

# How to Get Money for Fun and Profit (and Research)



Nils Lid Hjort

Department of Mathematics, University of Oslo

MatNat, Funding Day, 6.xii.2019

# How to Get Money

- Ta jobb på myntfabrikken!
- Do the magic of the **reiseregninger**, inside something called the **Human Resources Portal**.
- Get work (and salary) inside academics – PhD candidate, PostDoc, First Amanuensis, Innstegs, Professor:  
**This is (already) fine & splendid** – people can both survive and do excellent work in such positions. **But ...**
- Apply for **additional funding** –  
Forskningsrådet (FRIPRO, other),  
NordForsk,  
**ERC**, ...
- **WHY?**  
(is a question you need to ask yourself, very carefully)

## I've been at both sides of the tables

I've applied and (applied)<sup>n</sup> – and I've **won** and **lost**. Wins:

- 'Highly Structured Stochastic Systems' (1995-2003), lots o' money from the European Research Foundation; I was one of 8 Steering Board statistics professors, across Europe
- 'Evaluation of Bayesian Hierarchical Models' (2003-2006), BeMatA project, under NRC: PhDs, PostDocs, many papers, etc.
- 'FocuStat: Focused Driven Statistical Inference with Complex Data' (2014-2018), 'ERC Grade A', funded via NRC: PhDs, PostDocs, research kitchens, workshops, tvangskultur
- Smaller part in a few other bigger winning projects.

I'm **an evaluator**:

- I'm on the **ERC Panel** for (All of) Mathematics (first **Starting Grant**, now **Consolidator Grant**)
- I read (and judge) lots o' applications

## A Few Things:

- A Why and How to Apply for ERC money
- B General (and rather simple) Advice
- C How Not to Win
- D Minor Anecdotal Inferences
- E The Interview (if you get this far)
- F Success criteria

# A: Why and How

## WHY?

A few non-winners have not quite asked themselves that question.

- career boost;
- your bosses want you to – you ‘bring in money’;
- you can build a group around you;
- prestige;
- you can fly around, you can buy books!;
- you can invite Famous People;
- your research will/might get sharper;
- you will/might accomplish more;
- glorious science will/might benefit;
- you will/might gjøre en forskjell.

## Consequences of the Why?

I'm of [tvende sinn](#).

There can be 'too much'. There's an element of 'follow the money' – with a surprising level of 'extra things' along the way.

One risks '[A people](#) and [B people](#)'.

One risks having [Super Splendid Application Writers](#).

The [Utlendinger](#) will win [read [Forskerforum](#), last two issues] – they're as clever as we think we are [and](#) they don't stop working at 16:00.

Our Best and Brightest ... might opt out, and go to the famous industry instead, if [grants pressure](#) replaces [publication pressure](#).

# How?

If only ...

Dr. Otto Warburg

Antrag

Ich benötige 10 000 (zehntausend) Mark

*Otto Warburg*

## Talent & Timing ...



## Basics:

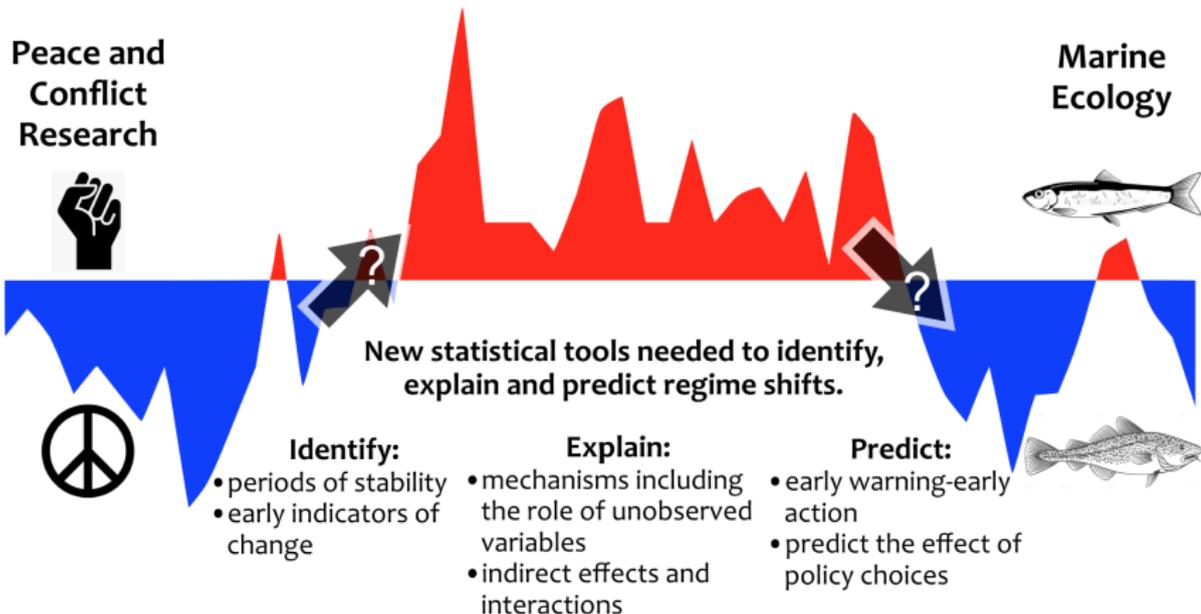
- (a) You check with your heart & soul & mind if you really want to **Do It**.
- (b) You check in good time with ERC sites regarding **when** and **what**.
- (c) Start writing early [**kremt to self**], talk to colleagues **and admin people!**, make it known that you're **Doing It**.
- (d) It's not enough with **Tough CV** and **Bold Plan** – you need consent & paperwork from your department, you might need support letters from collaborators, you need **a budget** in proper format.
- (e) Work **very** hard with the application prose. It should be a readable, understandable, intriguing, enjoyable read, for **specialists** and **generalists**.

