



## Personal Experiences with ERC funding

Sara Bals



# Who am I?

- PhD in 2003 from Antwerp University
- 2003-2004: NCEM, Berkeley National Lab, California, USA
- 2004-2007: FWO Postdoc
- 2007-2012: Assistant Professor
- 2012-2014: Associate Professor
- 2014-2018: Professor
- 2018-now: Full Professor
- **7** ERC projects in the group!



# ERC lessons learned

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- Timing is important, not only because of h-index etc. more about finding the right timing concerning the ability to do something innovative (equipment, new idea...)
- Panel is important: read the expertise of panel members in previous years
- Think and try before you write: you need a REALLY good idea and concept
- Do new experiments, dedicated to this grant
- Start writing in advance so that there is time to put it away for a week or so
- Prepare for the interview (see next slide)
- Consider this as an opportunity to shape your future
- Only apply for projects that seem like a lot of fun to do

# ERC lessons learned – the interview

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- Prepare well in advance
- Read the instructions, but DO highlight your strong points
- It is not a scientific presentation
- Make the slides attractive, don't change them in the days before the interview. End with a really good slide
- Movies: check in advances
- Rehearse timing
- Prepare for obvious questions
- Don't let other candidates make you nervous
- Show enthusiasm and enjoy...this is your audience

# The impact of my ERCs

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- Many doors opening
- Invitations for papers
- Visibility
- Quality label
- Research professorship
- Freedom
- Start of an independent career, my own research line
- Also some negative reactions...

# Last bits of advice / thoughts during application

- The hard work is totally worth it
- Do not give up
- Make sure that the project is high risk/high gain, innovative, but with preliminary proof of concept, show impact
- Read the guidelines
- Write a well-structured proposal, including WP, **risk analysis**, a Gantt chart
- Show off, but don't overdo it
- Try to get your proposal read by somebody that has experience with ERC
- Don't listen too much to all of the advice, stay close to yourself

# Last bits of advice / thoughts during the project

- Enjoy: it is YOUR project
- Get help from your financial department
- Ask advice from somebody who has been an ERC PI
- Take care of your open access publications
- Read the project again once in a while
- Only hire excellent students, this is too important
- Do a bit of PR
- Ask the officers for help, they are willing to provide assistance
- Start thinking about new applications before the end of the project