices	SH5 - Cultural Studies, Literature
LS5-Behavioral neuroscience	PE3 - theo condensed matter physics	SH5 - Museum studies
LS5-Cell and Mol. Neuroscience	PE3/PE4 - soft matter and biophysics	SH6 - Archeology
LS5-Computational Neuroscience	PE4 - electrochemistry	SH6 - Archeology
LS5-Neuroimaging	PE4 - heterogeneous catalysis	SH6 - History
LS6- cancer immunology	PE4 - surfaces and nanostructures	SH6 - History and Philosophy of Science
LS6-Microbiology	PE4 - theoretical chemistry	SH7 -Environmental Science
LS6-Microbiology/parasitology	PE5 - biochemistry	SH7 -Geography and spatial analysis
LS7- Epidemiology	PE5 - homogeneous catalysis	
LS7-Drug development/nanomedicine	PE5/PE11 - materials and synthetic chemistry	
LS7-Gene Therapy/Cancer/Vascular Biology	PE5/PE11 - polymers	
LS7-Medical Imaging	PE6 - computational biology	
LS8- Ecology/Evolution	PE6 - theoretical computer science	
LS8- Microbial ecology	PE7 - biomedical imaging	
LS8-Evo-Devo	PE7 - microengineering	
LS9_Plant stem cells?	PE7 - networks	
LS9-Cell and Tissue engineering/biomaterials	PE7 - robotics	
LS9-plant genetics/microbiology	PE8 - chemical and energy process engineering	

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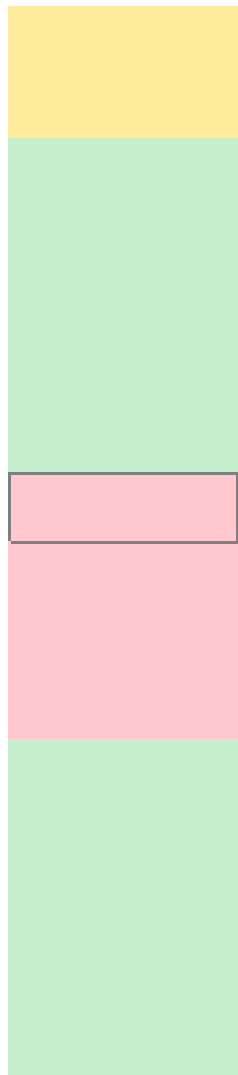
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project reviewing

Step 1: panel members – from a general perspective – Part B1 only

Attractive proposals score better, less is more

- Good overview figure of the problem/objective works
- Emphasise the synergy: why do you need to work together, why is there no other alternative
- Don't say groundbreaking, show it
- Details on the methods don't matter – connect to your expertise and show your excellence
- CVs are very important – provide all relevant work to show that you are able to advance the field. You lead a team!

Step 2: remote referees – part B1 and B2

Now you need to demonstrate that you will be able to fulfill the promised objectives

- be careful with introducing big problems and their need to be solved if you will only tackle part of it, or when the solutions will not be delivered
- journals are good indicators of expertise – reviewers evaluate these (not per se IF), also other merits that demonstrate excellence and authority
- Expertise should be available in your team, so be clear if analyses/approaches are available if you don't have the demonstrated experience
- proofs of principle are needed when new methods (equipment, tools, designs,..) are used

BIG QUESTIONS

Move the entire (larger) field forward

Paradigm shifts (new theory and evidence)

New technologies allow you to cross frontiers

Creativity by using approaches from different disciplines that has not been combined before

Scale

Test generality of important insights that have been disparatively generated

Global scale works! Generality or patterns in condition dependence

Unprecedented efforts to gather new complete data

NOT

Projections of well known theories/processes to a new system

New mechanistic insights (seem to) overrule new data

Patterns only [move beyond]

Questions without clear hypotheses [avoid such panel discussions]

BIG QUESTIONS

Move beyond the state of the art

In scope, scale & approaches [you need to convince the panel that you are the most suited team to spend a lot of tax money]

Be clear why, which novel concepts and approaches or developments between or across disciplines will be used

be explicit when you think panel members might doubt

A synthesis WP at the end does not make a project synergistic

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Team composition

PI need to be complementary

Interdisciplinarity can also imply PI from the same field (e.g., but specialised in different systems, expertise,... as long as it serves the project it is OK)

Demonstrate good synergy throughout the project (e.g., exchange staff, equipment, samples,...)

You all have the same goal to solve the most challenging question in your domain

Team size does not matter (but most usually 3-4PI)

Team composition (country, institute, gender) is not important – excellence is the only criterium (but...)

Is the most important aspect evaluated at step 3 !!

Good vibes, good team spirit

All partners are equal, so give all the floor and make sure each PI is able to put forward his/her own strengths

Career stage and gender balance officially don't matter, but...

Demonstrated (bilateral) collaboration are (seen as) a strength

Give some history on the co-creation process: always works!!

Budget

Seldom an issue – breaking point

Can be signaled in second step – then questioned in step 3

Balanced and well motivated (e.g., own salaries)

NonEU partner can get a substantial part if there is a good reason for it
(no one else can tackle this...)

Avoid

B1-B2 copy-paste

B1 and B2 are different and independent parts of the proposals

Promising

and not fulfilling [avoid empty, unsubstantiated sentences]

Boring

Boring proposals don't get the enthusiasm and support of the full panel

Disconnected

parts of the proposal. They can be an opportunity but may harm the synergy of the proposal and team

Panel members

Are humans

- Sympathise when they feel connected to the problem and team
- recognise sloppy proposals and proposals that are put together for the sake of applying rather than for the sake of solving that key problem



Questions?