## B: Some Pieces of Advice

- Be very clever and productive!
- Be smart and creative, write excellent papers, be visible and present, build an impressive CV.
- In your CV and in your prose: **turn up the bragging parameter** with 10% (but not 20%).
- Be bold and clear and ambitious. You need considerably more than 'I am clever and will write ten more papers'.
- **Brag modestly** that you're inspiring to younger research talent, supervising others, etc.
- Do the 'I need to build a group around me' thing.

Try **one or two leading figures**, conveying main ideas, the framework you're in – I'm hoping for **15 millioner NordForsk kroner** for this one:

## STARS: Stability and Regime Shifts, from Wars to Fish



# The Panel Will Judge You

The Panel of Exceedingly Clever & Strict Judges needs to like you.

- **Starting Grant:** within 2-7 years of PhD (median age 35).
- **Consolidator Grant:** within 7-12 years of PhD (median age 40).
- You apply – along with 100 other very talented people. Each wants 1.5-2.0 mill Euro for 5 years. Each applicant has submitted **B1** and **B2**.
- The Panel reads and reads **B1** and scores and scores. They use 3 Brux days in May to get from about 100 to about 27.
- The Panel then reads and reads **B2** and uses 3-4 Brux days in September to single out about 10 winners.

## C: How Not to Win

1.0 - 1.5 - 2.0 - 2.5 - 3.0 - 3.5 - 4.0 - 4.5 - 5.0

is the scale used!, with 4.0 = Excellent, 5.0 = Exceptional.

The panel members give scores, for (1) research project, (2) scientific approach, (3) the PI (which is you).

You need to reach 4.0 and above to get to the finals.

You'll lose if you:

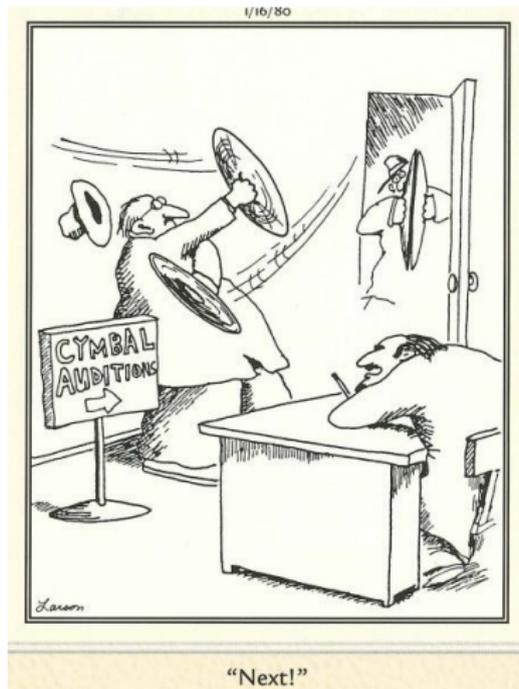
- brag too much, or are biting over too much.
- lack ambition ('high risk / high gain').
- have a narrow horizon.
- look unfeasible.
- haven't been enough around.
- don't look sufficiently independent.
- look very fine where you are (do the added value argument).

## D: Anecdotal Inferences

- Demonstrate **independence** – but it's not forbidden to keep up excellent collaborations.
- Show that you've **been around** – but it's not forbidden to have 'stayed at home' for most of your research time.
- Be a good, bold, clear, ambitious, clever, convincing person – but lots of money is also given to classical shy introverts, to the 'lone wolfs', etc.
- **Dare to brag** (a little) – but the panel doesn't like you overdoing it (!).
- **Be open** about any problems. Build trust.

## E: The Interview

Not everyone succeeds:



**NEXT!**

- ♠ Your competitors are wondrously clever and gloriously prepared. You need to be too.
- ♠ Some rehearse with professional actors.
- ♠ Some are almost ... **too** smooth.
- ♠ The panel is hoping **to trust you**, as a person, as an independent super-promising researcher, as a team builder.
- ♠ Demonstrate independence.
- ♠ Be clever, be prepared, be yourself.

## F: Success Criteria

### YOU:

- a – Did It!
- b – feel content with your application
- c – and don't regret your efforts.
- d – feel your project's worth it!, from the taxpayers perspective.
- e – have learned something, and your work will benefit.
  
- f – won!
- g – get your **Dream Team** around you (PhDs, PostDocs, others).
- h – accomplish Good Stuff. You have one or two or three Very-Top-Quality papers.
- i – have a happy group.
- j – are happy with your work and your life.