MY ERC GRANT STORY

Michal Smetana

Grant: ERC Starting Grant (submitted 10/2023, start 01/2025)
Project: Microfoundations of Collective Defence (MICROCODE)
ERC panel: Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems (SH2)
Host Institution: Charles University (Experimental Lab for International Security Studies/Peace Research Center Prague, Institute of International Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences)
ERC funding: 1.5 million euro for 5 years
Principal investigator: Michal Smetana
Team: PI + 3 postdocs + 1 PhD student + 1 project administrator

III **Elite Dispositions** → **DECISION-MAKERS**
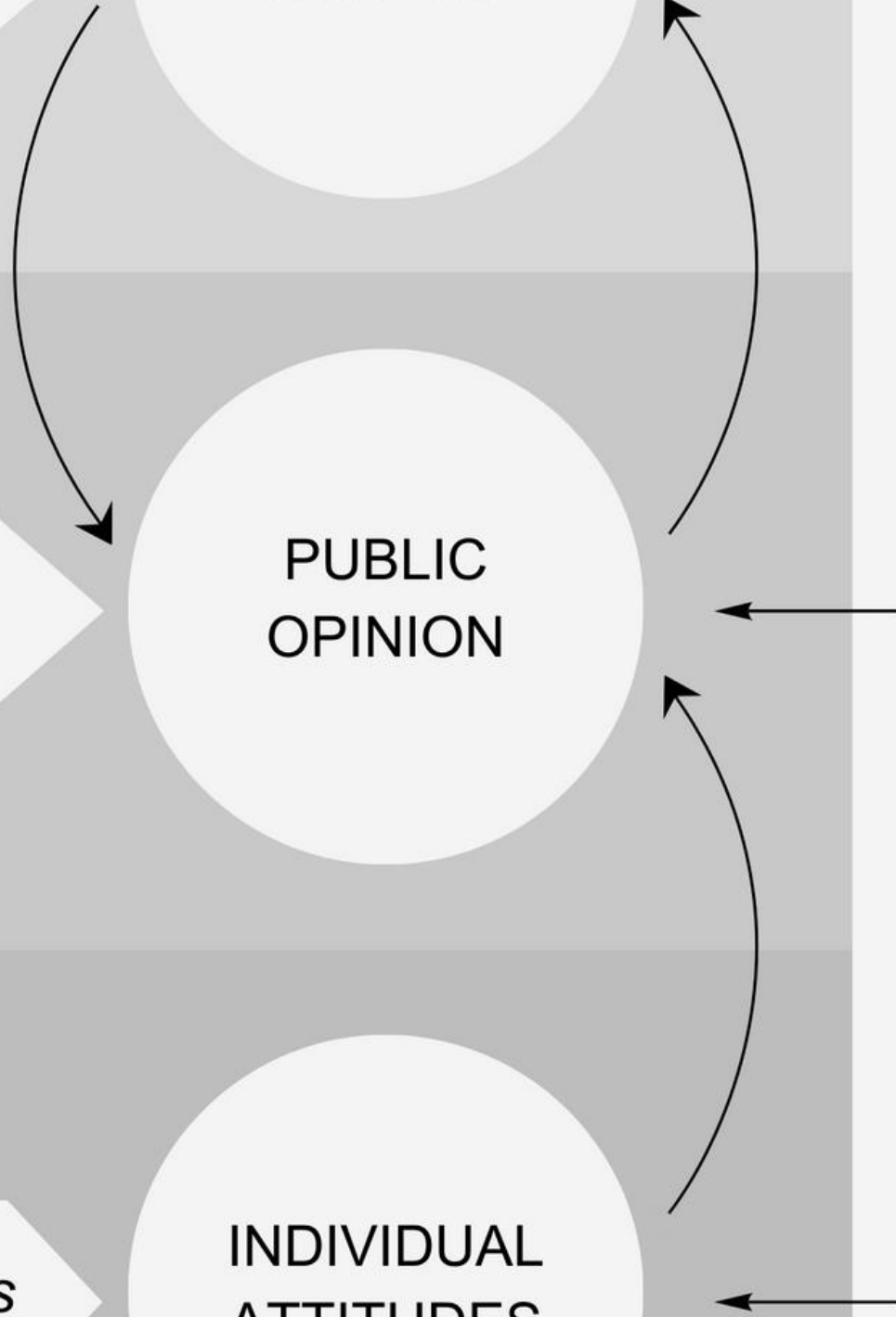
II **Societal Cues** → **PUBLIC OPINION**

I **Dispositions** → **INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES**

SITUATIONAL FACTORS

(Who, Whom, Where, How)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4/15 You will now watch a fictional TV news broadcast about Russia's armed attack against Latvia, one of the NATO member states. Imagine how you would feel if this situation were taking place in the real world.

