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Some considerations after 5 years of experience in evaluating ERC POC projects

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Vision of a POC



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- **A POC project is not a classical/pure research project**
 - ➔ The purpose is to progress on the innovation scale
 - ➔ Accurate definition of the objectives, focus on the targets
 - ➔ Medium term duration 12-18 months
- **Science excellence is a prerequisite that is supposed being achieved through the grant of the ERC itself**
- **The evaluation of a POC project is more focused on the targets, the pathway to achieve these targets, and the management of the project**
- **3 criteria :**
 - ➔ Breakthrough innovation potential
 - ➔ Approach and Methodology
 - ➔ The PI and the project management

The breakthrough innovation potential

High risk/high gain versus incremental



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- **Breakthrough** : No incremental research, change of paradigm, based on (latest) results from one or several ERC grants, including side results
- **What is new and game changing ?**
- **Innovation** : what use of the results ? For solving what unsolved problem ? What advantages ?
- **Can be very early stage, or based on already advanced results**
- **What will be the added value of this innovation in the market in the today situation ?**

Approach and Methodology (1)

Activities



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- **Description of objectives**
 - ➔ What are the accurate outcomes expected after the project
 - ➔ What are the specific go/no go criteria
- **Assessment of potential end users**
 - ➔ Who will be the end users ?
 - ➔ How to get practical information on their need or requirements ?
- **Description of activities**
 - ➔ Prototype, testing, what weaknesses to be improved
 - ➔ IP position and strategy
 - ➔ Vision of the business model (spin off ? licence ?)

Approach and Methodology (2)

Activities



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- **Involvement of partners (industrials, other labs ...)**
 - ➔ **Indications on key partners to succeed on short/long term**
 - ➔ **What role do you expect for them during the project ? After the project ?
How is it formalized (letter of intent, existing contract ...)**
 - ➔ **Be transparent on the role et and position of the partners (conflict of interest, state aid rules, ...)**

Approach and Methodology (3)

Actions



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- **Description of actions**
 - Action plan, what tasks have to be done ?
 - Technical, market, IP aspects, deliverables
 - Gantt chart with milestones and outcomes
- **Description of resources and why**
 - Access to specific equipment, including running staff
 - Consumables, travels ...
 - Indication on how the grant will help to carry out the actions
- **Description of the team**
 - Name, profile, adequate experience and role of the members of team
 - Who will be in charge of what actions ? (science and market)
 - Weaknesses of the team, to be improved

Project management



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- **Description of the organizational structure of the project**
 - ➔ What are the personal role and the commitment of the PI
 - ➔ How the team will work together ? How are the decisions taken ?
 - ➔ Is a steering committee in place, involving all aspects of the project :
(IP, market, technique, innovation development, TRL, CRL ...)
- **Description of risks and mitigation actions**
 - ➔ What could go wrong in the project ?
 - ➔ What actions if one target is not achieved (e.g. experiments fail)
 - ➔ What is the reaction if an unexpected event occurs (e.g. departure of key member of the team, lack of material ...)

Assessment of experts



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- **5 experts with different profiles**
- **Briefing and debriefing of the panel of experts with ERC team**
- **12 to 20 projects per expert at each call**
- **Scoring : 3 different notes among : very good, good, failed**
- **Feedback to each expert with statistics to evaluate the individual scoring**
- **This lead to a continuous improvement call after call, and a global coherence of the assessment process.**

Thank you



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Q/A ?