

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

My experience as an ERC ethics reviewer

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My experience as an ERC ethics reviewer or expert, is very **positive** and can be summarized in 3 points today:

- 1) We, the experts, and the ERC Executive Agency leading Teams, are **very motivated**.
- 2) The review process evaluating the ethics of the Proposals, has **excellent quality**.
- 3) Our cooperation, between the ERCEA Teams and the Applicant, constitutes **an efficient trio**.

I experience that Experts and our Leading Team are:

Devoted

Stable

Experienced

Respectful

Secure

Smiling

Never procrastinating

Highly qualified

Thus, the competence in Panels and Teams, is top.

For instance, we cover expertise in:

Stem cells, Biobanks, Medicine, Animal research, Veterinary Medicine, Psychiatry, Psychology, Mathematics, Technology, Chemistry, Physics, Engineering, Data handling, Misuse, Dual use, Environment, Biosafety, Law, Criminology, Political Science, Social Science, Humanities and more.

We read the best Proposals, “the potential winners”, and they are difficult, and need ethical clearance, before grant funding signatures.

Some Proposals pose complicated ethical issues of high sensitivity.

Thus, the interdisciplinary Panels and Teams are ideal for deeper ethical reviews.

I experience, that deeper ethical reviews are needed in all types of grants and panels. Some even miss the ethical self- assessment in the Proposal. I will illustrate two dimensions- type of Grants and Panels

	Starting Grants	Consolidator Grants	Advanced Grants
Ethical Screening panels	early career	middle career	late career
Ethical Assessment panels	difficult ethical issues	difficult	difficult
Ethical Check panels (during grant life time)	Follow up ethical issues	Follow-up ethical issues	Follow-up ethical issues

The panels are ideal for working with difficult ethical issues because:

We do not compete, as if we were writing up an application.

Rather,

we collaborate on formulating the best ethical analyses for each Proposal we work on.

We have a common goal and we like very much this complicated work.

But, before we meet up for 5 days,

I have to manage on my own, alone, remote, but with lots of time before deadline.

Thus, I experience I am challenged individually.

I know that my analyses of 6-11 proposals, will be merged, with the analyses of 2 other experts (out of the 10-12 in the panel) on the same Proposals.

I can pose additional ethical suggestions, only with thorough reasons.

I remind myself, not to think I do scientific evaluation (it is done),but solely concentrate on ethical reflections and evaluations.

I know I can look forward to the Panel's and Team members' positive expectations, trust, engagement and hopefully, support.

I accept that I may do errors, but it is ok to correct each other. In addition, before panel meeting,

The Rapporteur role

I am allocated 3-4 of the “my” projects as a Rapporteur to formulate a suggested consensus among the 3 of us.

This is challenging and often difficult.

I have to extract the best from the 3 of us but keep all comments for the discussions in the upcoming panel .

There, I join a constructive, harmonious, smiling Panel and Team.

- The ERCEA Ethics Officers prepare perfectly, highly useful documents, advanced templates and a technological portal.
- We suggest and discuss requirements to the Applicant and argue with reasons.
- We analyze the Applicants' reply documents, deliverables and read B2 Proposals.
- We suggest, discuss and modify requirements to the A according to national/international/ EU regulations and laws.
- This constructive, harmonious collaboration helps solving ethical issues.

The trio: Experts + Ethics Officers + Applicant.

- No Proposals are similar with respect to ethical analyses.
- I am impressed by the preparatory work done for us by the ERCEA.
- I enjoy joining the Panel and Teams for our lively debates which are necessary for uncovering new ethics issues in new cutting edge research.
- The Ethical Officers provide the Applicants with our finalized documents and offer personal contact, which is a resource for the A and the Host institution.

Conclusion

- As a scientist, I experience this work as very meaningful and constructive.
- As a Panel member, I enjoy the collaboration reaching synthesis of modifying excellent Proposals according to research ethical analyses.
- Responsible Ethics officers present, during the meeting, for each Proposal, is very valuable.
- Our general attitude during work is a positive one, respectful and aiming for the best for the Applicant receiving clearance and grant signatures.

To future, potential Applicants, remember, if you tick off boxes in the Proposal for ethics, you could also include your Ethical Self-Assessment, at least half a page or more.



Good luck and Thank you!

Athena Pallas, The Goddess of Wisdom, at a gate
of the University of Oslo.