Breaking News

Russia's military crossed Latvian borders

(after you watch the video, press the blue button below to continue with the survey)
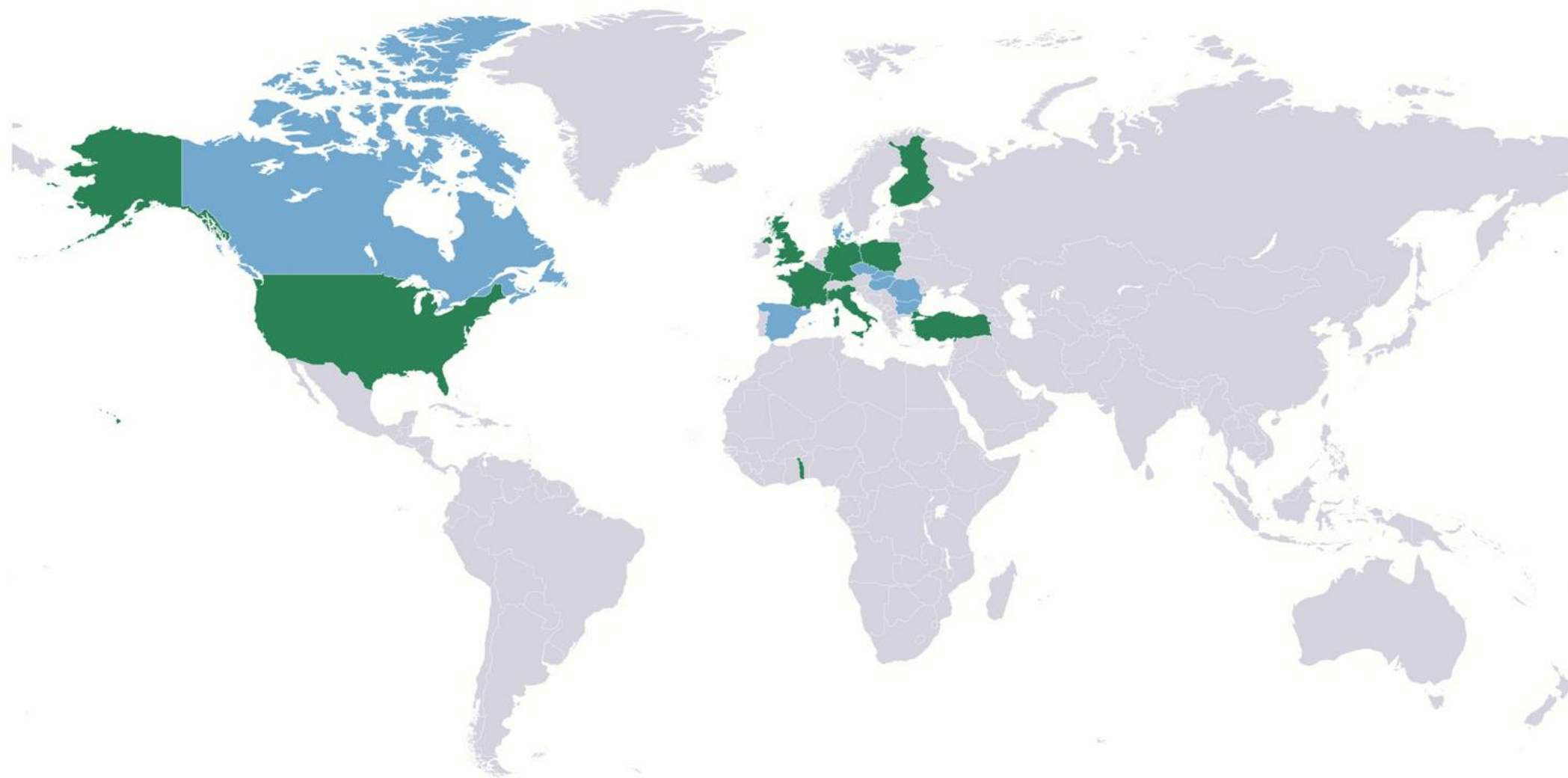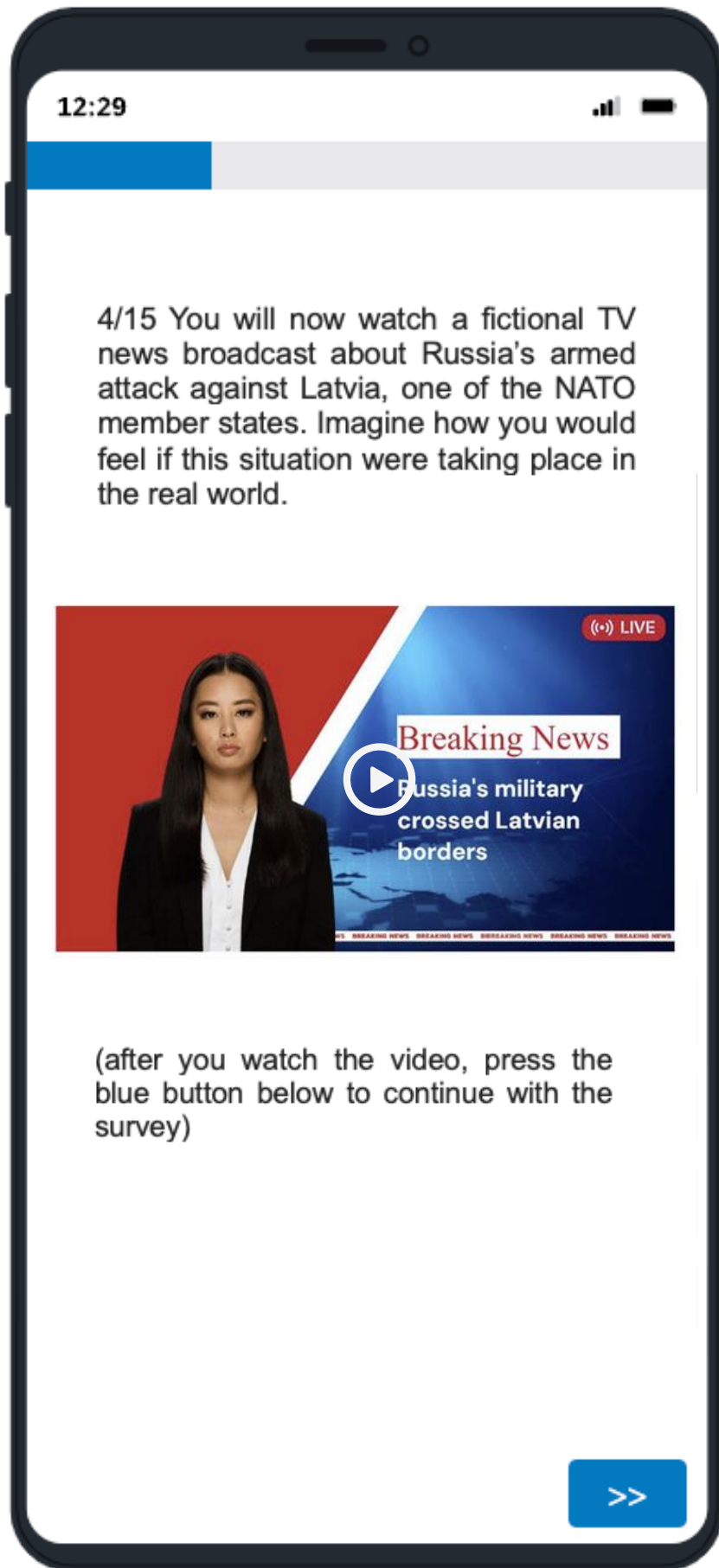
WP1 - only
WP1 + WP2 + WP3
