



## my ERC starting grant journey

Silvia Affò

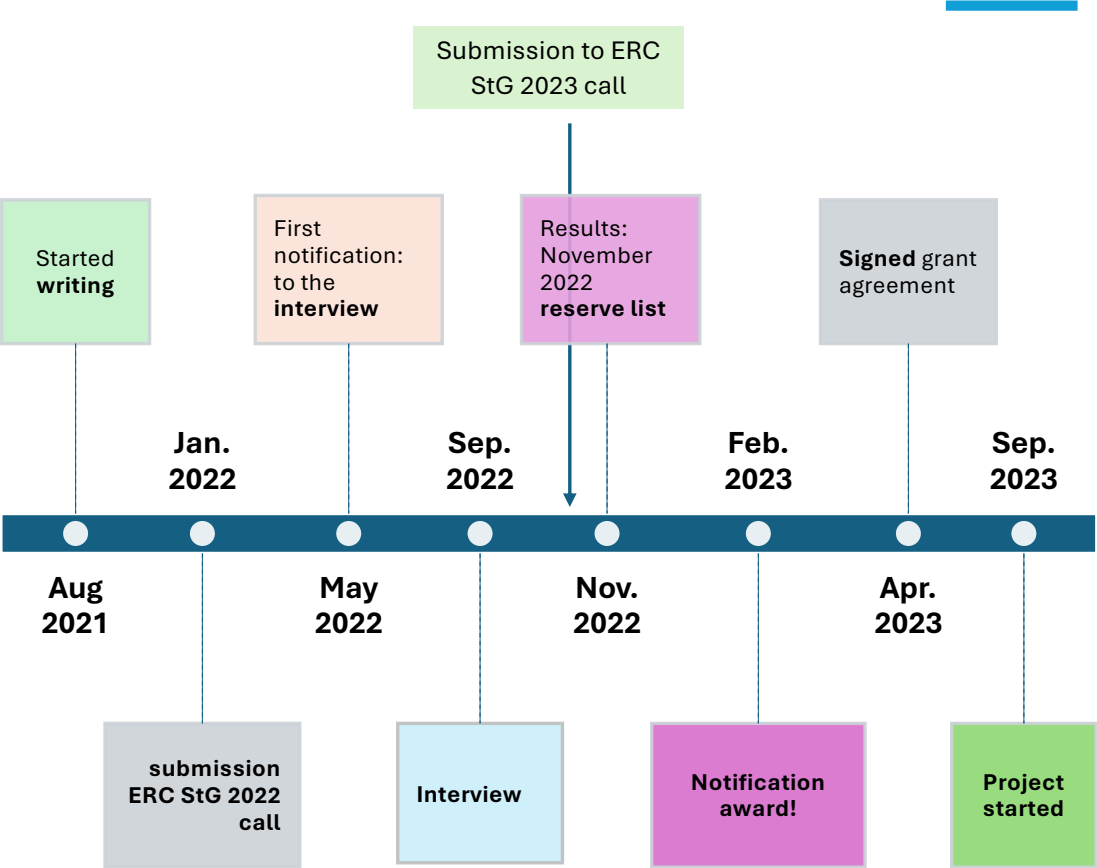
Group Leader,

The Tumor Microenvironment Plasticity and Heterogeneity,

IDIBAPS , Barcelona, Spain

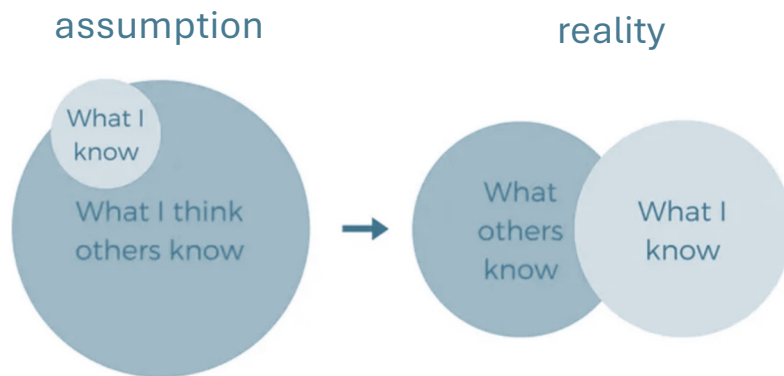


# Timeline



# WHY should I apply?

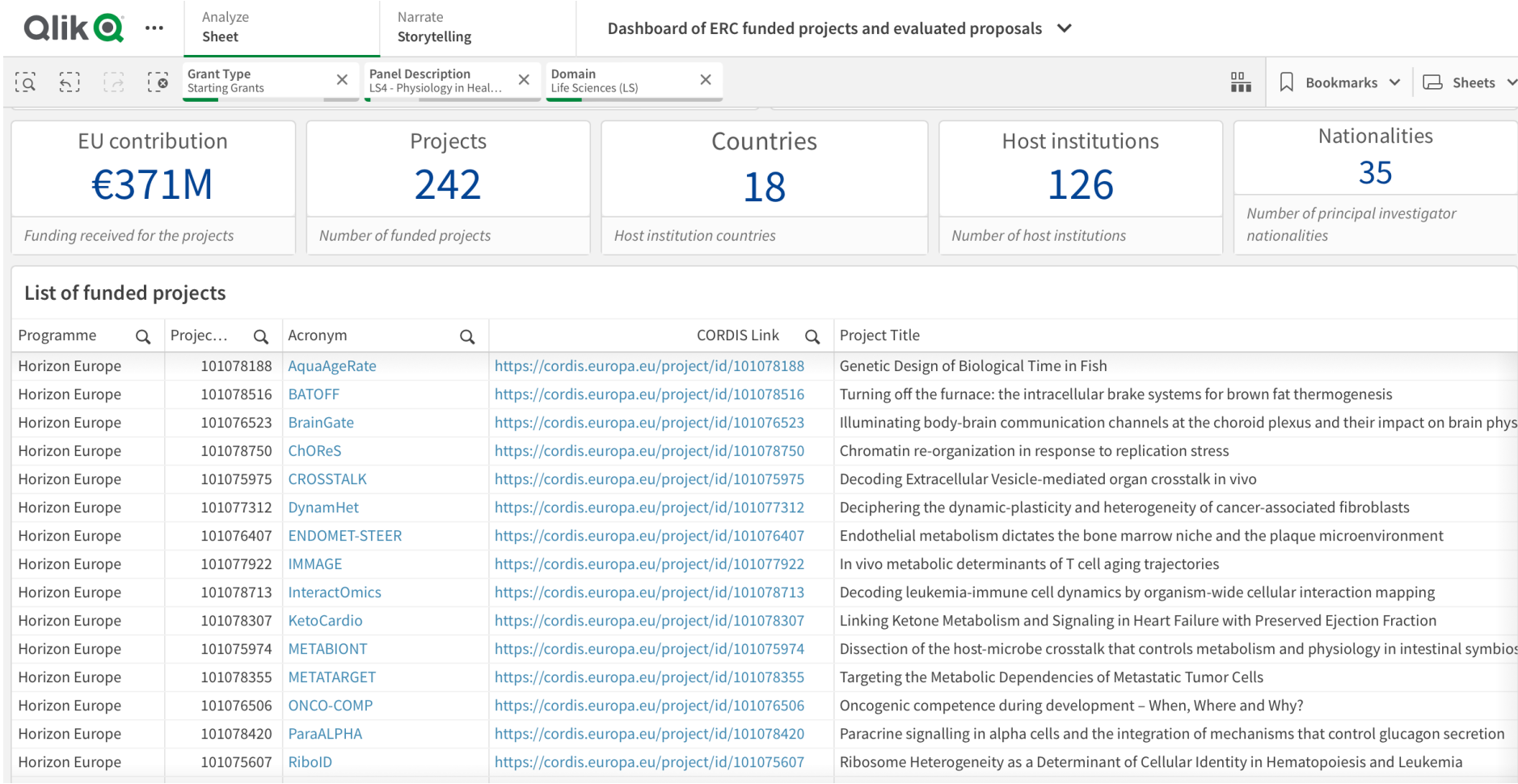
-----The IMPOSTER syndrome-----



## WHY NOT?



# EVERY TOPIC MATTERS



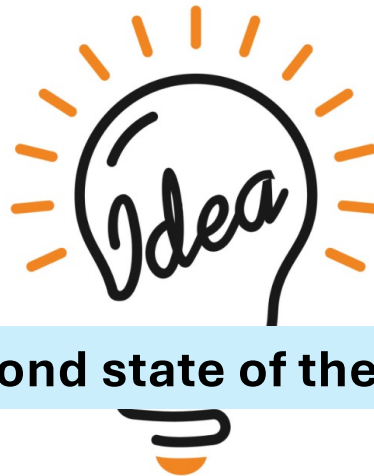
<https://erc.europa.eu/projects-statistics>



WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

# NOVEL

outbreaking\_ innovative\_ breakthrough



High risk

High gain

**Beyond state of the art**

# EXCELLENCE

5 years  
time- and funding- protection



