

ERC Interview Training

As panel member of the ERC you have two aspects which worry you from time to time: in the first round that you might miss out on an exciting good proposal, and in the second round that you select a proposal with hidden serious flaws.

Consequently in the first round the panel weeds out all proposals where three (or four) panel members agree that they are not of ERC calibre. And for the second round the proposals are sent to 4-6 external experts for critical comment - for Advanced Grants the final judgement might be based on up to 12 opinions!

After collecting and discussing the opinions about **Starting / Consolidator / Advanced Grant** applications, a list of the top finalists is drawn up covering roughly double to three times the number possible to fund. **All those Principal Investigators (PI) on this list are invited for an interview in Brussels.** There are actually two invitation letters: the first is just an announcement, the second letter offers date, location and some specifics, but does not provide any other information (like how the proposal is assessed, ranked, or points criticized). **This interview of roughly 20 minutes is extremely important - and every PI should prepare for it with utmost care.**

In **Germany** the system of assistance for applicants to the Horizon 2020 programs of the European Commission is quite developed, with KoWi ("Kooperationsstelle EU der Wissenschaftsorganisationen") and the NKS ("Nationale Kontaktstellen") most prominent. Foremost the NKS ERC offers free-of-charge interview training for ERC Grant **applicants geared towards German Host Institutions** who have been invited to the interviews in Brussels. These trainings (in English) give applicants the opportunity to practice their interview and receive individual feedback from a professional rhetoric coach. Usually a successful grantee will also share his or her experience, complemented by information from the ERC NKS.

These training sessions are fully booked early, a waiting list exists and for those "unfortunate" a simple webinar is arranged. Large German research organisations like the Max Planck / Fraunhofer / Helmholtz societies (as well as major universities) arrange additional training opportunities for their scientists. And yes, similar training opportunities exist in some other European countries, as well as training days offered by commercial operations.

Mostly for my own customers, but also for scientists in the less-fortunate countries, I offer two ERC interview training opportunities:

1. **Individual advice by e-mail and videoconference.** Besides giving a step-by-step introduction to interviews past and present I will, using the complete submission file (which I usually have of my customers) prepare a very critical evaluation - and try to guess questions the experts and panel members may raise. I also discuss more personal aspects, based on my experiences, in personal meetings. But, most important, together we prepare the 6 minute individual proposal presentation.
2. **A one- or two-day training seminar *in loco*** for a small group of max. 8 scientists, combining general information with mock-panel sessions (with or without video recording) and individual advice. Sometimes this is supplemented by individual videoconferences afterwards.

Both training opportunities should be arranged well in advance of the session in Brussels.

If you are interested, please contact me via office@icck.eu for further details.