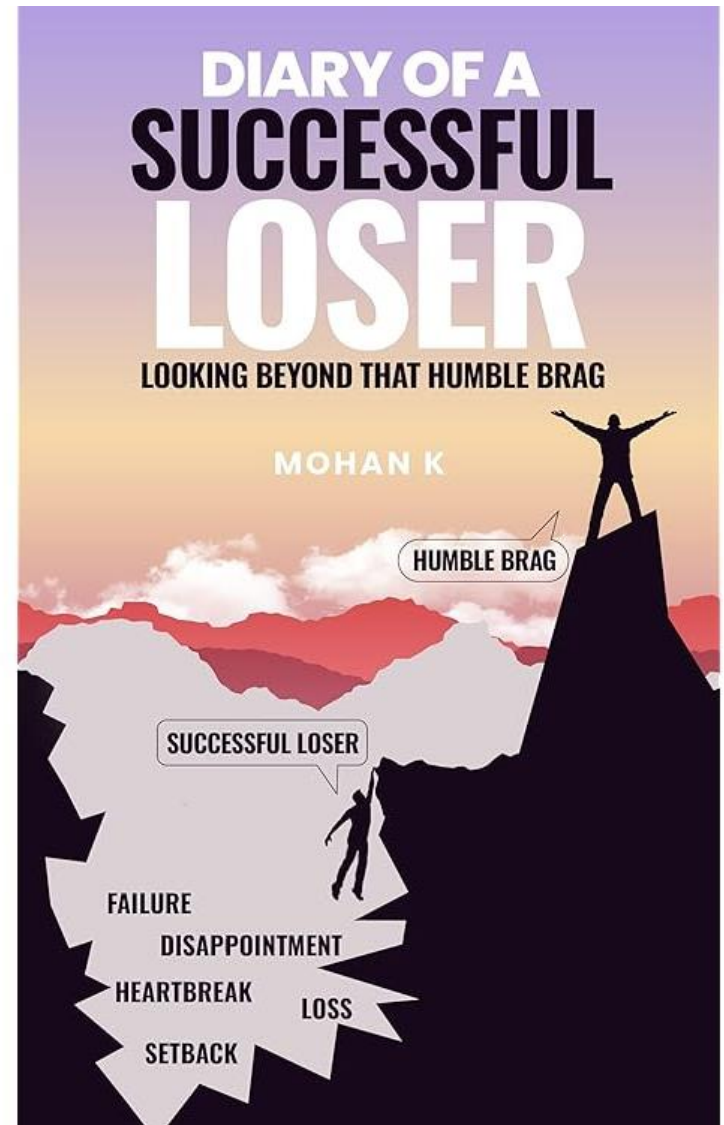


Applying for an ERC grant; lessons learned from practice

Dr. Felix M. Wensveen

University of Rijeka Faculty of Medicine



ERC Experience:

Grant	Applications	Progression to round 2	Financing
ERC Startup	2	1	0
ERC Consolidator	3	2	0 (1?)
ERC Advanced	1	1	0
Total	6	4	0

LS6: Life Science – Immunity and infection

WHY DO WE GET SICK?