# INFORMATION AND FORMATION



# INFORMATION AND FORMATION

Watch the ERC instructional videos describing the full grant application and evaluation process, step by step (<https://erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/starting-grant>)

Get to know your call carefully (eligibility, extensions of eligibility, PhD defense date, criteria, host institution, funding and additional funding).

**How to get started with your ERC proposal - CHECK ERC WORK PROGRAMME 2025 FOR CHANGES**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7mOFL2tIQ8>

**How to write part 1 of your ERC proposal - CHECK ERC WORK PROGRAMME 2025 FOR CHANGES**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsmQRM88yyM>

**How to write part 2 of your ERC proposal - CHECK ERC WORK PROGRAMME 2025 FOR CHANGES**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fpHkhitwA0>

**ERC starting grantees 2024: Expert tips for a winning application**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yB\\_zZblzRc&t=21s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yB_zZblzRc&t=21s)



**European Research Council**  
6.91K subscribers



# Let's get started



European Research Council (ERC)

<https://erc.europa.eu> › [national-contact-points](#) › [France](#) ⋮

## National contact points - European Research Council (ERC)



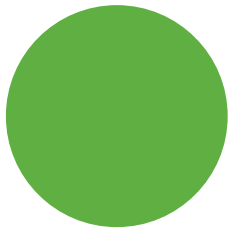
Contact the ERC national point in your country and participate to the reading days.



**Read other people proposals:** successful and not!



Summarize **common points found in successful proposals** and avoid common mistakes detected in non successful proposals.