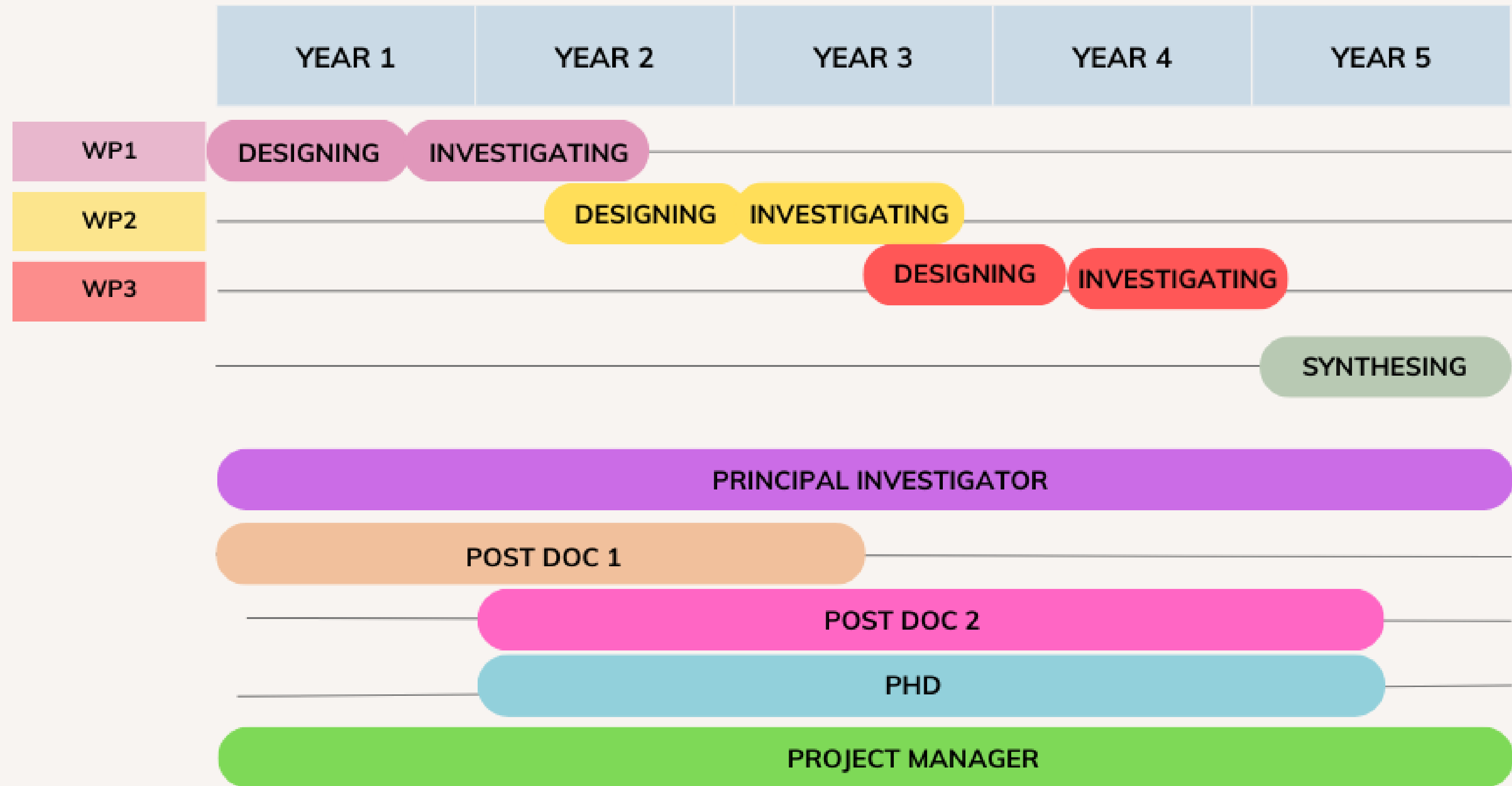
PI	Senior Staff	Postdocs	Students	Other Personnel costs	A. Total personnel costs/€	B. Subcontracting Costs/€ (No indirect costs)	C.1 Travel and subsistence	C.2 Equipment - including major equipment	Consum-ables incl. fieldwork and animal costs	Publications (incl. Open Access fees) and dissemination	Other 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
241500	0	256500	147000	105000	750000.00	0	50000	0	350000	42000	8000	400000.00	450000.00	0	300000.00	1500000.00

