Preparing your interview for ERC-SyG

(grantee's perspective)

Víctor Borrell
Full Professor CSIC
corresponding PI - ERC-SyG 2023

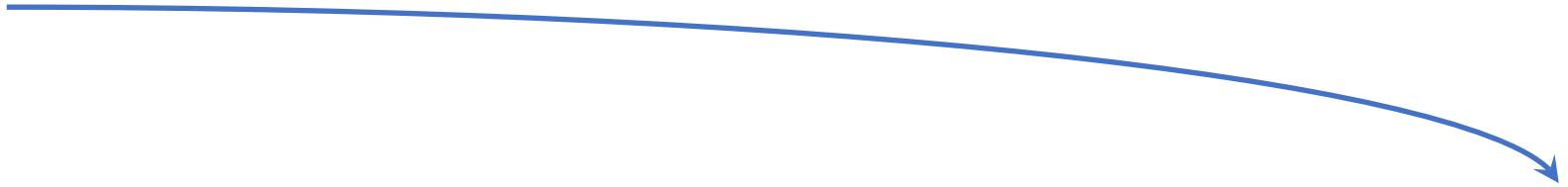
1. Prepare the slide presentation
2. Prepare the speech
3. Practice and get feedback
4. Self-testing for the interview
5. At the interview: Q&A

1. Prepare the slide presentation

The GOAL is to convince that your project is fantastic, requires synergy, and must be funded

Make it easy to the panel

1. Make the problem, and your proposed approaches, easy to understand
2. Reduce the multiple complexities of the project to their simplest concept
3. Use the simplest concepts possible, eliminate technicalities
4. Keep slides as simple as possible – use only to illustrate main concepts
5. Use animations to populate your slides and focus the attention step-by-step (do not abuse!)
6. Use color blind-friendly colors
7. Number your slides



1. Prepare the slide presentation

    1. Cover slide

Unfolding the dynamic interplay of mechanical and molecular processes in brain folding

Identify your project

UNFOLD

Identify your international team

cPI: Victor Borrell (Spain) – developmental biology

PI2: Kristian Franze (Germany) – physics

PI3: Laurent Nguyen (Belgium) – cell biology

PI4: Roberto Toro (France) – computational modeling

Identify your unique expertises

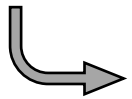
Show an image that captures the topic of your project

1. Prepare the slide presentation

    1. Cover slide → Thank for the invitation to the interview

    2. Topic and problem focus of your project, and its benefits beyond your field (1 slide)

    3. State-of-the-art and why your project will be transformative to make it advance (1 slide)



Stress your individual expertises, and how they have contributed to the current knowledge in the field on the problem

