# *Demystifying the ERC: Strategy and Success*

**1st Polish-Italian Conference on Chemistry, Materials and Biomedicine (CMB)**

Rome, 19 September 2025

# Plan for today

- **Introduction to ERC Grants**
- **Behind the scenes: Testimonials from ERC Grantees**
- **Group Work: "*You are the Evaluator*"**
- **True or False – ERC myths**
- **Wrap-up**
- ***"Pitch your ERC idea" - during after-lunch session***

## MONITORING

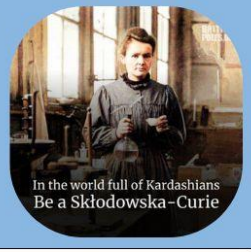
- EU R&I policy development official + informal
- Networking regional + (inter)national
- Translating knowledge

## COMMUNICATION & DISSEMINATION


- Organisation of trainings + open events + internal policy events
- PR activities focus on PAS community

## SUPPORTING R&I COMMUNITY

- Targeted activities interest-based
- Engagement at the level of support staff + researchers
- Building and strengthening community > PAS networks




PAN
POLISH ACADEMY of SCIENCES

PolSCA
Polish Science Contact Agency

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# Introduction to ERC Grants


**Michał Surowski,** *the PAS's Excellence in Science Department*

# Behind the scenes: Testimonials from ERC Grantees

- **prof. Róża Szweda**, *Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań*
- **prof. Krzysztof Fic**, *Poznań University of Technology*
- **Katarzyna Kubica-Oroń** (moderator), *National Contact Point (NCBR)*


European Research Council

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# ERC Evaluation in a Nutshell

- **Investigator-driven**, bottom-up
- **Excellence is the only criterion**
- Supports **high-risk**, frontier research

**Two-Step Evaluation Process**

**Step 1**: Part B1 only (Extended Synopsis + CV + Track record)

Scores: A invited / A not invited / B / C

**Step 2**: Full Proposal (B1+B2) + Interview

Scores: A (fundable) / B (not funded)

## Who Evaluates?

- **Panels**: 11–17 members, generalists + specialists
- **Panel Chairs** ensure fair evaluation
- **Remote Referees** add specialised expertise (esp. Step 2)
- Strict conflict of interest & confidentiality rules

# What is Evaluated?

**Research project**

- Ground-breaking nature
- Ambition
- Feasibility

**Principal Investigator (PI)**

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Independence

| Step | What's Assessed | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Step 1 | Extended Synopsis (B1), CV, Track Record | A invited / A not invited / B / C |
| Step 2 | Full proposal (B1 + B2), resources, ***interview*** | A (fundable) / B (not funded) |

# Key Takeaways

Be clear, bold, and ambitious

Write for generalists – avoid jargon

Highlight novelty, risk-taking, feasibility

Demonstrate independence & leadership

Convince from the **first pages**

# *You are the Evaluator*

*Step into the shoes of ERC panel members.*

*Assess a simplified ERC proposal using the **real evaluation criteria**.*

**Read carefully** the provided excerpt.

**Evaluate the proposal** based on the ERC evaluation forms:

- **Research Project**: ground-breaking nature, ambition, feasibility.
- **Principal Investigator**: capacity, creativity, independence.

**Discuss within your group**:

*What are the main strengths?*

*What are the weaknesses or risks?*

*Is the project convincing for ERC funding?*

**Assign a score** (following ERC practice)

**Step 1 scores**: A invited / A not invited / B / C.

Be prepared to justify your choice.

1. *Does the project go **beyond the state of the art**?*
2. *Is it **high-risk/high-gain** with credible risk management?*
3. *Is the PI profile strong and convincing?*
4. *Would you pass this proposal to **Step 2**? Why/why not?*

# *You are the Evaluator*

## Why the abstract matters?

It is the **first thing** panel members read (Step 1 evaluation).

Often read by **generalists** who may not be specialists in your field.

Sets the **tone**: clarity, ambition, and feasibility **must shine immediately**.

**Best Practices**

**Catchy but precise**: intrigue the reader without hype;
**Clear novelty:** state what is beyond the state of the art;
**High-risk/high-gain:** show ambition but also hint at feasibility;
**Accessible language:** avoid jargon, explain key terms;
**Self-contained:** abstract should stand alone;
**Balanced tone:** ambitious but not exaggerated (“*world-changing” claims are red flags*).

**Try to find and briefly discuss below elements:**

**Context/Challenge** *(why the question matters?)*
**Gap/Limitation** *(what is missing in current knowledge?)*
**Ambition/Novelty** *(what new concept/approach will be explored?)*
**Approach** *(short, credible explanation of how it will be done?)*
**Potential impact** *(why this will change the field?)*