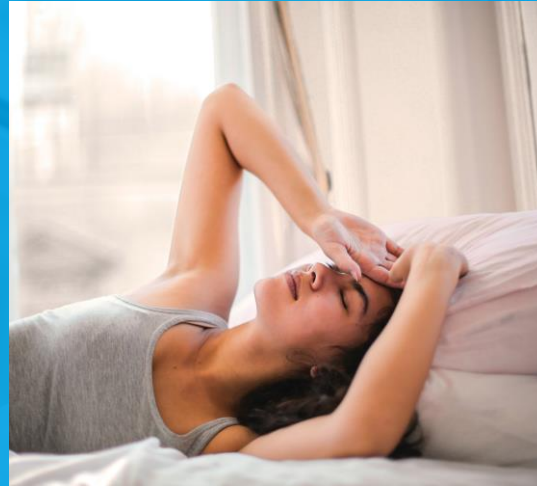
VIRAL INFECTION

ACTIVATION OF THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

METABOLIC CHANGES



LOSS OF APPETITE

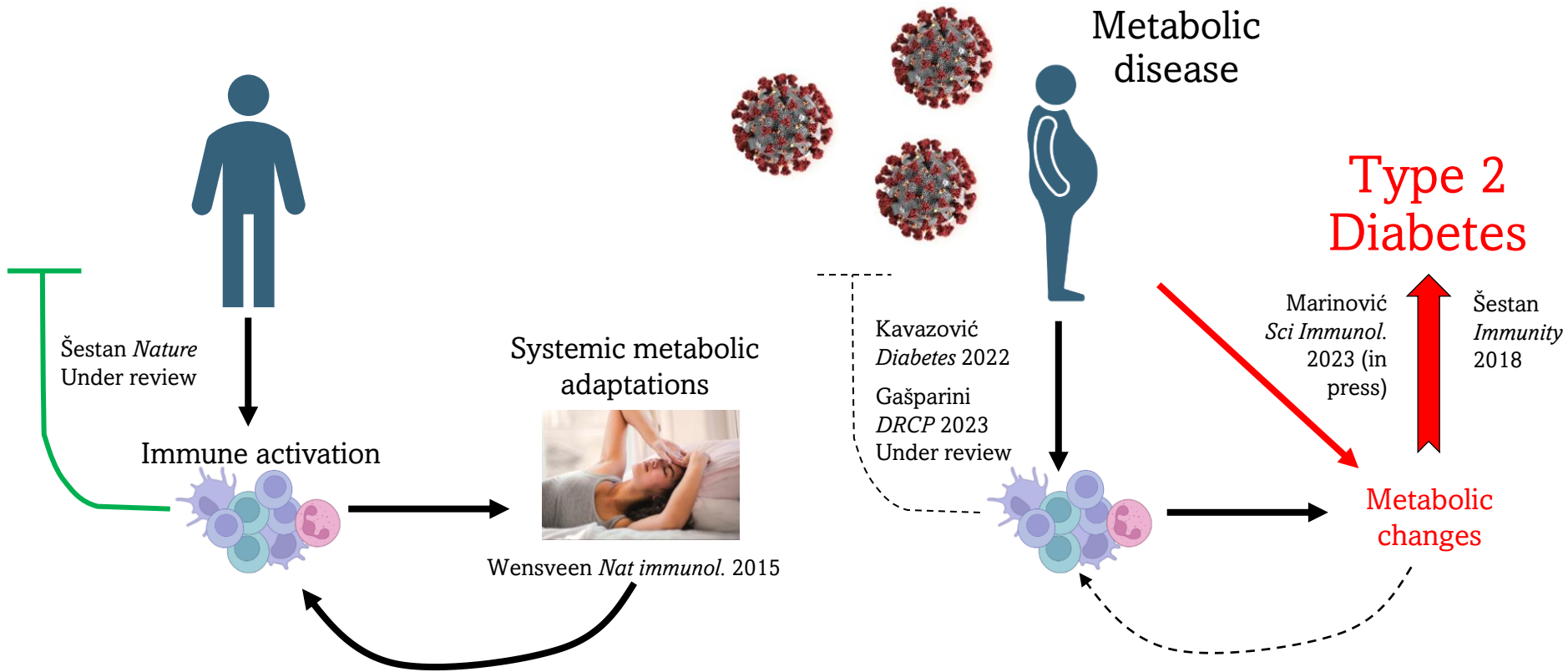


FATIGUE



FEVER

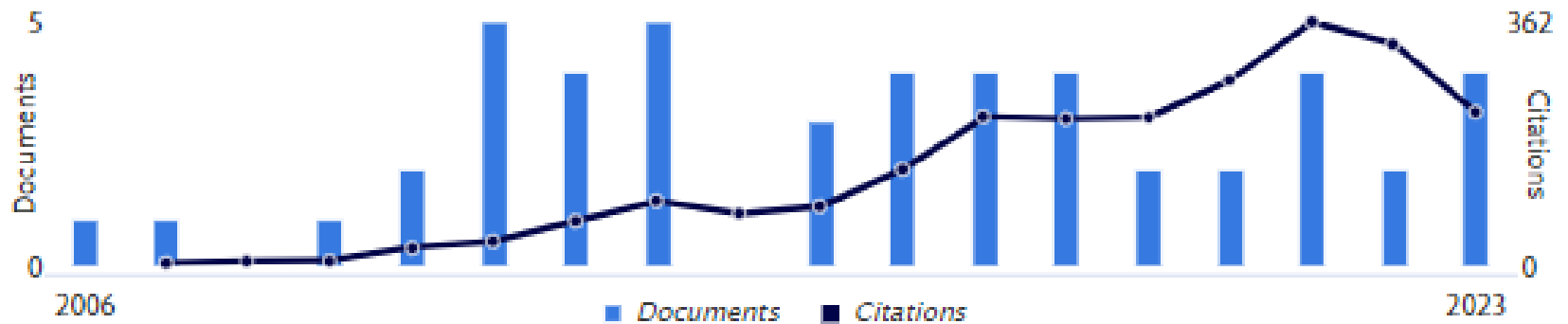
Metabolic changes in context of infection



My curriculum

www.Scopus.com

Document & citation trends



- Publications: **48**
- Citations: **2408**
- H-factor: **24**
- 1st author: **16**
- Last author: **10**
- Publications in journals with IF over 15: **11**

Nature: 0
Science: 0
Cell: 0

SWOT of our team:

Strengths

- Interdisciplinary
- Relatable
- Strong in vivo

Weaknesses

- Low-tech
- Small team
- Low budget
- Little human data

Opportunities

- Low competition
- Rapid in vivo implementation
- Cheap people
 - 1 Swiss PhD = 3 Croats
 - 1 Swedish PhD = 6 Croats

Threats

- No investments in major infrastructure
- Little institutional support

Key elements of the ERC application:



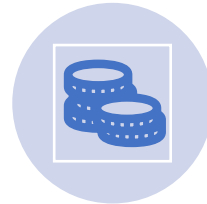
CV – 2 pages



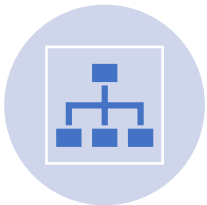
B1 – 5 pages



B2 – 15 pages



Budget – online form (1500 signs)



A (admin)

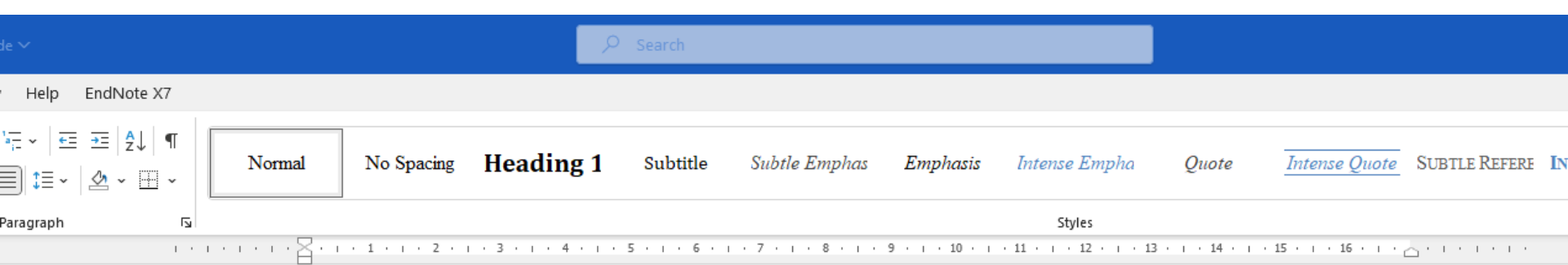
When should you consider applying for an ERC?

- You are ambitious
- Your CV is OK (not astronomical)
- You have a good idea
- You know how to sell that idea
- You have preliminary data



Getting started: Instructions

- HRZZ (€200.000): 'upute' → 33 pages
- HORIZON-TWINNING (€1.500.000) → 28 pages
- ERC (€1.800.000) → ...



Applicant's last name

Part B2

ACRONYM

**ERC Consolidator Grant 2022
Part B2**

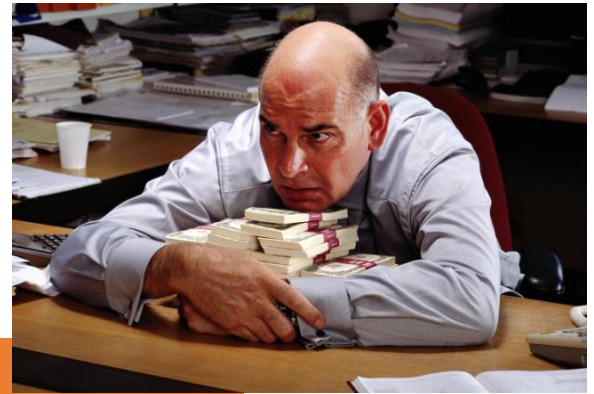
Section a. State-of-the-art and objectives

Section b. Methodology

Advantage: You can write the proposal however you want

Disadvantage: You can write the proposal however you want

ERC; What to communicate:



WHAT are you going to do

WHY should we care?

WHY NOW?

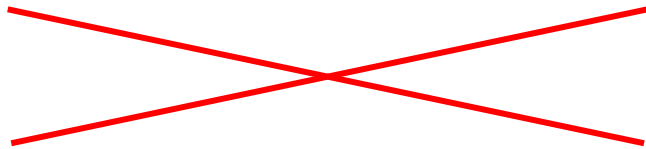
WHY YOU?

WHAT are you going to do?

Our mission



The ERC's mission is to encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to **support investigator-driven** frontier research across all **fields**, based on **scientific excellence**.



NO!!!!

