

ERC:
Do we need it?
Application and evaluation.

Zdeněk Strakoš

Charles University

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I. ERC - why to care about?

- ERC was born within the EU program called IDEAS.
It foster the **initiative of individual researchers**.
- It aims at the growth of leaders of the European science.
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Gen 11, 4:

*Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky,
and so make a name for ourselves ...*

I. What does a good ERC application require from us?

- A considerable long term effort. Leaving the "comfort" of the "Czech science" can be painful.
- Being humble. Being aware of the positive as well as negative sides. Avoiding games.
- Realizing that even an unsuccessful ERC application can be very rewarding, providing that it is prepared properly.
- If it is understood as "an exercise in writing", then it can hardly be done properly.

II. How to do ERC application right?

II. Evaluation process

- The panel chair gets the essential information to distribute the work throughout the panel.
- Panel members evaluate individually the assigned proposals (B1).
- First meeting of the panel. From a quarter to a third of the proposals is retained for evaluation, others are rejected (B or C).
- Remote experts and panel members evaluate individually the whole proposals.
- Second meeting of the panel. **Interviews**. Ordered list of proposals - retained for funding (A), the rest (A or B).

II. Basic guidelines for applicants

- StG: Support for excellent PI at the career stage at which they are **starting their own independent research team or programme.**
- CoG: Support for excellent PI at the career stage at which they may still be **consolidating their own independent research team or programme.**
- AdG: Support for excellent PI at the career stage at which they are already established **research leaders with a recognized track record of research achievements.**

PI must demonstrate a **ground-breaking nature and feasibility of the scientific proposal that must include risk.**

II. Strongly advisable structure of ALL PARTS

- **WHAT** is the problem to be investigated?
- **WHY** is the proposed work on the problem worth funding?
- **HOW** the problem can be approached so that a substantial progress towards the goals can be expected?
- **WHO** are the PI and the team? Does the previous record establish credibility for getting close to a breakthrough?

II. Application essentials

- Acronym and Title
- Primary panel specification
- Secondary panel(s) specification
- Keywords
- **Abstract**

Part B1 (to be evaluated at step 1 and step 2):

- Essentials.
- Extended Synopsis
- PI's CV and Track Record

WHAT, WHY, HOW (feasibility), **WHO**

While working on the proposal, put in front of your eyes **the very few questions** that reviewers will have to answer!

II. Distribution of information - B1

- Synopsis: **Invitation to read the whole proposal.** It must make the reader curious and full of expectations on what will follow in Part B2. If it does not, the case is lost.
- Outcome of the previous work. **Knowledge, applications, influence on the young generation.** Publications and lectures are only means of communication of the results.
- All facts about the PI and the previous achievements should be supported by links to the further sources of information whenever possible. **An absolute contradiction with GAČR.**

Part B2 (evaluated at step 2 only):

- State-of-the art and objectives
- Methodology
- Resources (including project costs)

WHAT, WHY, HOW (methodology), WHO

II. Characteristics of strong proposals

- **Originality. Clarity.**
- They get enthusiastic support from a part of the referees (leading experts on the particular topic), and they convince the rest.
- Solid, self confident language, without exaggerations.
World scale state of the art horizon.

Mistakes within the ERC evaluation process can happen (and they do).
Try to give it a minimal chance in your case.

It is not required that the goals are fully reached. **Unlike in the Czech research environment, in frontier research nobody asks for declaring deliverables years ahead** (in science it makes no sense whatsoever).

However, it must be clear that the outcome will be with a high probability so substantial that it is worth to retain the proposal for funding.

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CONSISTENCY

A quote from Jana Kalbáčová - Vejpravová:

Do not try to apply for ERC. DO IT!