Brain folding

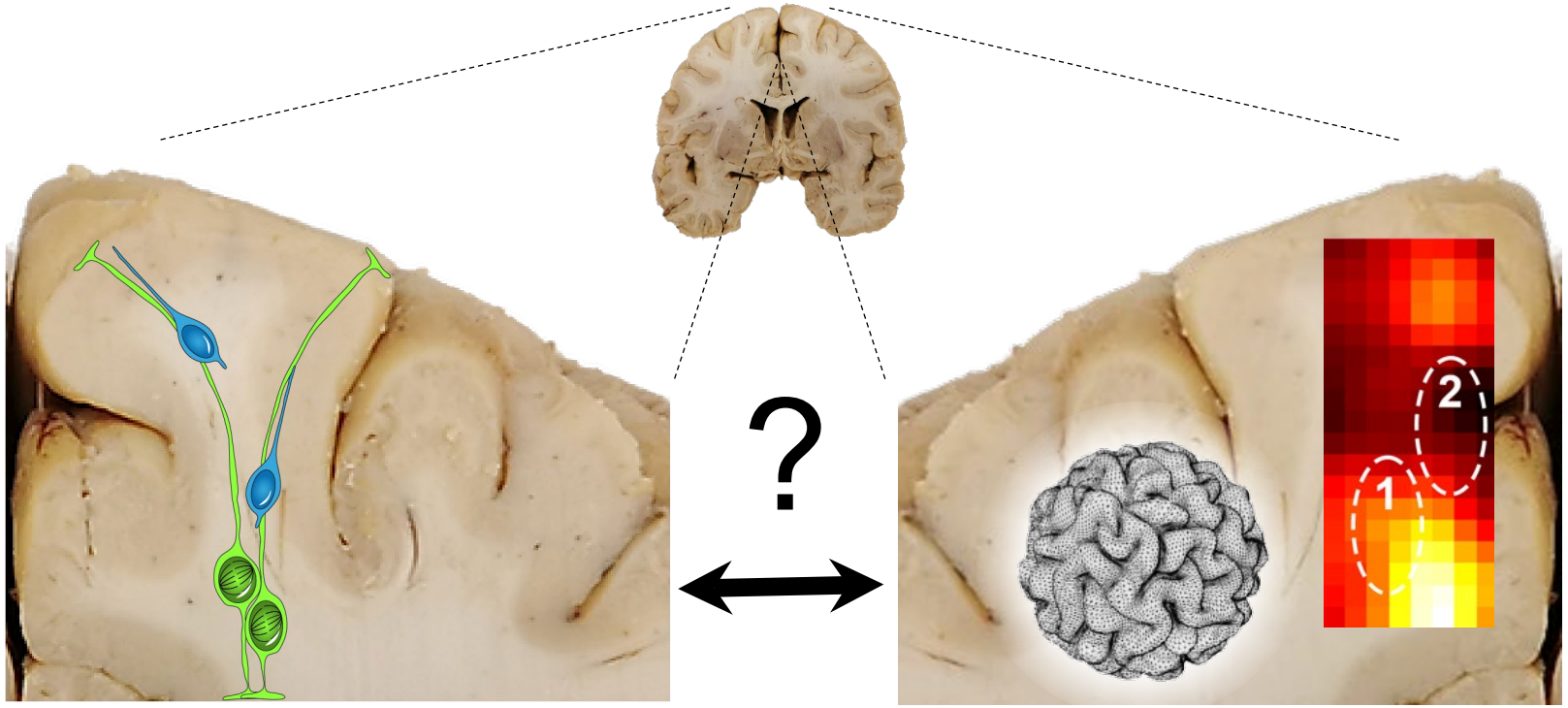
Borrell

Stem cells and genetics in ferret

Franze

Brain tissue and cell mechanics in vertebrates

Life sciences



Physical sciences

Current view:
- ➢ Data from isolated fields
- ➢ Lack of holistic understanding

Needed:
- ➢ Synergy of complementary fields

Nguyen

Neurogenesis and neuron migration in mouse and human

Toro

Biomechanical models – Brain mapping

1. Prepare the slide presentation

    1. Cover slide

    2. Topic and problem focus of your project, and its benefits beyond your field (1 slide)

    3. State-of-the-art and why your project will be transformative to make it advance (1 slide)

    Use title-only slides to define blocks in your presentation
    (i.e. Current understanding, Your specific approaches and synergies, Outcomes and Impact)

    4. Show the specific and distinct expertise (and techniques/models) of each PI's team (1 slide)

    5. Outline the general strategy of the project, pinpointing its specific aims (sequence, parallel…) (1 slide)

    6. Summarize each individual specific aim, and how each partner will contribute to it (1 slide / aim)
        → Show preliminary data where collaboration was needed, if it exists
        → Show proof-of-concept results, if they exist