How to set up the project

1

Start with B2

2

Evaluate the preliminary data that you have

3

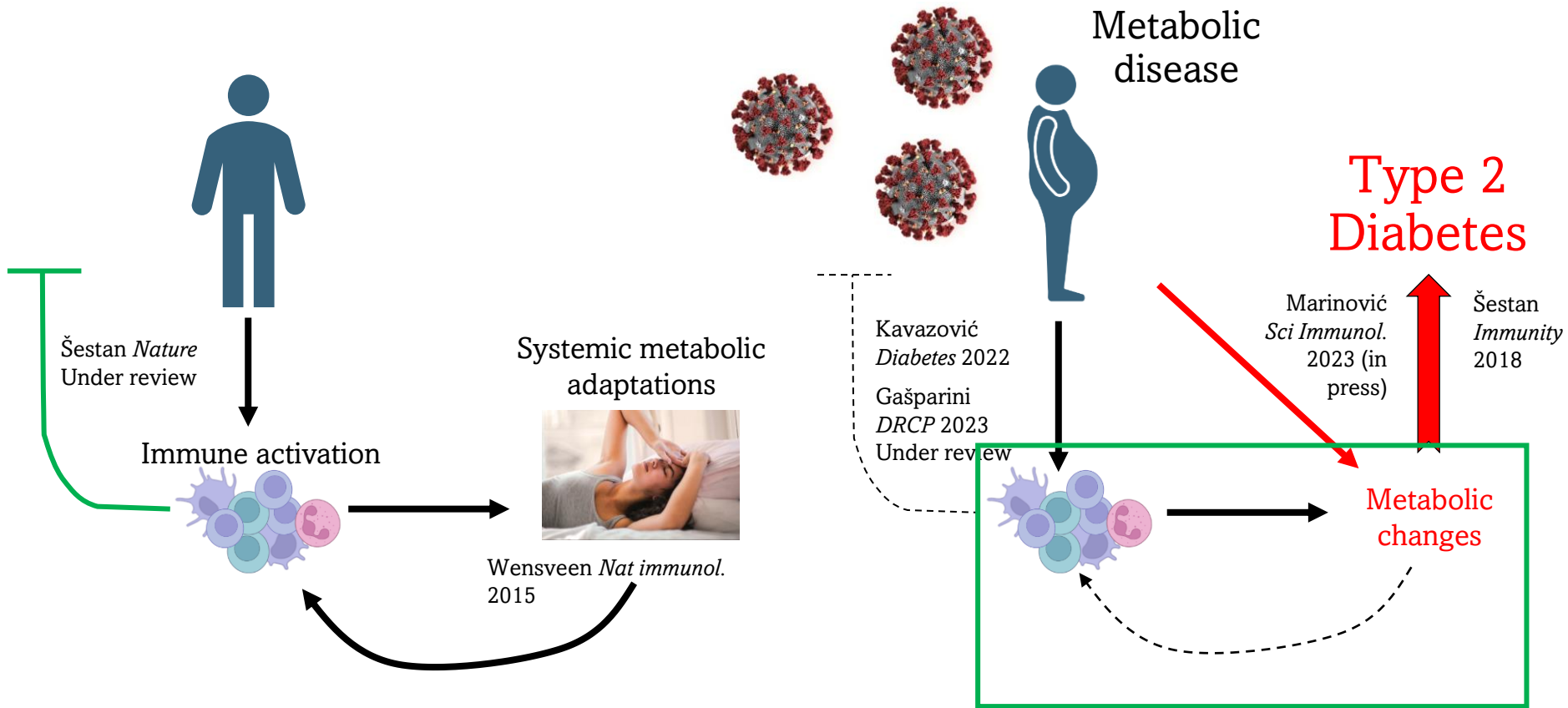
Formulate a central research question

4

Cut it up in 2 to 4 non-interdependent projects

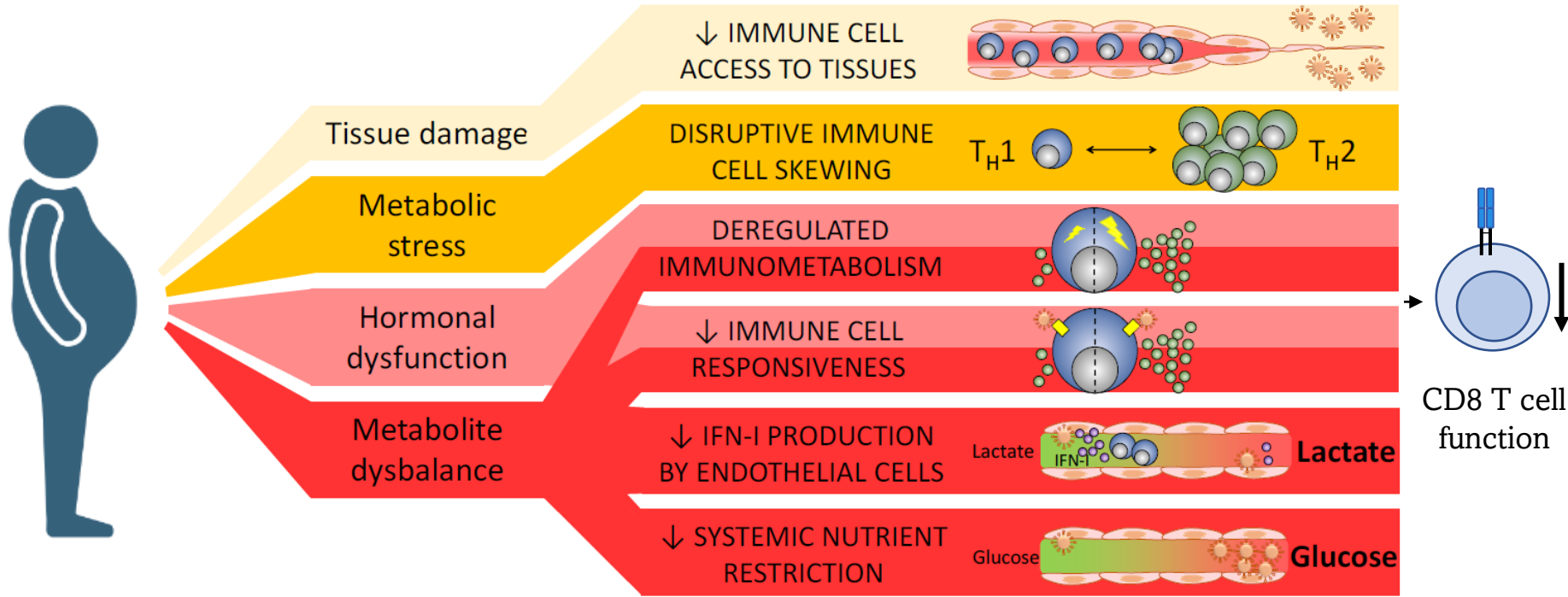


Metabolic changes in context of infection



Central research question:

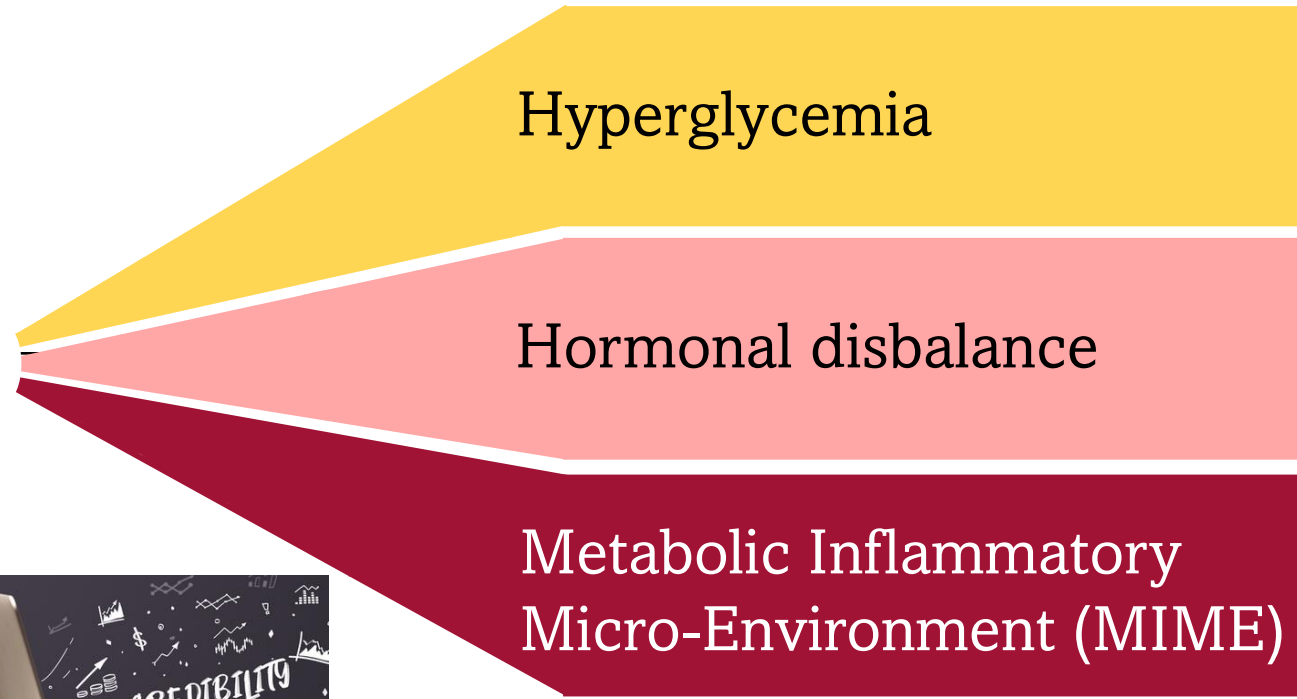
How does T2D impact CD8 T cell function?



Central research question:

How does T2D impact CD8 T cell function?

How big?



1 Postdoc

1 PhD.

1 Postdoc
1 PhD.

CD8 T cell

Preliminary data for 10-30% of a good paper

'High risk'



WHAT are you going to do?

- 3 projects
 - For 2 experienced and 2 unexperienced people
 - Mix of high/low risk
 - No interdependence
 - Overlap in models and topic
- Of which 10-30% is already proven
- In a field in which our team has proven itself
 - Papers
 - Preliminary data



Writing B2

- B2 division of space:
 - 1/3 to section a (state of the art)
 - The problem
 - Background of the topic
 - Preliminary data
 - 2/3 to section b (methodology)
 - Segregated by project
 - Gant chart
 - Host institute
- Contingency plan
 - Weaknesses without appearing weak

