ERC STARTING GRANT EXPERIENCE

November 27th 2023

Stéphanie van der Pas, Amsterdam UMC

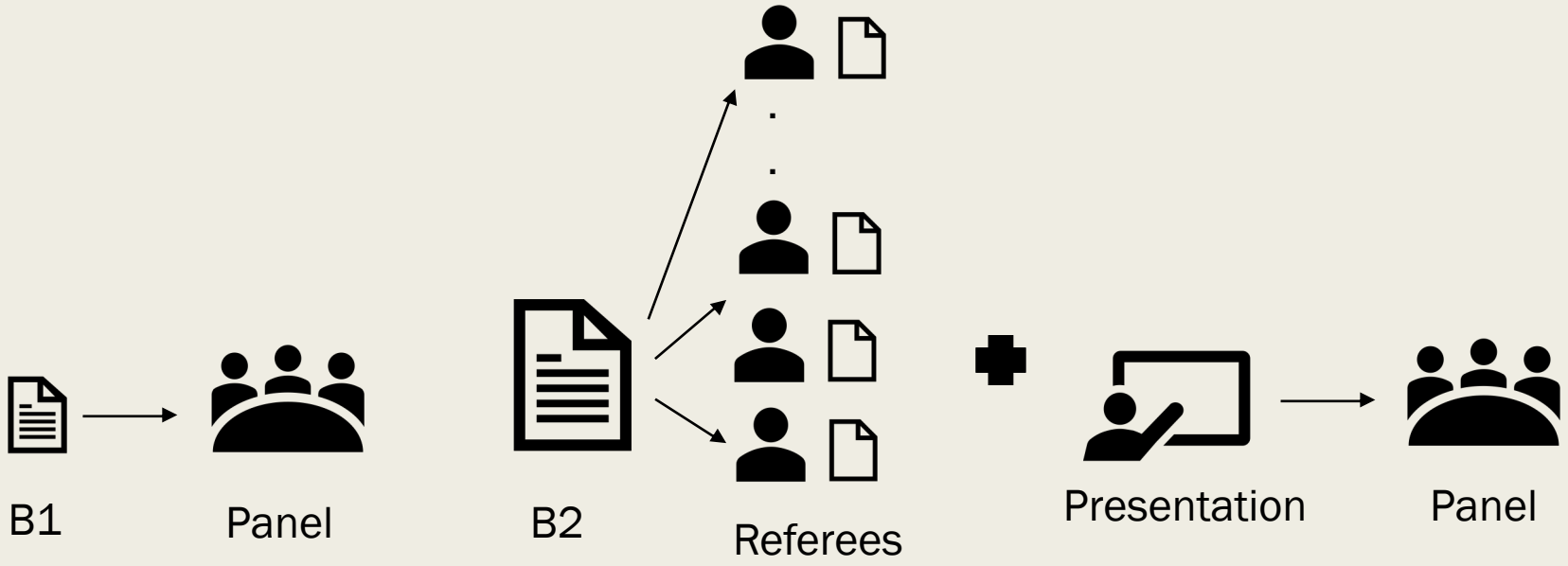
My experience

2019	2020	2021	2022
NWO Veni 250k 3 years	NWO ENW-KLEIN *(now: ENW-M)* Panel member	NWO ENW-M 287k 4 years	ERC Starting Grant 1500k 5 years

What do you need to prepare?

ERC Starting Grant

- Part B1: abstract, extended synopsis (5 pages), structured cv (4 pages).
- Part B2: 14 pages.
- Interview.



