My experience with submitting an ERC Consolidator Grant

Jan Beyers
Overview

- something about my project
- why submitting an ERC CoG
- added value for my research
- tips and tricks
Understanding contemporary interest group politics: mobilization and strategies in multi-layered systems

iBias
Understanding Contemporary Interest Group Politics: Mobilization Strategies in Multi-Layered Systems

**Background**
1. Growing density of organized interests communities in all political systems.
2. A more complex, multi-layered institutional environment.

**Research Problem**

**Problem 1**
Organized interests are beneficial (de Tocqueville) and detrimental for democracy (Madison).

**Problem 2**: Rivaling expectations
1. Scale shifting upwards increases diversity and limits representational bias.
2. Scale shifting upwards limits diversity and generates representational bias.

**Problem 3**
Representational bias understood as a problem of a) mobilization or b) strategic interaction with policymakers.
- Fragmented and non-cumulative understanding of interest representation.

**Data and Methods**

Multiple in-depth studies of interest representation: three international and one national setting.
1. Mapping the population of mobilized groups (cf. bottom-up perspective).
2. Policy-centered sampling of policy issues.
3. Targeted policy-centered expert interviews on strategic interaction with policymakers (cf. top-down perspective).

**Expected Results**
1. Cross-fertilizing empirical research and theoretical reflection:
   - A refined characterization of representational diversity and bias
   - A new conceptual understanding of interest representation.
2. Methodological innovation: combining content analysis with interviewing in a longitudinal design.

**Principal Investigator**
Prof. Dr. Jan Beyers (Google Scholar 1563 cites, H-index 18), two PhD-students, one postdoc and one data manager, integrated in ACIM (acim.ua.ac.be) and an international network of researchers.
ERC Consolidator Grants are designed to support researchers at the stage at which they are consolidating their own independent research team or programme. The scheme will strengthen independent and excellent new individual research teams that have been recently created.
Why submitting an ERC CoG (2)

- odysseus II, plus various projects (ESF and FWO-V)
  - that enabled me to establish a research team, ACIM
  - but projects are coming to an end in 2014-2015-2016

=> consolidate what has been established

- build and strengthen a strong research profile

- doing my own research myself and building a team around this
Added value for my research

- flexibility of the ERC-grant
- resources for teaching replacement
- time to spend on the research
- technical support, data-manager
- postdoc
- plus two PhD-researchers
- extending and consolidating an existing team
Tips and tricks (1)

- CV; knowing where do you stand
- time, time, time
- big plan; think big; vision
- ask advice; proofreading by colleagues (and others)
- budget; be realistic
Tips and tricks (1)

- seek a balance, innovative and cumulative
- interview; be prepared for very big and broad questions
- luck, but much, much more chance than winning a lottery
Questions?