START WRITING



Acronym\_title

**B1**



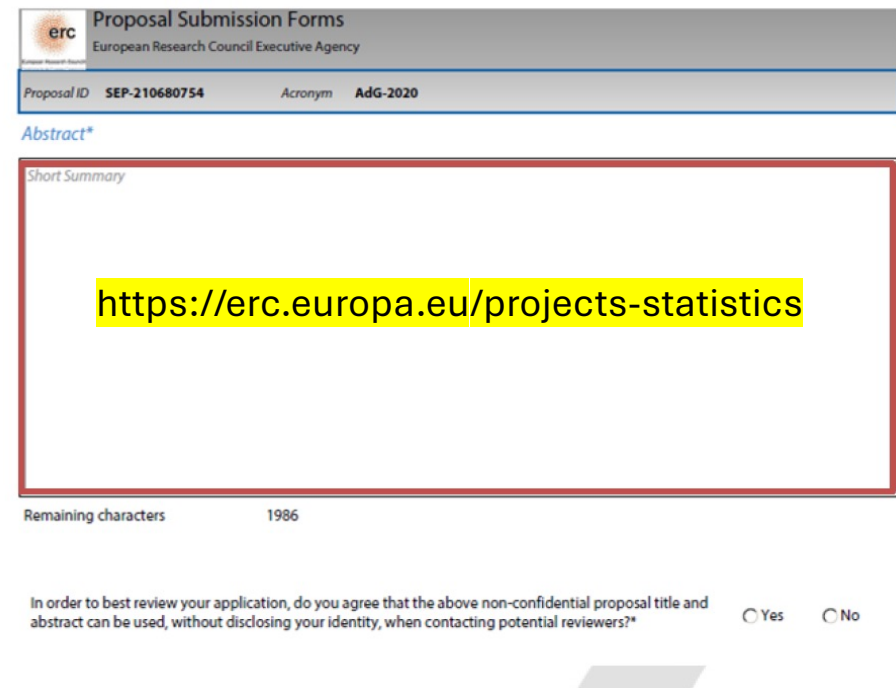
**B2**

Graphical Abstract

# Abstract

This is the first impression that the reviewers will have about you and your proposal

- Be concise
  - Be appealing
  - Explicit why it is important to investigate this field
  - Why now is the right moment
  - Feasible and ambitious
  - The abstracts are published!
- Do not add sensitive data



The screenshot displays the 'Proposal Submission Forms' interface for the European Research Council Executive Agency. At the top, the ERC logo and agency name are visible. Below this, a header bar contains the 'Proposal ID' (SEP-210680754) and the 'Acronym' (AdG-2020). The main section is titled 'Abstract\*' and contains a 'Short Summary' text area. A yellow highlight is placed over the URL 'https://erc.europa.eu/projects-statistics' within this text area. Below the text area, a status bar indicates 'Remaining characters' and the count '1986'. At the bottom, a question asks for agreement to use the proposal title and abstract for review, with 'Yes' and 'No' radio button options.

erc Proposal Submission Forms  
European Research Council Executive Agency

Proposal ID SEP-210680754 Acronym AdG-2020

Abstract\*

Short Summary

<https://erc.europa.eu/projects-statistics>

Remaining characters 1986

In order to best review your application, do you agree that the above non-confidential proposal title and abstract can be used, without disclosing your identity, when contacting potential reviewers?\*

☐ Yes ☐ No

## Practical Tips

- **Graphical Abstract** → is important for you and for the reviewers!
- Think and write 2-3 **fundamental questions** that your project aims to solve
- Think about **ambitious Objectives beyond the state of the art**
- **Max 3 objectives\_ intellectually connected but independent** each other's to avoid waterfall effect\_ 1 figure may be the schematic workflow of your project showing fundamental questions, main objectives and specific tasks (max 2-3 x objective)
- **Milestones not needed, Gantt chart needed in B2**

## Practical Tips

- Use a **consistent style** through your entire proposal

→ Give the **same structure to all aims/objectives**:

Ex: Fundamental question\_ background\_ hypothesis\_ novelty\_ preliminary data

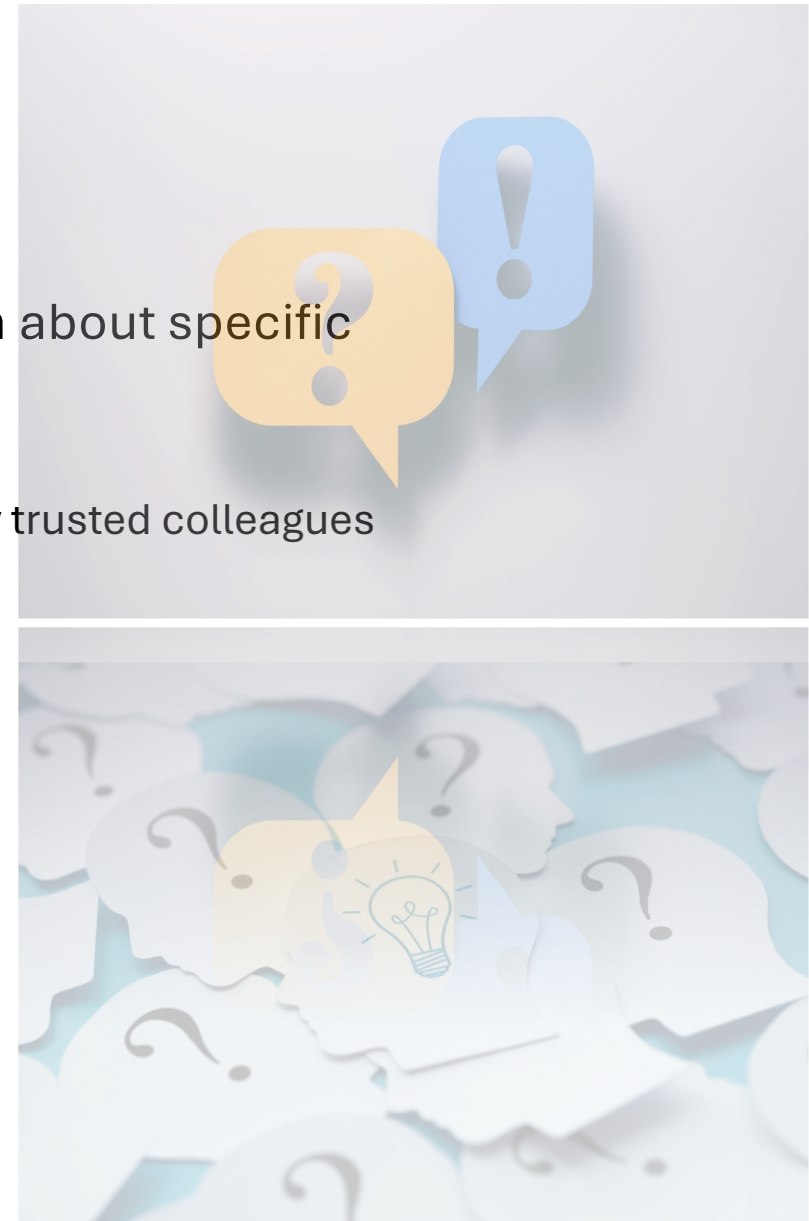
- Make sure and clear that you and your group will do most of the work (collaborators do not perform tasks but they provide support) \_ NO risks assigned to collaborators

## Practical Tips


- Show the reviewer that **you are the right person**
  - Project connected to your expertise but exploring **new** aspects and concepts
- Present **preliminary data supporting your idea**
- Explicit how the **high risk is balanced by the high gain**
- **Contingency plan** → needed for all objectives (short in B1, detailed in B2)

## Feedback and brainstorming are key

- Select trusted colleagues and friends to brainstorm about specific aims/objectives of your project
  - Conceptual mistakes or weaknesses can be detected only by trusted colleagues
- Ask for feedbacks from trusted expert in your field
- **Accept constructive criticisms** and advices



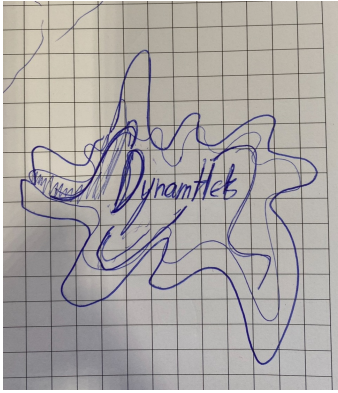


A wooden easel with a white sign attached to it. The sign contains three lines of text: 'Intrigue (B1)', 'Convince (B2)', and 'Inspire (interview)'. The easel is made of light-colored wood and has a simple A-frame design.

Intrigue (B1)

Convince (B2)

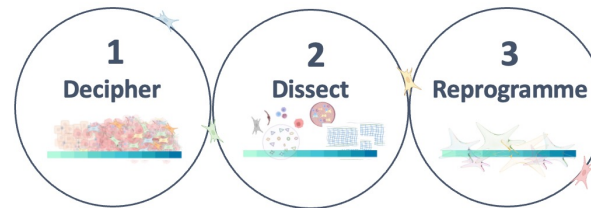
Inspire (interview)



CUSTOMER OBJECTS TO DIMEN		
1	2	3
OBJECTS		
Dim 1	Dim 2	Dim 3
1.1	2.1	3.1
1.2	2.2	3.2



# Dynam Het



# Choose your panel carefully (28 panels in 2025)

## **PHYSICAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING**

PE1 Mathematics  
PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter  
PE3 Condensed Matter Physics  
PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences  
PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials  
PE6 Computer Science and Informatics  
PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering  
PE8 Products and Processes Engineering  
PE9 Universe Sciences  
PE10 Earth System Science  
PE11 Materials Engineering

