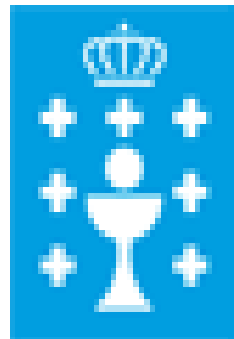


Mi experiencia con el ERC

Hector Gomez

ERC Starting Grant 2012



How to get an
ERC grant ?

Unfortunately,
I do *not* know

My opinion on
how I got an
ERC grant

Outline

- So, who am I and what is my story ?
- My vision of the ERC. The StG program
- What I did before applying
- How I prepared my proposal
- How I prepared my interview

My story

(a brutally brief summary)

- Civil Engineer, UDC, 2003
- PhD Civil Engineering, UDC, 2006
- Visiting Professor, UT Austin, 2007-2008
- Associate Professor, UDC, 2008-now
- ERC Starting Grant, 2012
- Google: Hector Gomez

Outline

- So, who am I and what is my story ?
- **My vision of the ERC. The StG program**
- What I did before applying
- How I prepared my proposal
- How I prepared my interview

My vision of the ERC (I)

- ERC was launched *seven years ago*
- *Recognition* similar to that of NIH, NSF or DARPA
- The *success of ERC is a fact*
 - 3 Nobel Prize winners only in 2014
 - +7% publications in the top 1% most cited

My vision of the ERC (II)

- ERC introduced *several key innovations*
 - Individual projects – no networks !
 - No artificial requirements
 - Portability of the grant
 - Cover PI's salary
 - Need to spend 50% of your time in Europe
 - *Excellence is the only evaluation criterion*

ERC funding programs

**Starting
Grants**

**Consolidator
Grants**

**Advanced
Grants**

Proof of concept

ERC funding programs

**Starting
Grants**

**Consolidator
Grants**

**Advanced
Grants**

Proof of concept

Starting Grant (StG) program

- 2-7 years after PhD
- Up to € 1.5 Mio for 5 years
- *All fields* of science and humanities
- Funds *fundamental and applied* science
- *Individual* project
- *Excellent and independent* PI
- *Excellent and ground-breaking* proposal
- In my experience, excellent evaluation

Should you apply ? (I)

- The ERC web page can be discouraging
“For research talents with proven potential only”
- *Very* strict resubmission rules
- You will never be *certain* you will get it, but ...
 - Writing good proposals is a *crucial* asset
 - Proposals which are not funded can be *reused*

Should you apply ? (II)

- It is *very competitive*, but an ERC grant offers:
 - *Independence, recognition* and *visibility*
 - *Freedom* to chose your topic and your team
 - *Financial autonomy* for five years
 - Capacity to *negotiate* better conditions of work (with your current institution *or* another one)
 - An international *quality label*

Outline

- So, who am I and what is my story ?
- My vision of the ERC. The StG program
- **What I did before applying**
- How I prepared my proposal
- How I prepared my interview

What I did before applying

- Focus on *high-quality science*
- Try to be *independent*
- Identify my panel(s)
- Find and meet grantees in my panel(s)
- Compare my CV with those of grantees
- Ask grantees evaluate my CV

Outline

- So, who am I and what is my story ?
- My vision of the ERC. The StG program
- What I did before applying
- **How I prepared my proposal**
- How I prepared my interview

How I prepared my proposal

- Understand the *ERC principles*
- Study how proposals are *structured and evaluated*
- *Write* the actual proposal

Proposal structure

1. Administrative Proposal (**Part A**)
2. Research Proposal (**Part B**)

Part B1: - Extended synopsis (5 pages)
- Curriculum Vitae (2 pages)
- Funding ID (no page limits)
- Track record (2 pages)

Part B2: - Scientific proposal (15 pages)

Personal interview

Proposal evaluation

**Principal
Investigator
CV**

**Scientific
Proposal**

Proposal evaluation

**Principal
Investigator
CV**

**Scientific
Proposal**

You cannot
change your
past, but ...

Proposal evaluation

**Principal
Investigator
CV**

You cannot
change your
past, but ...

**Scientific
Proposal**

Completely up to
you to come up
with a great idea

CV preparation

- *Irrefutable proof* of excellence and independence
- *Show* ability to shape and create research fields
- Do *not* exaggerate. *Avoid* empty sentences
- Let the *facts* speak

CV preparation: Examples (I)

Highest GPA award in Civil Engineering

CV preparation: Examples (I)

~~Highest GPA award in Civil Engineering~~

BAD

CV preparation: Examples (I)

~~Highest GPA award in Civil Engineering~~

BAD

Highest GPA award in Civil Engineering
(1st in a class of 130, admission rate: 25%)

GOOD

CV preparation: Examples (II)

My ability to create new research fields is
out of question

CV preparation: Examples (II)

~~My ability to create new research fields is out of question~~

**VERY
BAD**

CV preparation: Examples (II)

~~My ability to create new research fields is out of question~~

**VERY
BAD**

Demonstrated ability to create new research fields

CV preparation: Examples (II)

~~My ability to create new research fields is out of question~~

**VERY
BAD**

~~Demonstrated ability to create new research fields~~

BAD

CV preparation: Examples (II)

~~My ability to create new research fields is out of question~~

**VERY
BAD**

~~Demonstrated ability to create new research fields~~

BAD

I did a postdoc at Harvard. I started a new research field in the lab. It was my own idea. When I left, 2 PhD students and 3 Postdocs were working on that field

GOOD

Proposal evaluation

Principal
Investigator
CV

**Scientific
Proposal**

The scientific proposal

- Find a problem, and *think big*
- Get to the point *quickly*
- *Perfect* logical structure
- Have your proposal ready *1 month in advance*
- Ask successful applicants read your proposal
- *Polish, polish, polish*

Interview preparation (I)

- Panel of approximately *20 top-class scientists*
- Panelists can be from *anywhere* in the world
- Typically, 3-5 panelists have read your proposal
- Panelists have reports from 6-8 *remote referees*
- Details of the interview *vary* from panel to panel

Interview preparation (II)

- Be *professional* – you are requesting € 1.5 Mio
- Know your proposal *and* your budget
- *Listen* carefully, *think* and *answer to the point*
- *Practice* until you are completely convinced
- There may be aggressive questions. *Be ready*

If you want to do top-class
science, ERC is for you

I am here to help

Good luck !