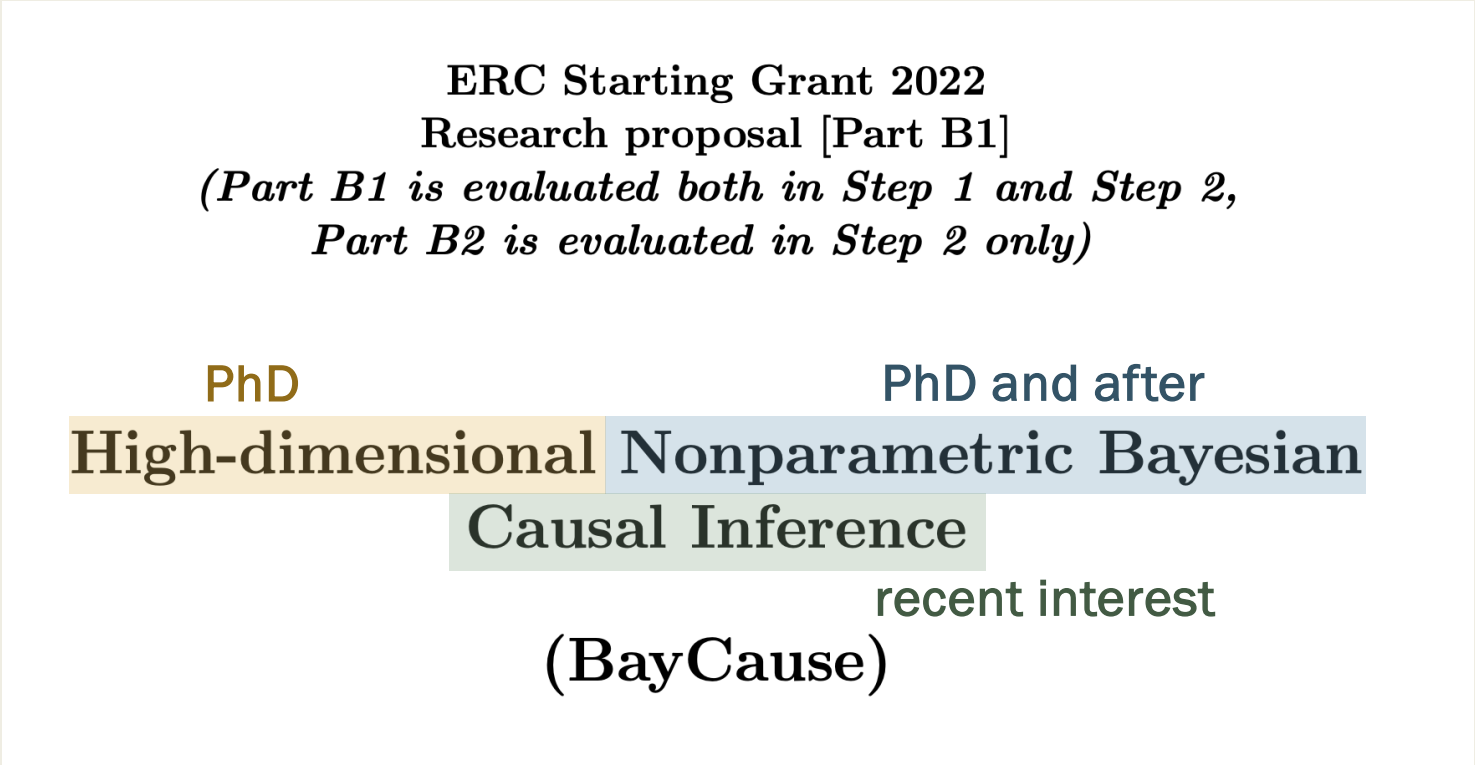
Timing

- I participated in the 2022 round, ~5 years after my PhD
- Would have had 2 more chances after that
- Mainly based on cv
- And Vidi plans

ERC: the grant and finding the idea

ERC Starting Grant 2022, project started September 2023.

Idea: combination of PhD expertise and new research interest – felt nervous!



Selecting the panel

- I selected PE1 Mathematics, but considered other options as well.
- Wrote the proposal with the panel in mind.
- List of options for statistics proposals by former PE1 Panel Member:
  - *PE6 Computer Science and Informatics*
  - *PE7 Systems and Communications Engineering*
  - *LS2 Integrative Biology*
  - *LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Disease*
  - *SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations*
  - *SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity*

https://xianblog.wordpress.com/2020/11/09/erc-descriptors/

Preparing the proposal

Choosing the panel: PE1 Mathematics.

Started by watching ERC YouTube videos.

Spent ~150 hours. Not just on research idea, also cv and finances.