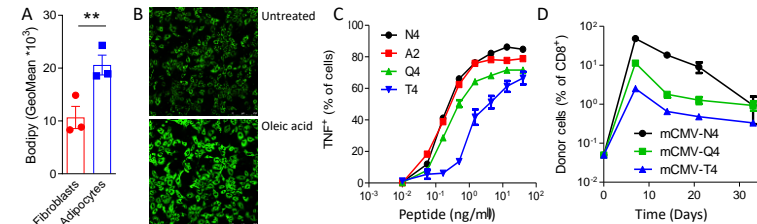


Fig. 5. Lipids in 3T3-L1 cells differentiated to fibroblasts or adipocytes were labeled by BODIPY and measured by flow cytometry. (b) Primary hepatocytes were untreated or cultured with oleic acid, stained with BODIPY, and analyzed by confocal microscopy. (c) OT-1 cells were differentiated to memory cells in vitro and restimulated with N4 or the APLs A2, Q4 or T4. TNF production was measured by intracellular flow cytometry. (d) OT-1 cells were transferred to WT recipients and infected with mCMV expressing N4 or indicated APLs. Frequency of donor cells was followed in blood.

WHY should we care?

- Define the problem that you will address and why it is important
 - Novelty
- Define the impact that your findings may have
- Summarize the importance at the end of the grant

WHY NOW?

