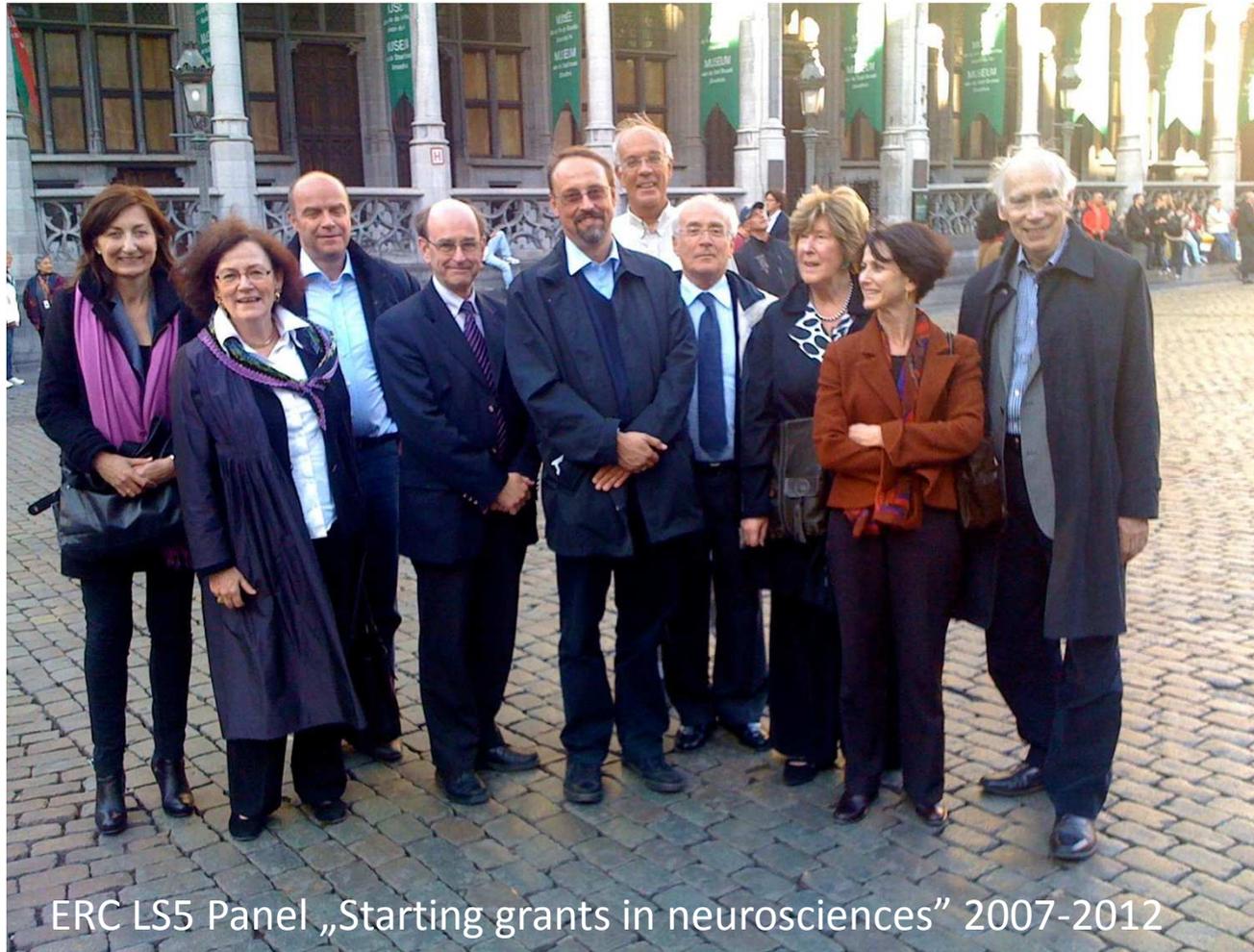


Leszek Kaczmarek

Nencki Institute, Warsaw, Poland



ERC Workshop: How to get the ERC grant? 11th December 2014, Warsaw

- ❑ I do not agree that Polish researchers are not sufficiently interested in ERC grants
- ❑ Dynamics of the application numbers (high at the beginning and then declined) support this notion
- ❑ Scientists are (hopefully) rational and they do not waste time on futile efforts

Why Polish (and not only) researchers have so limited chances to get ERC grants?