Budget

ERC journey from September 2022 until today

✓ September–November 2022: Getting some general information about the ERC grants & thinking about possible ideas for the project
✓ December 2022: First ELISS lab brainstorming sessions (three very different ideas about the possible direction)
✓ January–February 2023: More focused brainstorming sessions, decision on the (general) thematic focus
✓ March 1, 2023: First contact w/ the FSV UK & RUK about my intention to submit ERC
✓ March 6, 2023: First version of the abstract submitted to RUK
✓ March 22, 2023: Feedback (quite critical!) on my abstract from RUK
✓ March 23, 2023: Feedback (also quite critical!) on my abstract at the PRCP research seminar
✓ March 28, 2023: Revised abstract submitted to TC workshops
✓ May 17, 2023: First TC Workshop, feedback on my abstract (unsurprisingly, still rather critical)
✓ June 23, 2023: Second TC Workshop (learning from successful applicants)
✓ July–August 2023: Working on my B1+B2 forms, getting feedback from colleagues, reading other researchers' proposals
✓ September 15, 2023: Third TC Workshop, feedback on my B1 (the harshest feedback so far ☹)
✓ September–October 2023: Major revisions of my B1/B2, budget/annex preparations, additional feedback from ELISS/PRCP/FSV UK and other colleagues
✓ October 24, 2023: Grant submitted (yay!)
✓ March 7, 2024: Decision on step 1 and an invitation to the second round (interview)
✓ April–May 2024: preparation for the interview, consultations, mock interviews
✓ May 22, 2024: ERC interview
✓ July 15, 2024: Decision on step 2 (I have got the grant; yay!); start of the information embargo
✓ July–August 2024: Grant agreement preparation
✓ September 5, 2024: End of information embargo, official announcement of ERC StG results
✓ October 14, 2024: Grant agreement signed
 January 1, 2025: Grant starts

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criterion 1 - RESEARCH PROJECT
Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project
To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?
To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?

Scientific Approach
To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the proposed research?
To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources and PI commitment adequate and properly justified?

Criterion 2 - PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Intellectual capacity and creativity
To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?
To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative and original thinking?
To what extent does the PI have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

Panel comments (1 page) + 8 reviews (shortest ½ page, longest 1,5 pages)

PANEL SCORE AND RANKING RANGE

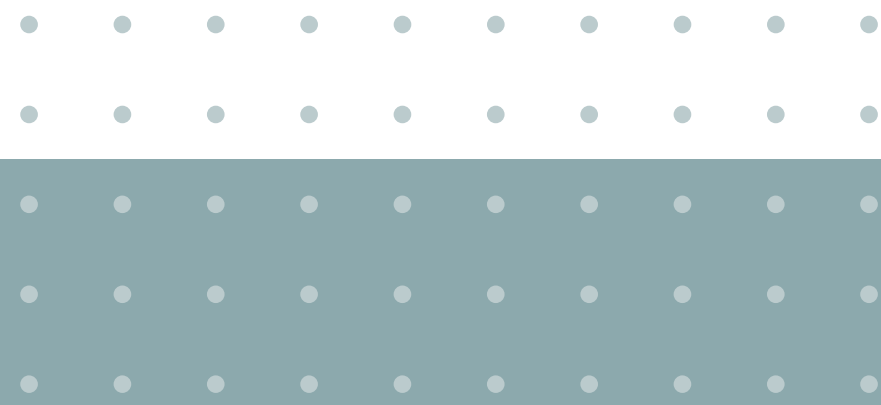| **Final panel score:** A (fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding if sufficient funds are available)	**Ranking range*:** 1%-34% For your information, only the top 36% of the proposals evaluated in panel SH2 in Step 2 were funded.

* Ranking range of your proposal out of the proposals evaluated by the panel in Step 2, in percent, from 1% for the highest ranked proposals to 100% for the lowest ranked.

- Each panel has a different format (in my case, a 3-minute presentation without slides, then 22 minutes interview)
- I spent one month preparing for the interview, about 1 hour daily
- I did 4 mock interviews + 1 TC workshop + 4 one-on-one presentation/feedback sessions
- Critical: good technical setup, proper room, audio-visual testing, perfect internet connection (+ back up), IT assistance, comfortable setup (standing!)
- 3-minute presentation: 440 words

- attend workshops
- organize presentations and mock interviews
- seek critical, tough feedback both on the written proposal and on the oral presentation
- work with ERC grantees & colleagues from abroad
- there were at least 35 people who attended my presentations and/or provided me with written feedback, and many others who participated in externally organized workshops (incl. TC workshops)
- responsibility is 100% yours, but you need others to succeed <3

More info:
https://michalsmetana.academic.ws
https://www.eliss-lab.eu
https://www.prcprague.cz