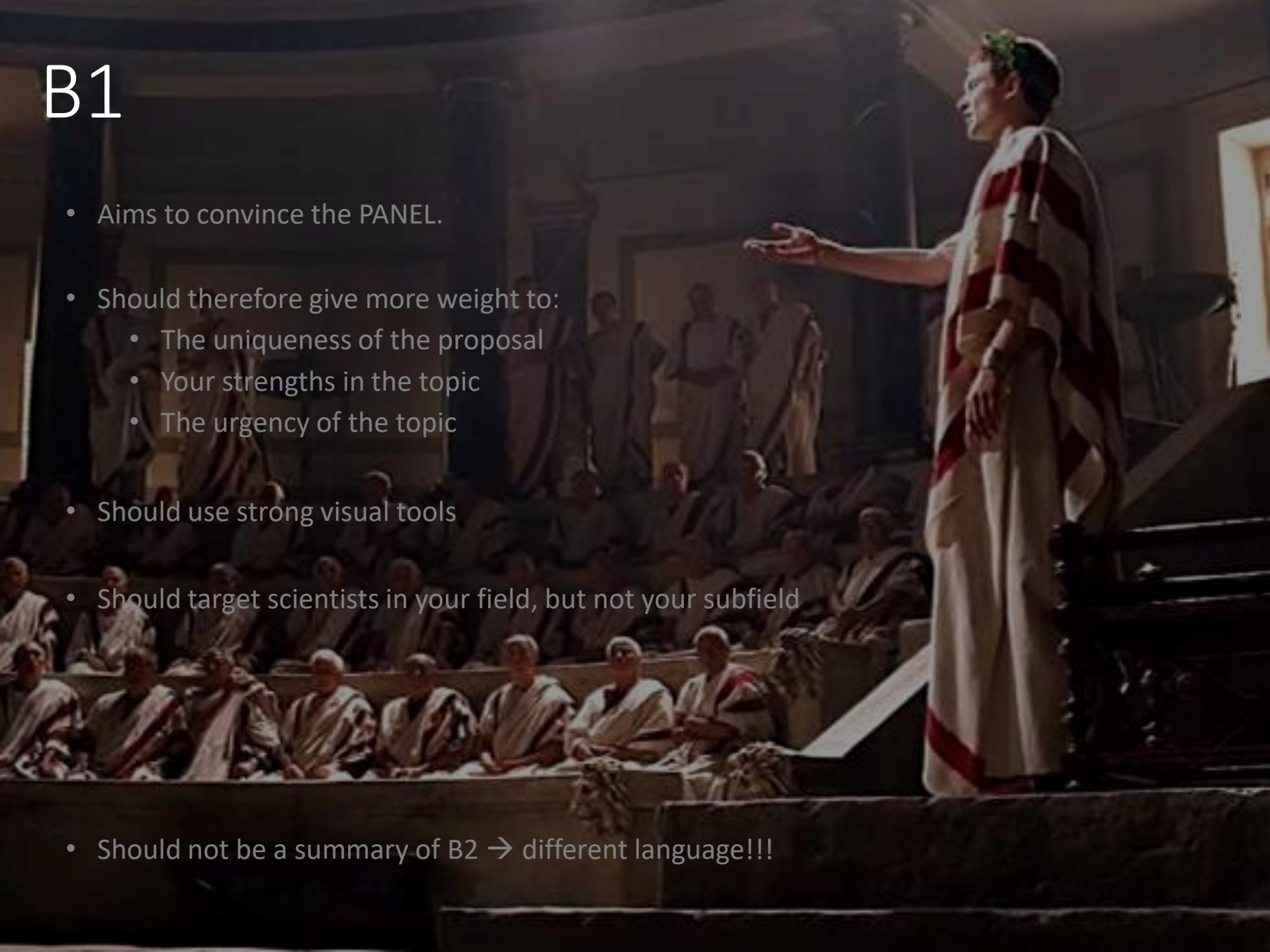
- Indicate the urgency of this research

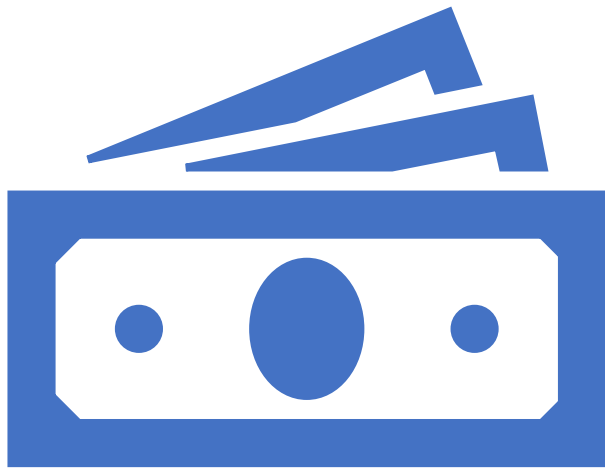
WHY YOU? CV

- Emphasize your scientific prowess:
 - Scientific projects
 - Supervision experience
 - Collaborations
- Emphasize the unique position your research has in the field:
 - Publication record
- Less important:
 - Education
 - Teaching activities
 - Institutional activities
 - Etc.



B1

- Aims to convince the PANEL.
 - Should therefore give more weight to:
 - The uniqueness of the proposal
 - Your strengths in the topic
 - The urgency of the topic
 - Should use strong visual tools
 - Should target scientists in your field, but not your subfield
 - Should not be a summary of B2 → different language!!!
- 
- A man in a white and red striped robe stands on a raised platform, gesturing with his right hand towards an audience seated in a tiered, classical-style arena. The background features large, classical statues of figures in white robes. The scene is dimly lit, with a bright light source from the right, possibly a window, casting a glow on the speaker and the audience.



The Budget

Nobody cares about the budget

Excellence is
key

3 - Budget

Beneficiary Short Name	PI	Senior Staff	Postdocs	Students	Other Personnel costs	A. Total personnel costs/€	B. Subcontracting Costs/€ (No indirect costs)	C.1 Travel and subsistence	C.2 Equipment - including major equipment	Consumables incl. fieldwork and animal costs	Publications (incl. Open Access fees) and dissemination	Other additional direct costs	C.3 Total other goods, works and services	Total Purchase costs/€	D. Internally invoiced goods and services/€ (No indirect costs)	E. Indirect Cost/€	Total Eligible Costs	Requested EU contribution /€
Medri	35000	36400	200000	180000	185000	636400.00	42000	57000	345000	577000	21000	56000	654000.00	1056000.00	0	423100.00	2157500.00	2157500.00
Total	35000	36400	200000	180000	185000	636400.00	42000	57000	345000	577000	21000	56000	654000.00	1056000.00	0	423100.00	2157500.00	2157500.00

Section C. Resources (Maximum 8000 characters allowed)

Beneficiary Short Name	PI	Senior Staff	Postdocs	Students
Medri	35000	36400	200000	180000
Total	35000	36400	200000	180000

Section C. Resources (Maximum 8000 characters allowed)



The interview

- 10-minute presentation
- 20 minutes of questions
- You are behind the webcam, the panel is in Brussels.

