



## ERC Starting Grant 2009 Step 1 Evaluation Report

### CONFIDENTIAL

<b>Call reference</b>	ERC-2009-StG
<b>Activity</b>	ERC Starting Grant
<b>Funding scheme</b>	ERC Starting Grant
<b>Panel name</b>	SH2-4 - Institutions, values, beliefs and behaviour
<b>Proposal No.</b>	240907
<b>Acronym</b>	INTERCOHESION
<b>Applicant Name</b>	Balazs Vedres
<b>Title</b>	Intercohesion: The social network foundations of innovation

### PANEL MARKS

<b>1. Principal Investigator</b>  <b>Quality of research output/track-record:</b> How well qualified is the Principal Investigator (and any co-Investigator if applicable) to conduct the project (reviewers are expected to evaluate the quality of the prior work such as published results in top peer review journals as well as other elements of the Principal Investigator's CV). To what extent are the publications and achievements of the Principal Investigator groundbreaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art? To what extent does the quality and quantity of funding the Principal Investigator has attracted during the last ten years demonstrate his/her reputation as a performer of ground-breaking research?	<b>2.0 / 4</b>
<b>2. Research project</b>  <b>Ground-breaking nature of the research:</b> Does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed? Does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts and/or approaches)? How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity?  <b>Potential impact:</b> (a) Does the research open new and important, scientific, technological or scholarly horizons? (b) Will the project significantly enhance the research environment and capabilities for frontier research in Europe (including the host institution)?  <b>Methodology:</b> Is the outlined scientific approach (including the activities to be undertaken by the individual team members) feasible?  <b>High-gain/High-risk balance:</b> a) does the proposed research involve highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies, whose high risk is justified by the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline?	<b>1.5 / 4</b>
<b>Total mark</b>	<b>3.5 / 8</b>
<b>Has the proposal passed the thresholds (2/4) for criteria 1 and 2?</b>	<b>No</b>



## PANEL COMMENTS

This evaluation report contains the final marks awarded to the proposal by the ERC Starting Grant Evaluation panel in its meeting in February 2009. The panel bases its appraisal on prior individual and independent assessments conducted by panel members, whose comments are reproduced below. The panel has reviewed these assessments, discussed the proposal and compared it with the other proposals.

After careful deliberation the panel found that the criticisms contained in the individual assessments were more important than their appreciation of the attempt to consider innovation as generated in networks. Essential weaknesses include the empirical focus on network mapping as such, rather than the link with innovation. There was also a concern that the more important publications were co-authored by the PhD supervisor.

The proposal was awarded the final marks by the panel and was ranked in the lower part of all proposals. The panel regrets to inform you that the proposal will not be retained for the second step of the evaluation.

## REVIEWER COMMENTS

### 1. Principal Investigator:

The PI has been very prolific since the completion of the PhD in 2004. One publication (but with the advisor) is in the American Journal of Sociology.

### 2. Research project:

The proposal deals with social networks in innovation. "Network" is a very elusive concept. Indeed the European Union has spent a fair amount of money on promoting networks, and national authorities overspend on trying to build (top-down) links across disciplines. In that respect the recognition that trusted partners, or more generally bottom-up approaches to geographic and cross-field interbreeding, are important is welcome. This, and the idea in the proposal that insiders can get access to information, is also an important theme in the recent work of Calvo-de Marti and Prat. [Another useful reference, this one on the issue of cohesiveness and overlapping relations, is Chiappori-Weiss, Journal of the European Economic Association 2006]. The project is interesting, and could gain further audience by considering the welfare/policy aspects, and by giving more prominence to incentive issues.

### 1. Principal Investigator:

The qualification of the Principal Investigator to conduct a research project in frontier research is doubtful given the items listed in previous research and the lack of an extensive list of academic publications in top journals. The reviewers should also add that the PI lacks a diversity of scholarly positions and activities developed outside the current position held that could sustain the excellence sought in this call.

### 2. Research project:

Although showing the intention to develop suitably ambitious objectives, which might go beyond the current state of the art, there are reasonable doubts as to the positive outcome of the research, given the resources and organizational model allocated to the activity. There are also some real doubts as to the real ability of those allocations, not to endanger some of the set objectives. For the above reasons the research project is considered to be non-fundable.

### 1. Principal Investigator:

The PI has done good work (together with his supervisor), and tries to develop new approaches

### 2. Research project:

There's a "structural hole" in the proposal: it says it wants to understand innovation, but will only study network patterns. No attempt is made to even explore the proposed dependent variable. The PI is selling his form of network analysis again and again.

**1. Principal Investigator:**

The PI has an international profile, and has participated in several projects, twice as co-PI. His main publications are with his PhD supervisor.

**2. Research project:**

The project aims to understand better how innovations are generated. Three domains are analyzed: academic production, social movements, and business. The methodology is clear.

**1. Principal Investigator:**

The PI has an outstanding record of publication in leading journals.

**2. Research project:**

This project holds every promise to open up new avenues in the study of innovation. Both the background of the research problems and the avenues to be pursued are clearly and convincingly articulated.