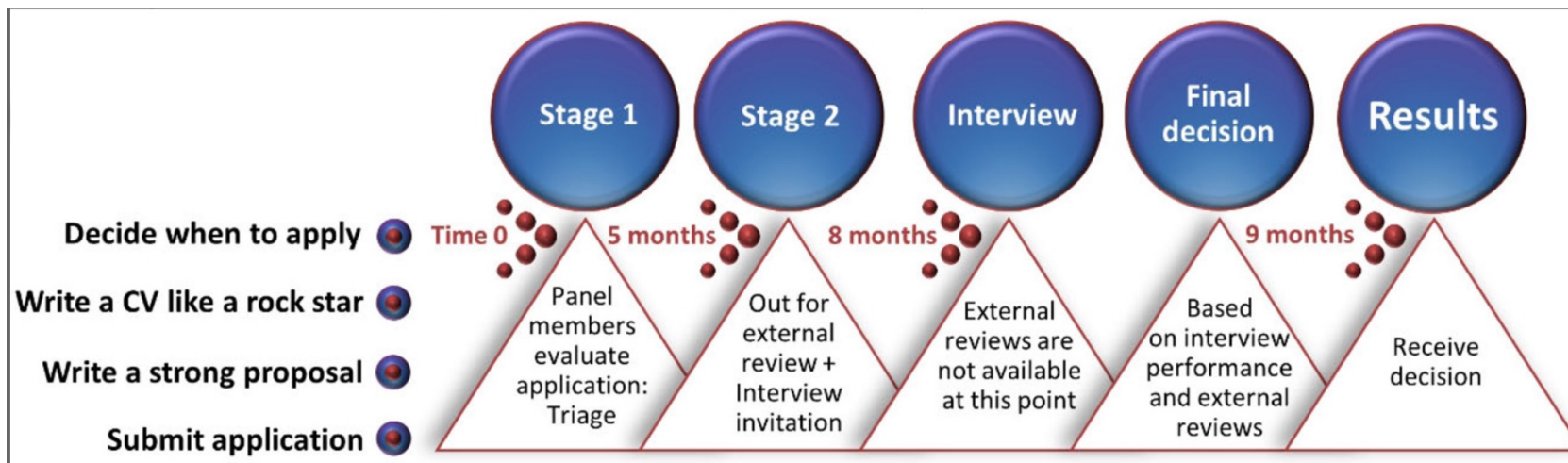
## **LIFE SCIENCES**

LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions  
LS2 Integrative Biology: from Genes and Genomes to System  
LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration  
LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing  
LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System  
LS6 Immunity, Infection, and Immunotherapy  
LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases  
LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution  
LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering

## **SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES**

SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations  
SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems  
SH3 The Social World and Its Interactions  
SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity  
SH5 Texts and Concept  
SH6 The Study of the Human Past  
SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space  
SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts

# Revision steps of an ERC StG application



<https://doi.org/10.1002/anie.202206303>

# THE INTERVIEW





**BUILD CONFIDENCE**

[REDACTED] July 9, 2018

Today I found out that I failed the ERC Grant! @ERC\_Research  
Knowing that I did my absolute best means it was out of my  
control to get it! Congratulations to the ones who got it, very well  
deserved! For the rest of us, let's keep trying!

Comments: 6

Retweets: 0

Likes: 15

[REDACTED] Sep 3, 2020

Sometimes you have to lose in order to win. Very excited to  
announce that after failing twice, I was awarded an ERC Starting  
Grant. Thanks to my group @ [REDACTED] and colleagues  
@ [REDACTED] for their support! Trust me, you have to keep  
applying! @ERC\_Research @ [REDACTED]

Comments: 53

Retweets: 19

Likes: 444



# Good Luck!