On the one hand, the ERC starting grants are extremely competitive. They are supposed to fund only the cream of excellent European researchers. **It has been argued** that this focus on research excellence is a smokescreen for funding austerity. At any rate, **three hundred researchers received a starting grant** from ERC in 2013, with a success rate of about 10%.

Many young researchers have just given up applying. The chances of being supported by host institutions with their application, particularly if not doing research in a trendy field, are remote – especially if they haven't won the lottery of publishing in elite journals such as Nature and Science.

Researchers from eastern Europe have next to no chance of getting an ERC grant. In fact, the ERC increasingly looks like a reversed Robin Hood scheme, given that most ERC funds go to well-off countries. For example, in 2013 about three out of four ERC starting grants (222 out of 300) went to researchers hosted by institutions in the UK, Germany, Israel, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

European research funding: it's like Robin Hood in reverse

The EU's Horizon 2020 programme has a budget of £63bn, but don't expect a share unless you're in one of the wealthiest countries and have a string of articles published in top journals

In ERC top quality appreciation focused on the „high impact journals” dominates

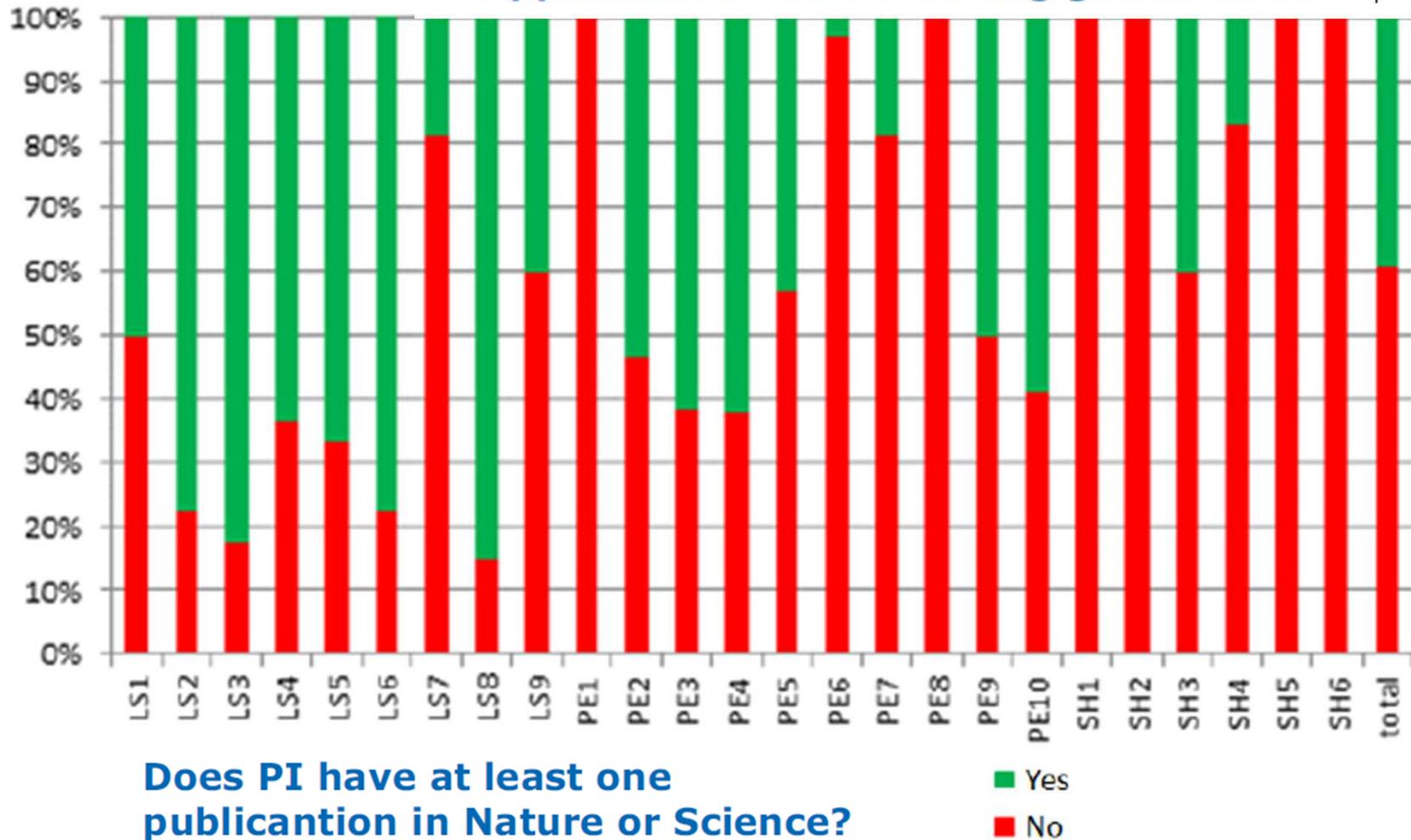


Ondřej Pecha

TECHNOLOGICKÉ
CENTRUM AV ČR

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Results of a bibliometric analysis of successful applicants for ERC Starting grants in 2012



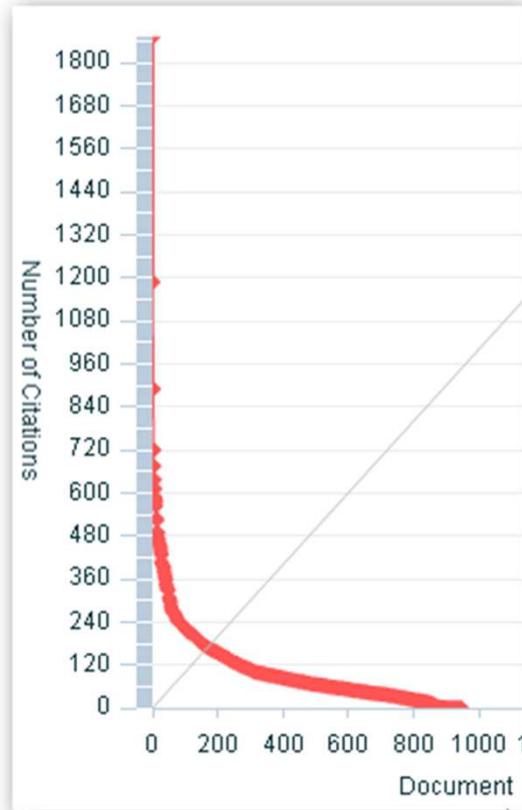
In Poland there is on average a single corresponding author paper per year in Nature, Science and Cell, combined!

- There is no scheme to send the best for PhD in the top labs
- There is no scheme to send the best for postdoc in the top labs