Naam	Bewerkingsdatum
210506_ERC_StG.pdf	6 mei 2021 11:19
210506_ERC_StG.tex	6 mei 2021 11:19
210507_ERC_StG.pdf	7 mei 2021 18:05
210507_ERC_StG.tex	7 mei 2021 18:05
210511_ERC_StG.pdf	11 mei 2021 17:17
210511_ERC_StG.tex	11 mei 2021 17:17
210512_ERC_StG.pdf	12 mei 2021 17:36
210512_ERC_StG.tex	12 mei 2021 17:36
210517_ERC_StG.pdf	19 mei 2021 16:33
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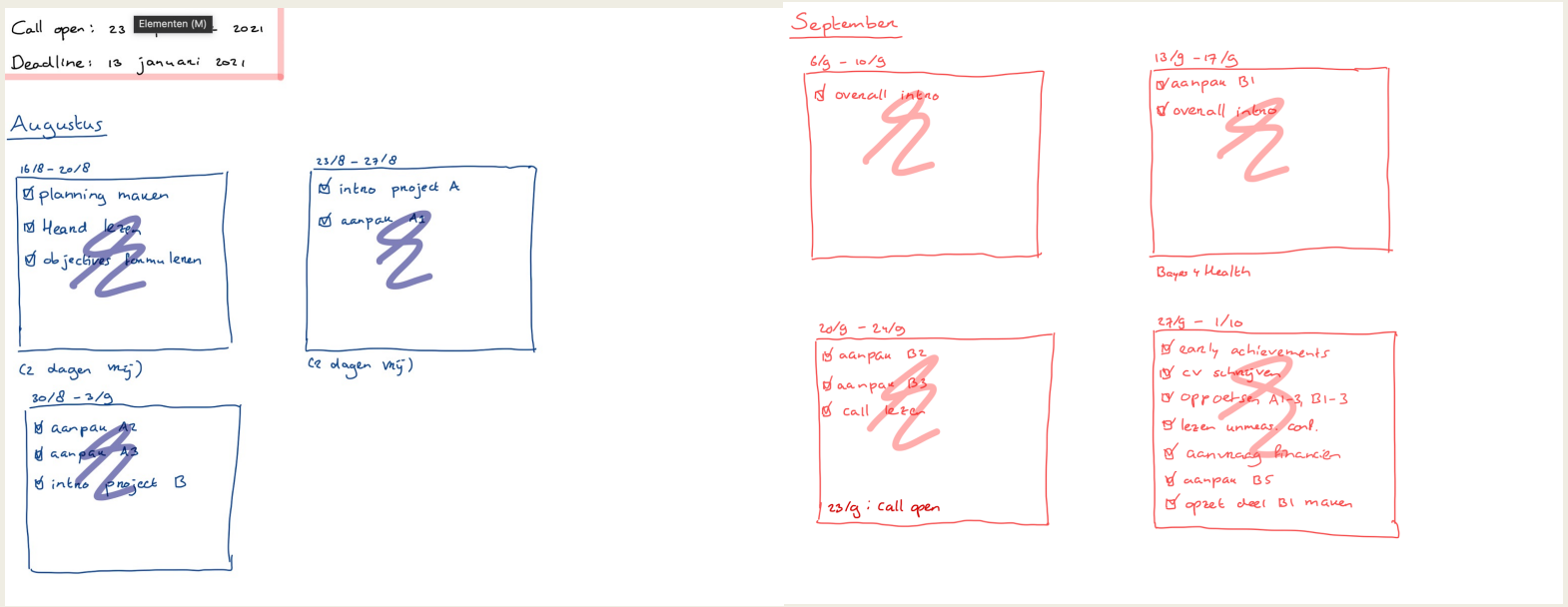
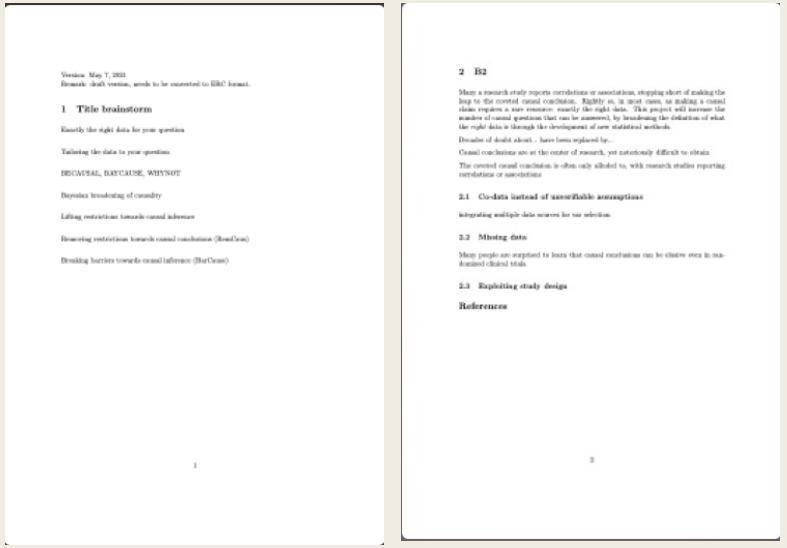
First words on paper May 2021, deadline was January 2022



Weekly milestones from August - plenty of time.



