

NOMINATION PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AWARD 2019

Dear members of the jury,

With great pleasure and enthusiasm we would like to nominate Adhemare de Rijk for this year's individual Professional Services Award. Adhemare has been the funding manager of Erasmus School of Economics and Erasmus School of Philosophy for some time already, but during the past two years she also operated across the Woudestein campus to help researchers from other schools, with significant additional success. Over the past year, across the Woudestein campus, **a total amount of more than €6.5 million of funding was obtained** with her support, with an **outstanding success rate** that was three times higher than the national average for some types of grants.

Adhemare provides essential support to researchers who pursue grants, such as those provided by N.W.O. and the EU. Adhemare's devotion to her work, her profound knowledge about various types of grants and the systematic, comprehensive, proactive and empathetic approach she uses to support an amazing number of applicants are impressive. Equally impressive is the amount obtained with proposals that she supported. At Erasmus School of Economics alone, currently the equivalent of the research time of more than 40 academics is financed through revenue from grants. Moreover, out of the 8 Veni grants awarded in 2019 in the category Economics & Business Administration, 5 recipients were supported by Adhemare. Similarly, out of the 5 Vidi grants that were awarded in that same category, 3 had been supported by Adhemare. It is always difficult to put a price tag on individual contributions in this type of situations, but not a single scholar who has worked with Adhemare doubts that she is instrumental to the overall budget of the schools.

It is important to emphasize that Adhemare's job does not only consist of advising applicants regarding the actual writing of the proposal. Adhemare also helps future and prospective employees who for instance consider applying for a Marie Curie grant, advises applicants on the best year to submit a proposal, proactively establishes contacts with grant officers at funding organization, organizes the FLAT (Finance, Legal, Audit and Tax) checks for all proposals, and does not stop when a grant is obtained. After the start of a research project she stays involved, giving feedback on necessary documents, and preparing intermediate or final reports for the funding organizations.

Quite a few faculty members will admit that they have dreamt of becoming an academic researcher since they were young, but no one dreams of submitting grant proposals. Still, applying for grants has become more and more part of the game of being a researcher, as governments around the world have gradually reduced the financial support for research that is related to the number of students in an institution. More and more, government funds for research must be obtained through highly competitive calls for grant proposals. It is increasingly difficult to build a career in research without success in those competitions and as a result the number of applications is steadily rising. Consequently, for a researcher in Social Sciences & Humanities the average rate of success in an evaluation round for grant proposals is less than 10%. Clearly, one of Adhemare's main achievements is that the researchers she supports have a much better chance.

Part of the reason for that is that Adhemare coaches all applicants intensively. Obviously, the eventual quality of the proposals highly depends on the researchers themselves. Without a solid idea or a convincing curriculum vitae most proposals will be unsuccessful, regardless of the support. However, a grant proposal differs from what researchers typically write and specific requirements need to be taken into account. To do this properly the availability of a dedicated, knowledgeable, flexible grant officer is indispensable; someone who explains the application process, takes the time to engage in a conversation about the proposed project and provides several rounds of feedback on gradually improving drafts.

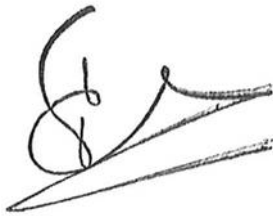
Adhemare excels in this type of support. Each year she processes very many applications with a high level of attention to detail. **During the busy weeks around the main deadlines she works day and night to provide feedback, answer questions and perform all kinds of hands on support, often under very stressful circumstances.** At any time she can tell you exactly which researchers are competing for what type of grant and what are the main challenges they are addressing at that moment in time. In her interaction with the applicants she is very friendly, but also strict when she needs to be.

Adhemare keeps an open eye for best practices around the world. She maintains good contacts with colleagues in leading institutions abroad and travels frequently to stay up-to-date with grant support practices elsewhere. She also acts as an evaluator for the European Commission on a regular basis, to stay in touch with the evaluation process at the other side of the table.

In the past two years, she has not only supported researchers at Erasmus School of Economics and Erasmus School of Philosophy (already quite a large number) but also many researchers at other schools on the Woudestein campus. While working across campus, Adhemare has extended the approach at her base schools to other schools, creating important cross-campus innovations with substantial results. We would like to highlight one particular innovation.

Many grant evaluations require some type of presentation and interview with a selection committee in the final stage of the decision to provide the grant or not. For most researchers effective use of the interview requires training, preferably in front of a **mock committee** that resembles the actual selection committee. Organizing and coordinating such mock interviews is not straightforward, e.g. because of the limited availability of potential members with suitable expertise and experience. Still, Adhemare succeeded in organizing at least one, and often multiple, mock interviews for all Veni, Vidi and ERC grant applicants across campus. For all candidates she created relevant custom-made mock committees consisting of senior faculty from various schools. In each case these mock committees first sternly questioned the applicants about their proposal (to resemble the actual interview) and then more kindly advised them about their application and presentation. In some cases, applicants admitted afterwards that they had been shaken and stirred by the mock committee, but all of them agreed that the experience had been very helpful. Importantly, the encounter with the mock committees effectively communicated to all candidates that their applications were taken very seriously by the EUR, that their efforts were noticed and appreciated and that quite a few senior researchers were cheering them on. All this contributed to a record of grant successes on Woudestein and a success rate that is significantly higher than the national average. The success of the mock committees points at one crucial consideration regarding grants. For a research-intensive institution it is crucial that applying for grants becomes accepted as business as usual. To achieve this it is vital that researchers are convinced that it is appreciated and properly supported.


In sum, we believe Adhemare deserves the individual Professional Services Award for two main reasons. First, her outstanding and unprecedented track record in grant acquisition over the recent years and especially the past year. This success is a testimony of her dedication and her outstanding support of researchers across the Woudestein campus. Second, and arguably even more important, Adhemare's actions have **clearly established the preparation of grant proposals as a constituent part of doing research and working together in a constructive spirit, throughout Woudestein**. She has shown that applying for grants can be instructive, rewarding and stimulating. We therefore strongly encourage the leadership of this university to use the services she has pioneered and the mentality behind it as inspiration for the further development of research support. Adhemare's steps across campus have shown how this university can make a giant leap in providing support to researchers who pursue grants. Those researchers strongly appreciate her for it and we wholeheartedly recommend to the jury to show its appreciation too.



Prof. dr. Frank van der Duijn Schouten
Dean Erasmus School of Economics



Prof. dr. Hub Zwart
Dean Erasmus School of Philosophy



Prof. dr. Enrico Pennings
Dean of Research, Erasmus School of Economics
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The following researchers endorse this nomination:

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