The interview – inside information

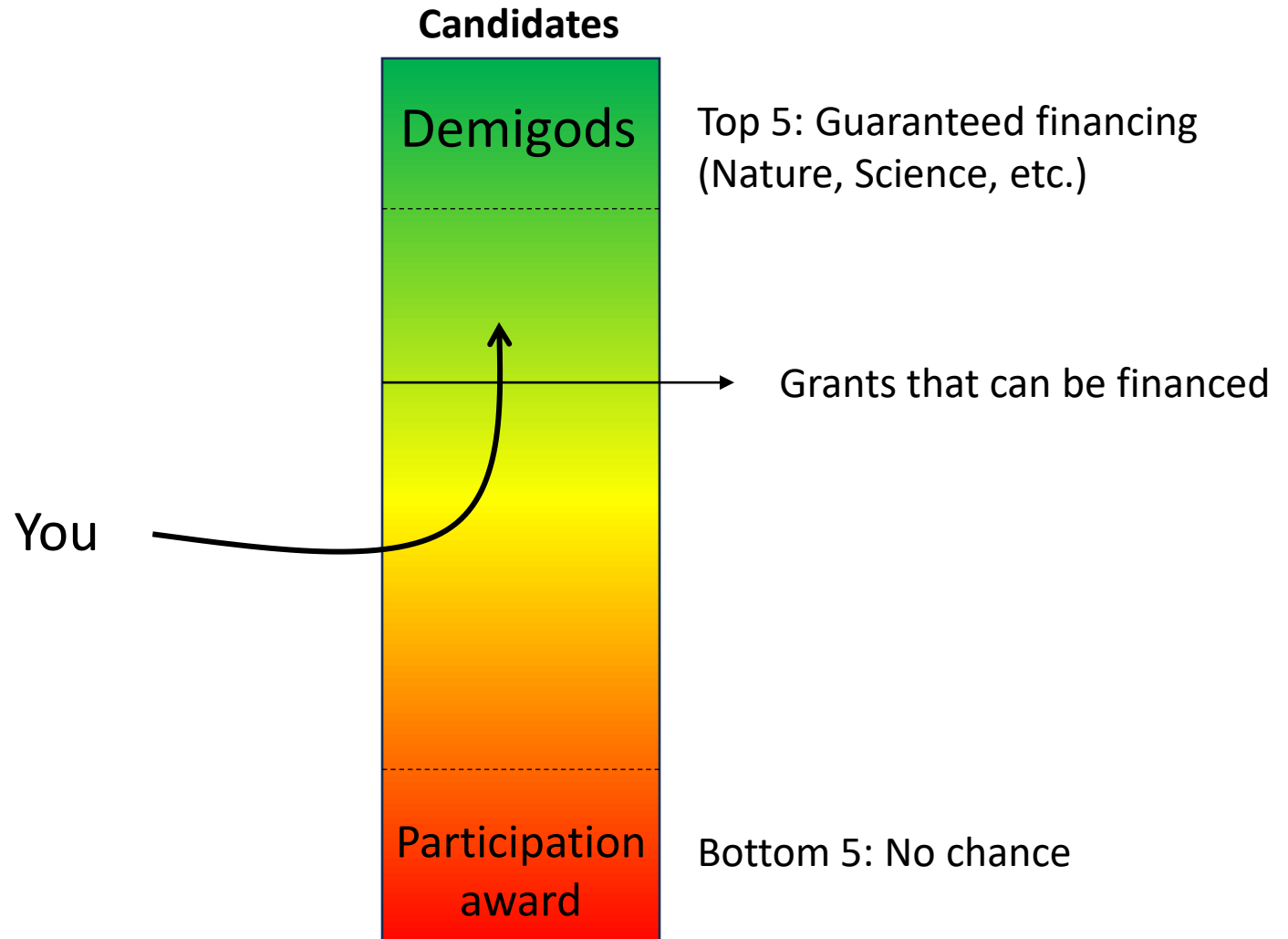
The panel needs to go through 30 interviews in 3 days

Only about 3-4 panel members have really read your proposal

The panel is armed with the reviewer reports that you did not see yet

You need to convince those 3-4 panel members to defend your cause in the general meeting

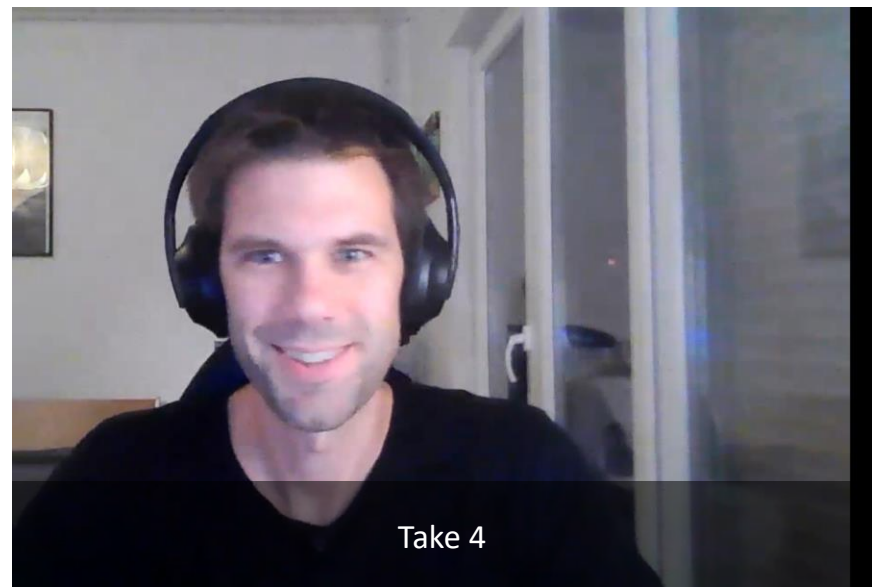
The interview – inside information



What will they ask → reviewer questions

- Methodology
 - How will you address this issue?
 - Why did you choose this model?
- Context
 - How does this relate to other data?
 - You focus on A? Why not on B?
- If you exceed the standard budget, the panel chair will ask you why (answer: for equipment).

Last tip: Ask
for a 2nd
opinion



When you are not financed

- Use the comments of the reviewers to improve your proposal
- **NEVER** submit your proposal as a resubmission
 - It always has a negative impact on your evaluation
 - Change the title and the acronym
 - The panel changes every year



In summary

- The purpose of the proposal is to convince the panel that you can realize its goals
 - Based on your personal profile
 - Based on your scientific basis
- Write the B1 and the B2 towards different audiences
- Take a step back and consider whether *you* would want to finance you, if you weren't you



Good luck!