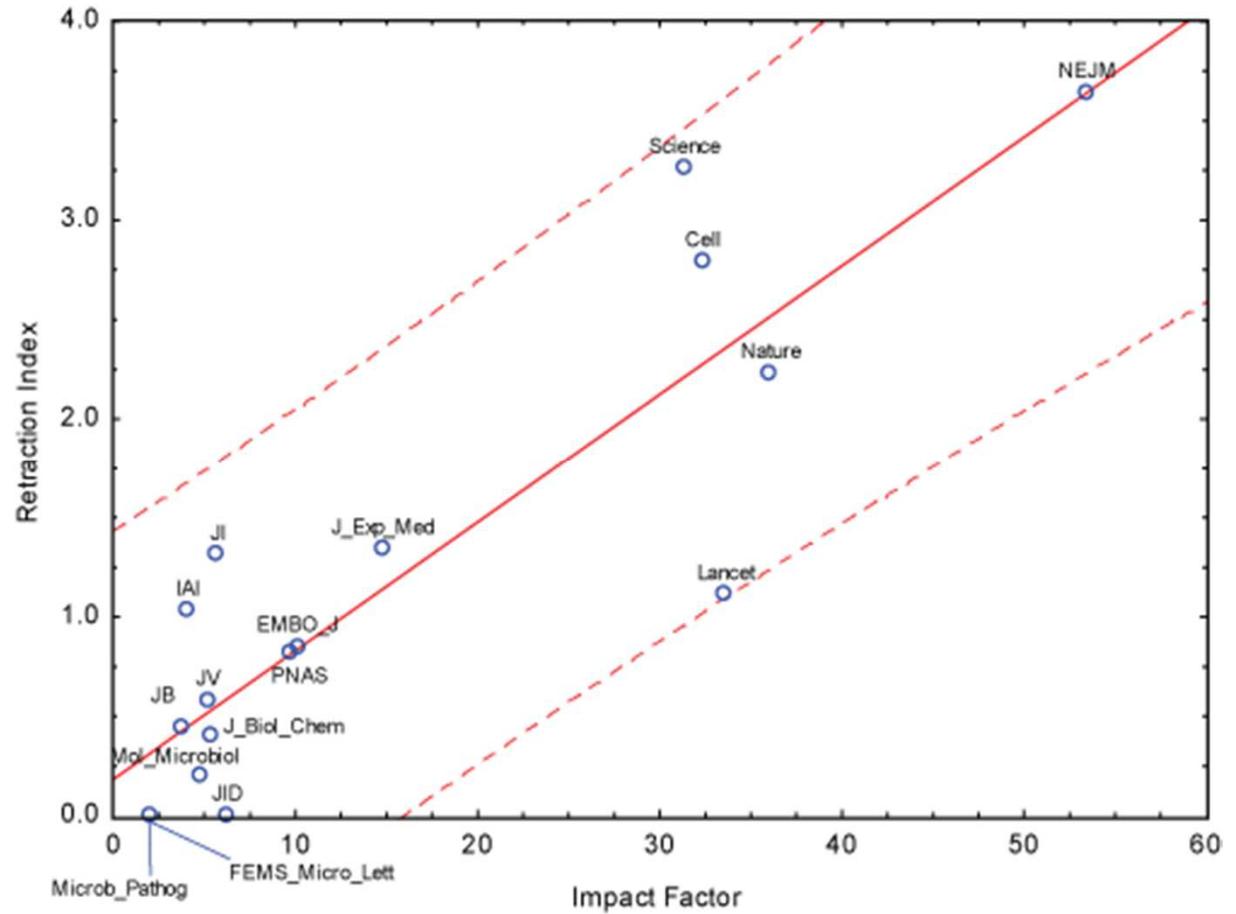
This helps to publish in the top journals, learn the culture why and how to publish this way, get to know people who review for those journals

- Untill a couple of years ago there were not grants to establish new groups by young leaders (now Sonata Bis from NCN)
- The vast majority of research insituties/universities do not express interest in attracting top young group leaders (EMBO SDIG, lack of open competition for group leader positions)
- Still there are very limited financial options to develop excellent labs (Maestro, Symfonia, NCN)
- There is no system to support organization of small symposia (networking!)
- The major support for research is based on quantity over quality (3 x FEBS Lett > 2 x Nature!)

But...



Distribution of Nature articles' citations



<http://blogarchive.brembs.net/>

And...

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R516

Publication metrics and success on the academic job market

David van Dijk^{1,4}, Ohad Manor^{2,4},
and Lucas B. Carey^{3,*}

Out of 25,604 uniquely identifiable authors 6.2% become a PI

We show that success in academia is predictable. It depends **on the number of publications**, the **impact factor (IF) of the journals** in which those papers are published, and the number of papers that receive more citations than average for the journal in which they were published (**citations/IF**). However, both the scientist's **gender and the rank of their university** are also of importance.

authors with more **first author publications**, and with **more papers in high impact factor journals**, are more likely to become PIs.

Remarks for Poland

- ❑ The motivation/financial/grant system has to promote the top research, as evidenced (i.a.) by publications in high impact journals
- ❑ KEJN „parametric evaluation” is THE worst enemy of Polish ERC success
- ❑ In addition, there is a lack of professional grant-writing (and interviewing) support

Remarks for ERC

- ❑ Inevitable use of scientometric measures have to be diversified, with citations to experimental papers, with the applicant leading contribution, probably being especially important
- ❑ Request such various data in the application
- ❑ Request pdfs of the major publications
- ❑ Request to name the major achievements (bullet points, 1-3 for starters/consolidators; 3-5 for advanced)