



Experiences with the ERC-StG application

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My background



- I'm a **theoretical physicist**
 - research focus: interface of **quantum information & condensed matter**
(→ between panels PE2 and PE3)
 - project “Wavefunctions for strongly correlated systems” (WASCOSYS)
ERC-StG call 2014 (runtime 3/15-2/20)
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- at **time of application**:
 - Junior Professor (tenure track) at **RWTH Aachen University**
 - 7 years after PhD (2014)
 - previous application in 2013 (did not get passed to round 2)
 - since Nov '15: Research Group Leader at **MPI of Quantum Optics**
 - **migration of ERC grant** 8 months after start of grant
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The project



- Regardless of how you got to your project proposal ...

Clarify for yourself, and be clear about the **main points**:

Motivation, main objectives, novelty, impact of the project!

- **Ground-breaking** nature:

- What will be the **impact** of the research?
 - How does it **differ from existing efforts** in the field?
 - Keep it **sufficiently focused** so it is clear how it differs!
 - Novelty important, but also demonstrate you have **necessary expertise**
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- The project should be **made specifically for you!**
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- think about **right panel** (if applicable)
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The PI (=YOU!)



- ERC is a **personal grant** → **you** are important!
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- project should be **tailored to you**

- you have the **right prerequisites** to carry out the research
 - **you are the person** in the world who is **best suited** for this project
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- **highlight why** you are the right person

- **scientifically** (previous experience, unique combination of skills, ...)
 - through your **personality as a researcher**
 - **convince panel/reviewers** that you will **successfully run the project!**
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→ **You need the right pairing of person and project!** ←

Writing the proposal



- **B1 is not a short B2** – write them **independently!**
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- B1 will be **judged on its own** (and afaik by the panel members):
 - it must be **self-contained**
 - focus on **motivation, goals, novelty, impact** – be brief on technical part!
 - write a **short section about yourself** –
Why are you the right person to carry out this project?
 - maybe a (very short) paragraph on the organization of the work
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- B2 contains all the details ...
 - include a discussion on work planning, hiring, backup plans, ...
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- **Ask people you know** for their proposal,
and if they can have a look at your proposal
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What did I do different?



- It was my second attempt to get the ERC-StG.
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- **What did I do different** the second time?
 - similar but **more focused research proposal**
 - proposal **focused on my specific strengths**
(rather than broadly the interesting problems in the field)
 - **made clear why I am the person** to carry out this proposal
 - **started by writing B1 from scratch**, and then B2
(rather than first B2 and then shortening it to B1)
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- Did it work the 2nd time because of or despite these points?
→ I don't know!
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The interview



- Talk:
 - focus on **key points**: idea, novelty, impact, ...
 - **advertise your project** – this is not a science talk
(they already have 8 or so reports → questions!)
 - include a **slide about yourself** + host institution/context
 - **train your talk** (timing!), ask colleagues

 - Questions:
 - think about **any kind of questions** (and answers!):
strength/weaknesses, competitors, collaborators, why you, budget, ...
 - backup slides (details on science, planning, budget, ...)

 - **start preparing early** (both talk and questions)
(going to an early coaching might help in doing so!)

 - inform yourself about **previous panel members**
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Good luck!