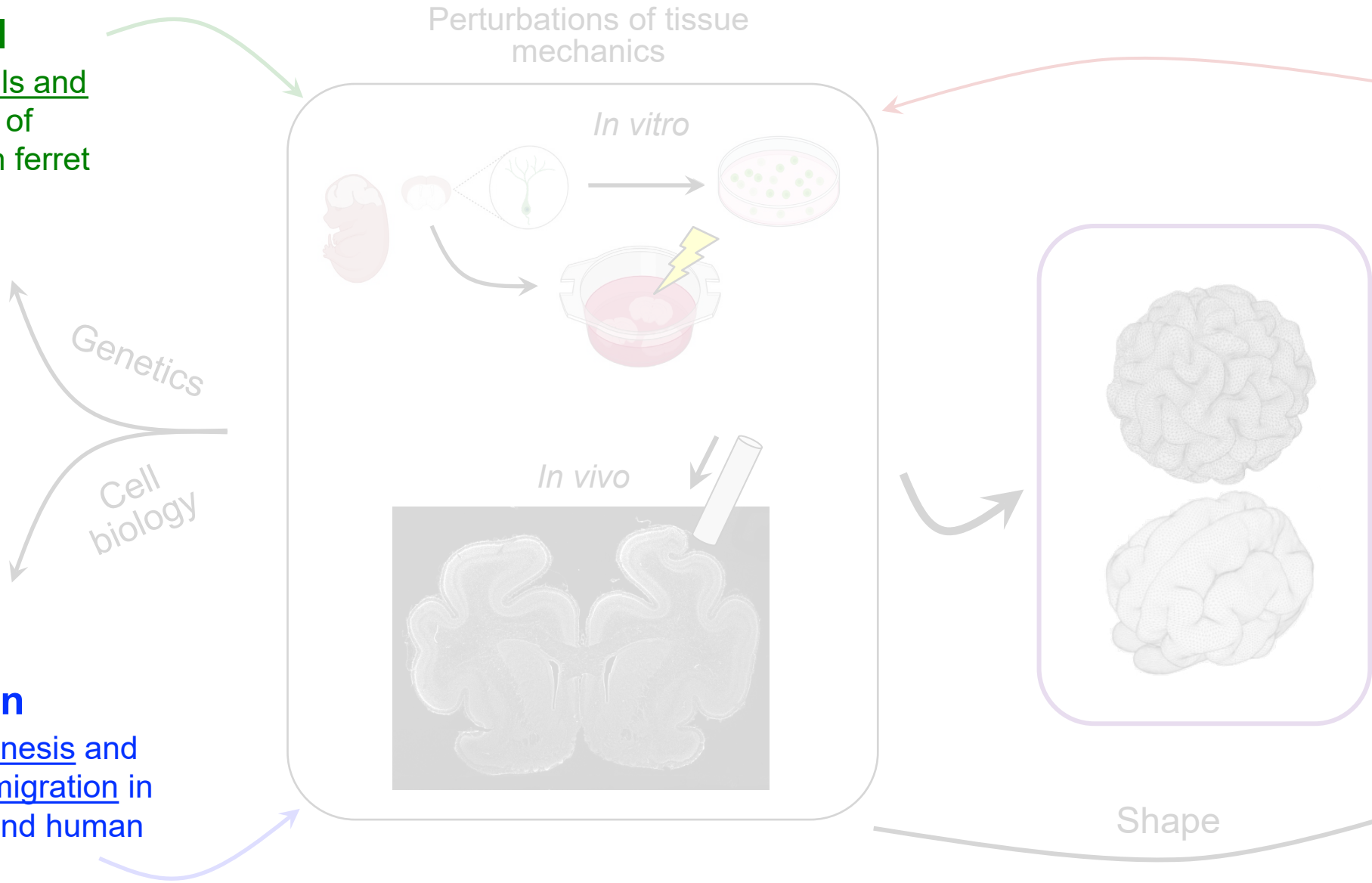
3 Effect of perturbations of tissue mechanics on cell biology and genetics

Borrell
Stem cells and genetics of folding in ferret

Franze
Brain tissue and cell mechanics in vertebrates

Nguyen
Neurogenesis and neuron migration in mouse and human

Toro
Biomechanical models – Brain mapping



1. Prepare the slide presentation

    1. Cover slide
    2. Topic and problem focus of your project, and its benefits beyond your field (1 slide)
    3. State-of-the-art and why your project will be transformative to make it advance (1 slide)
    4. Specific and distinct expertise (and techniques/models) of each PI's team (1 slide)
    5. Outline the general strategy of the project, pinpointing specific aims (sequence, parallel…) (1 slide)
    6. Explain each individual specific aim, and how each partner will contribute to it (1 slide / aim)
    7. Deliverables – specific gains of the project (1 slide)
    8. Greater impact of the project (outside our problem and immediate field) (final slide)

2. Prepare the speech

1. All team members together write down the speech, slide by slide

2. This is the synthesis of the project, so all should bring in their view and expertise

3. Economize on time (10 minute presentation!!) – use minimum words, use key words and concepts (should also appear in slide)

4. Use key words for the call (synergy, complementary expertise, together, cross-disciplinary, integrated, relevance, share,…)

3. Practice and get feedback

1. Presentation is done by co-PI → practice, practice, practice…
   → Memorize speech, then practice to deliver with naturality

2. Present to colleagues for feedback
   → With and without direct expertise in the field, but with capacity to have a generalist view
   → Live practice, and/or record and share for feedback

4. Self-testing for the interview

    1. Follow ERC guidelines to prepare the interview:
        a) Check all specific points to be evaluated by panel members

5. At the interview: Q&A

1. Stay cool, be polite (no matter what, even if questions sound stupid and repetitive)

2. Show that this is NOT a one-man project, but a team's

3. Show that all PIs stand at the same level and the team is really integrated

Questions may be addressed to a specific PI

Otherwise, co-PI leads the replies to the panel
→ Balance the involvement of all PIs in the discussion
→ Invite others to reply, and thus evidence their unique lead role