

Individual Counselling

In general, the chances to be successful with an ERC or Marie Curie application is around 10% - the chances for myself and my colleagues at the Max Planck Institute were 40 % or better. Why? Because our science was excellent, we understood the system and we used an internal pre-evaluation service. In short: we were not too shy to ask for help. And having been an evaluator myself I was tasked with giving advise and doing pre-evaluations.

One of my biggest problems then (and today) was (is) to make my colleagues (now clients) realize that a funding application is VERY different to a scientific paper! It helped that they knew me personally - and thus today I try to initiate a counselling by sitting down with a potential customer and create a personal relationship, establish trust (discretion is self-evident). Fortunately some of my clients have already a basic understanding after attending one of my seminars.

There are several types of individual counselling (today mostly by videoconference):

- 1. "Light"**: typically for students and postdocs with no clear idea what they really want. Roughly two weeks before the session the client sends me the completed 2-page preparation sheets together with a CV for consideration. We have a consulting discussion of about 30-60 minutes - typically this is done as part of a seminar day.
- 2. "Normal"**: typically for postdocs or junior research group leaders with a rough idea or already rejected applications. Roughly two weeks before the session the client sends me the completed 2-page preparation sheets together with a CV and the complete rejected application (DAAF, DFG, MSCA, ERC, etc) for consideration. The consulting can take between 1-2 hours, most of the time followed by an e-mail / video exchange. Again this can be initiated as part of a seminar day.
- 3. "Intensive"**: typically for (junior) team leaders with a solid idea and rejected or planned applications. Again, roughly two weeks before the session the client sends me the completed 2-page preparation sheets together with a CV, the rejected or largely finished draft of a new application (most of the time Marie Curie or ERC StG, CoG) for consideration. The consulting can take between 1-4 hours, most of the time followed by an e-mail / video exchange. This takes too much time to execute as part of a seminar day.
- 4. "Coaching 1"**: preparation of an ERC StG, CoG, Marie Curie, or DFG scholarship application. Includes "intensive" exchanges until the final submission, with usually between 15 – 25 consulting hours. With this I usually get applicants either to success or at least into the second stage (interview) of the procedure. Only individually, hourly rate.
- 5. "Coaching 2"**: preparation of an ERC AdG or AvH application. Includes "intensive" exchanges. With this I usually get applicants into the 2nd stage - here are the chances 1: 3 (and the rest depends on scientific excellence and an eventual interview). Only handled on an hourly basis, requires often more than 40 hours. ERC AdG is the supreme discipline, but for recent clients (who received 2.5 M €), the counselling was well worth it.
- 6. "Interview training"**: preparing a scientist (or a group of scientists) for the 12 - 15 min interview in Brussels as part of an ERC StG / CoG / AdG application having reached the second stage. Similar in structure to the (ministry-paid) training offered for German candidates by KoWi (or institutions like the Max Planck Society) - but more intensive and with follow-up video contacts.