



European Research Council

President

Established by the European Commission

Brussels, 1 June 2023

Subject: Your letter of 18 May 2023 concerning the revision of ERC panel descriptors

Dear Dr van den Berg,

Thank you for sending me the letter from the chairs of ESHET and related societies, dated 18 May 2023. The letter expresses concerns regarding the recent revision of some of the ERC panel descriptors, specifically those including “Historical Economics” (located in the SH1 panel) and “History of Economic Thought” (located in the SH6 panel). I hope the explanation for these changes will be useful and will allay your concerns.

ERC panel descriptors serve to guide applicants to the panel closest to the profile of their proposed research. They do not represent funding priorities. The ERC funds excellent frontier research, irrespective of whether a research field or theme is specifically mentioned in the descriptors. The rationale for the recent revision was to use similarly broad descriptors in all panels and to avoid highly specific or narrow descriptors. The 2023 descriptor “SH1_16 Historical economics; quantitative economic history; economic systems, institutional economics” has been shortened to: “SH1_16 quantitative economic history; economic systems, institutional economics” in the 2024 ERC Work Programme, and the 2023 descriptor “SH6_14 History of ideas, Intellectual history, history of economic thought” is in 2024 subsumed under the updated “SH6_13 cultural history, intellectual history”. Furthermore, in 2024 SH6 also has the descriptor “SH6_12: social and economic history”.

The revision of ERC panel descriptors does not imply a change of coverage of the panels. The ERC Scientific Council will continue to ensure the involvement of experts in the SH1 and SH6 panels who are able to evaluate proposals in the field of economic history and in related fields, including Historical Economics and History of Economic Thought. As you know, ERC evaluation procedures also include the use of cross-panel evaluators and of specialist, remote referees. These are additional mechanisms to ensure the fair evaluation of all proposals submitted to the ERC.

I would also like to recall earlier correspondence between former ERC president Jean-Pierre Bourguignon and Hans-Michael Trautwein, at that time President of ESHET (letter of 31 October 2017, attached), in which Bourguignon encouraged the ESHET research communities to seize ERC funding opportunities.

I am glad, therefore, to read in your letter that younger historians of economic thought are becoming increasingly interested in ERC funding. I hope that ESHET will further encourage the community to apply for ERC funding. The scientific officers from the ERC Executive Agency are always available – as they have been in the past – to present the ERC funding opportunities at research conferences.



Such presentations can also further explain the ERC evaluation process, including the fact that proposals from all research fields are equally welcome and stand equal chances to be funded.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maria Leptin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Maria Leptin
President of the European Research Council