Advices to prepare the ERC starting Grant proposal

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**PART B1**

**Section 1 Track Record of PI**
- Scientific Leadership Potential: 2 p (not this year)
- CV (including “funding ID”): 2 p.
- Early achievements track record: 2 p.
- Extended synopsis: 5 p.

**PART B2**

**Section 2 Scientific proposal**: 15 p.

**Section 3 Research Environment**: 2 p.
ERC Starting Grant: Proposal evaluation

**Submission**

- **Proposal - B**
  - Section 1
  - Section 2
  - Section 3
  + Annexes

- Eligibility Check

**Step 1**

- Evaluation
  - Indiv. Assessments
  - PANEL MEETINGS
  - Ranking

**Proposal – B1**

- Section 1
- Section 2
- Section 3

**Step 2**

- Evaluation
  - Indiv. assessments
  - Interdisciplinary flag
  - Interviews
  - PANEL MEETINGS
  - Ranking

**Proposal – B1+B2**

- Section 1
- Section 2
- Section 3
1. **Panel members from previous years** are known.

2. Some are replaced, but many continue.

3. Two panel members and two external reviewers will examine the part B1. this is the crucial step.

4. If succeed, six reviewers, including the two panel members, will examine the complete proposal (part B2).

5. **Ground breaking but not controversial proposal:** if you have a negative evaluation, you are out!
# Evaluation criteria

## PANEL MARKS

<table>
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<th>1. Principal Investigator</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of research output/track-record:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>How well qualified is the Principal Investigator (and any co-Investigator if applicable) to conduct the project (reviewers are expected to evaluate the quality of the prior work such as published results in top peer review journals as well as other elements of the Principal Investigator’s CV).</td>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent are the publications and achievements of the Principal Investigator groundbreaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art? To what extent does the quality and quantity of funding the Principal Investigator has attracted during the last ten years demonstrate his/her reputation as a performer of ground-breaking research?</td>
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<th>2. Research project</th>
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<td><strong>Ground-breaking nature of the research:</strong></td>
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<td>Does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed? Does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts and/or approaches)? How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity?</td>
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**Potential impact:**
(a) Does the research open new and important, scientific, technological or scholarly horizons?
(b) Will the project significantly enhance the research environment and capabilities for frontier research in Europe (including the host institution)?

**Methodology:**
Is the outlined scientific approach (including the activities to be undertaken by the individual team members) feasible?

**High-gain/High-risk balance:**
a) does the proposed research involve highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies, whose high risk is justified by the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline?

**Total mark**
Has the proposal passed the thresholds (2/4) for criteria 1 and 2?
Quality of research output/track-record:

- How well qualified is the Principal Investigator to conduct the project (reviewers are expected to evaluate the quality of the prior work such as published results in top peer review journals as well as other elements of the Principal Investigator’s CV).

- To what extent are the publications and achievements of the Principal Investigator groundbreaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art?

- Intellectual capacity and creativity: To what extent does the Principal Investigator's record of research, collaborations, project conception, supervision of students and publications demonstrate that he/she is able to confront major research challenges in the field, and to initiate new productive lines of thinking?
1. **CV: Education, Professional Experience, supervised students, funding ID.**

2. **Publications, as main author:** Starters do not necessarily need senior or corresponding author publications, but it is a plus. Crucial to have 1-2 publications in top journals of your area or beyond.

3. **Granted patent(s).**

4. **Invited presentations to international conferences.**

5. **International Prizes/Awards/Academy memberships**
Scientific leadership potential: not this year, but try to spread it in the CV and early achievement record

Describe your scientific contributions, highlighting:

1. **Independence**

2. **Capacity for innovation** (technical and intellectual) for your benefit but also for the benefit of other peers in the lab.

3. **Ground breaking research** that has resulted in sequels for you or others: **open new avenues of research for the labs where you stayed.**

4. **Supervision** of students and **experience in leadership**.

5. All the previous points should be **supported by facts**.

6. **Recognition and diffusion**: main journals contributed, cumulative impact factor, citations, h index…

7. **Assessment of your career**: Starter, but highlight independence and initial funding.
1. The PI has been working rather independently most of the time... equally successful in two laboratories... Innovative... Ability to change fields and topics while maintaining high productivity.... In your description of your work you should convey the idea that your work has been consequence of your leadership.

2. ...made a seminal discovery... Highlight your main contributions.

3. ...was instrumental in establishing new technologies... The approaches initiated enabled subsequent students to profit from his input...

4. ... Experience in supervising students

5. ... Junior position & acquired finances to start the group... ERC would consolidate the scientific independence of the PI.

6. Extensive experience in most technologies required to satisfy the aims of the project...
2. Research project

*Ground-breaking nature of the research:*
Does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed? Does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts and/or approaches)? How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity?

*Potential impact:*
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*Methodology:*
Is the outlined scientific approach (including the activities to be undertaken by the individual team members) feasible?

*High-gain/High-risk balance:*
a) does the proposed research involve highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies, whose high risk is justified by the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline?
1. **State of the art** clearly setting the stage (context and impact for your objectives).

2. Objectives

3. Explaining each aim: hypothesis clearly shown. Illustrate with schemes.

4. Feasibility: host Institute facilities, size of the team, reagents and expertise for the assays in each aim.

5. Milestones (brief timeline).

6. Potential impact: basic and translational, collaborations, setting the independence of your group.
Scientific proposal (part B2)

1. State of the art and objectives.

2. Project methodology. Of each objective, indicate: a) background, hypothesis and preliminary data. b) Experiments proposed and expected results. Possible alternative or backup plans. c) Milestones.

3. Illustrate with figures containing preliminary results (not redundant with B1).

4. Strategic overview containing scope and impact of the proposed research, leadership and independence from previous mentor, reduced risk and contingencies.

5. Timeline including lab members per aim.

6. Resources (up to 1.5 M€)
1. The applicant is overambitious in terms of the proposed work and not very realistic… the work is largely descriptive…

2. Logical extension of the recent work of the applicant… It is not clear how much overlap there will be with the research program of the former supervisor…

3. Interesting program, but neither the proposal or approaches are of a particularly groundbreaking nature.

4. The project is presented in a logical and coherent way…
1. **High risk/high gain balance:** Some of the project is without great risk and will certainly yield results. Other parts include fishing expeditions on new molecules or partners, which is, of course, high risk... Good balance risk/gain... the level of risk is acceptable and the strategy to reduce potential pitfalls is clearly explained... high risk project with potential of high return...

2. **Methodology:** The project is based on solid methodology and the skills of the applicants...

3. **Potential:** … potential to have a wide impact in the field...

4. **Ground-breaking:** The topic of this application represents a niche and to a large extent a black-box with important implications.... Hot topic... great impact.
Good luck!!!