Files were almost empty for the first few months!

Support from others & submitting the proposal

Feedback on cv from medical researchers.

Feedback on synopsis in B1 from medical researchers and mathematicians.

Finance department – important to do early!

Submission: started the submission as soon as portal opened.

The good news and next steps

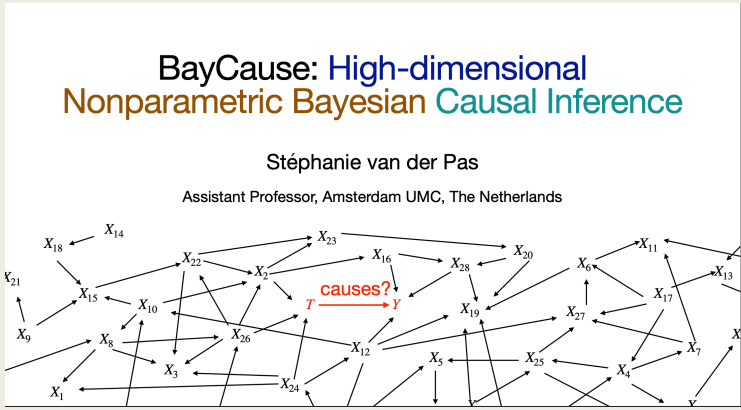
Interview invitation May, interview September.

Monetary support from Amsterdam UMC to hire a coach.

In the meantime already started preparing for 2023 round (deadline October).

Good news: e-mail in October. Happy day! But also… huge responsibility.

Trying to create a nice background for the interview.



Insights from being on the KLEIN panel

- Make it easy for referees and panel members to see how you/your research plans meet the evaluation criteria. Be very blunt. Don't expect your proposal to be read in detail.

The **overall aim** of this project is to increase the number of data sets from which we can safely draw causal conclusions.

To achieve the overall aim, four objectives are posited below. The first three of these will deliver methodological and mathematical advances, while the fourth objective will ensure that the newly developed methods are conveniently availabe for practitioners. **The innovative character of this project is twofold:**

1. Methodological: gaps in theory and methodology for the regression discontinuity design will be filled, so that it becomes available for more data and study types;
2. Mathematical: a novel approach will be taken: recently developed mathematical insights and tools from Bayesian statistics will be transferred and tailored to regression discontinuity designs.

Insights from being on the KLEIN panel

- Panel members likely won't know what some prize or committee or journal is, so spell out why something is important or an achievement. This is not the time to be humble.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Individual grants

2021 Open Competition Dutch research grant (PI, 287.000 euro, awarded to 20% of applicants)
2019 VENI Talent Dutch research grant (PI, 250.000 euro, awarded to 10-20% of applicants)

Awards

2018 Willem R. van Zwet Award (best PhD thesis in statistics in The Netherlands)
2018 C.J. Kok Award (best PhD thesis of Leiden University's Faculty of Science)
2014 Leiden University Thesis Award (best master's thesis of Leiden University)
2013 ASML Thesis Award (best mathematics master's thesis in The Netherlands)
2008 Young Talent Award (best first-year results in mathematics at Leiden University)

SUPERVISION OF PHD STUDENTS

I am co-promotor for all listed students, which is the highest level of responsibility possible for assistant professors in The Netherlands. The listed end dates are the expected end dates.

Some more advice

- Try to find out who the committee members are.
  - *ERC: not announced beforehand, but panel members will participate every other year and do so 3 or 4 times. Check previous panels at https://enspire.science/grants/erc/erc-review-panel-members-database/*
- Abstracts of funded proposals are usually publicly available. Use those to see whether research like yours has been funded in the past before.
  - *ERC: https://erc.europa.eu/projects-figures/project-database*
- Have an up-to-date website.
- Decide for yourself how much support you'd like.