



European Research Council  
Scientific Council

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## EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL 90th PLENARY MEETING, 29-30 June 2023, Stockholm, SE Minutes

**Scientific Council members present (in alphabetical order):** Geneviève ALMOUZNI, Harriet BULKELEY, Eveline CRONE, Ben FERINGA, Mercedes GARCÍA-ARENAL, Gerd GIGERENZER, Tom HENZINGER, Liselotte HØJGAARD, Dirk INZÉ, Eystein JANSEN, Chryssa KOUVELIOTOU, Maria LEPTIN (ERC President), Sylvie LORENTE, Laszlo LOVÁSZ, Luke O'NEILL, Björn OTTERSTEN, Giovanni SARTOR, Nicola SPALDIN, Jesper SVEJSTRUP, Alice VALKÁROVÁ and Milena ŽIC FUCHS.

**ERC Executive Agency staff present:** Laurence MOREAU, Jose LABASTIDA, Anthony LOCKETT, Angela LIBERATORE, Mila BAS SANCHEZ, Pascale CID, Raluca IONESCU, Josefina ENFEDAQUE, Philippe CUPERS, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Lino PAULA, Elena TOMA, Ben TURNER, Madeleine DRIELSMA, Sabine SIMMROSS, Srdjan PERKO, Severina SHOPOVA.

**ERC Executive Agency staff participating online:** Niki ATZOULATOU, Gwennael JOLIFF-BOTREL, Anisoara ULCELUSE-PIRVAN, Anita KUCHARSKA, Philippe VIJGHEN, Eleni ZIKA, Katja MEINKE, Alice RAJEWSKY, Dace RAMBAKA, Dagmar MEYER, Anna PELAGOTTI, Eleni CHATZICHRISTOU, David KRASA, Filipa FERRAZ DE OLIVEIRA, Victor LOSADA, Carlos HERNANDEZ FERREIRO, Veronica MARTINEZ OCANA, Susana NASCIMENTO, Abdul THIEME, Wieland STAESSENS, Fiona KERNAN, David KRASA, Anne NIELSEN, Dia ANAGNOSTOU, Noëlie Auvergne, Carmen GARCIA FERNANDEZ, Miguel PESQUERA, Mariam BENJDIA, Telma CARVALHO, Ani DOMAIN, Irene PALOMO NUNEZ and Brigitte ETIENNE.

**Chair of the meeting:** Maria LEPTIN (ERC President).

**Rapporteur:** Severina SHOPOVA, ERC Executive Agency.

### Thursday 29 June 2023

#### 1. Welcome, Plans and Goals of the 90<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting

Maria LEPTIN welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the main points to be discussed during the plenary.

#### 2. Adoption of the Agenda of the 90th Plenary Meeting

The Draft Agenda of the meeting was approved by the Scientific Council.

#### 3. Adoption of the Minutes of the 89th Plenary Meeting

The Scientific Council approved the Draft Minutes of the previous plenary meeting.

#### **4. Action Points Summary of the 89th Plenary Meeting**

The Agency informed the Scientific Council on the various action points from the previous Scientific Council plenary meeting in February.

#### **5. Update on Recent Meetings and Activities**

Maria LEPTIN reported from her recent meetings. Those included the following:

- Bilateral meetings with new Director-General of DG Research and Innovation Marc LEMAITRE.
- Meeting with Stina SOEWARTA, Head of Cabinet of Executive Vice-President Margrethe VESTAGER who took over the portfolio of Commissioner Mariya GABRIEL who left.
- Meetings with seven research ministers:
  - ✓ 3 March: Meeting with (now former) Colombian Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Arturo LUNA.
  - ✓ 10 March: Meeting with (now former) Romanian Minister for Research, Innovation and Digitalization, Sebastian BURDUJA.
  - ✓ 13 April: Meeting with the French Minister for Higher Education and Research, Sylvie RETAILLEAU.
  - ✓ 19 April: Meeting with Italian Minister for University and Research, Anna Maria BERNINI.
  - ✓ 1 June: Meeting with Robbert DIJKGRAAF, Dutch Minister for Education, Culture and Science.
  - ✓ 8 June: Meeting with Slovenian Minister for Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Igor PAPIČ.
  - ✓ 9 June: Meeting with Croatian Prime Minister Andrej PLENKOVIC and Croatian Minister of Science and Education, Radovan FUCHS.
- 27-28 February: Event honouring Blavatnik Prize winners, among them many ERC grantees, in London. Meetings with Russell Group, British Academy, Royal Society.
- 3-4 April: Heads of International Research Organizations (HIROs) meeting in Washington.
- 17-18 April: Meeting at Schloss Ringberg organized by the Max Planck Society with the G6 group of research funders and ministerial representatives from Germany, France, Italy and Spain.
- 19 April: Visit to Florence (EUI; mediated by Giovanni SARTOR) and Rome (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and Italian Research Ministry).
- 27 April: Meeting with new EIC President Michiel SCHEFFER.
- 30 May-1 June: Global Research Council meeting and bilateral meetings with representatives of funding organisations.
- 26 June: Conversations with The Guild and LERU.
- April/June: Observation, meetings, and dinners with ERC evaluation panels across all domains.

Maria LEPTIN encouraged Scientific Council members to also observe evaluation panel meetings. They provide an opportunity to hear from the panels and collect feedback to take back to the plenary meetings for discussion.

Eveline CRONE reported that she had been having regular meetings with the ERCEA and the SH domain representatives. She also took part in an event for young media professionals on “story telling” in science, organised by the European Science Media Hub at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Jesper SVEJSTRUP reported that he participated at an event organised by ALLEA where he gave a presentation about the ERC.

Eystein JANSEN reported that, in late May, he attended an event on frontier science and innovation, organised by the European House-Ambrosetti consultancy, Italy. He gave a presentation on the ERC, which had been prepared by the ERCEA. He also gave a presentation on the ERC to Norwegian research administrators.

Liselotte HØJGAARD reported from an event she attended in April at the European Parliament, celebrating 80 years of dialysis patients. She also participated, together with Jesper SVEJSTRUP, in an event organised by the Danish Technical University, where Baltic and Scandinavian PIs were present.

Giovanni SARTOR reported from an Italian event with 600 participants where he gave a presentation on the ERC, together with the Head of the ERCEA Scientific Department.

Geneviève ALMOUZNI reported from an event called “EU-LIFE ERC Masterclass 2023” in which she participated together with Dirk INZÉ. Geneviève ALMOUZNI also attended the ERC event in Paris that celebrated the 1,500 ERC grantees in France.

Sylvie LORENTE reported from a workshop on “slow science” promoting more quality rather than quantity in research outputs, which she attended on 20 March.

Laszlo LOVÁSZ reported from an Academia Europaea webinar for young researchers on how to apply for ERC grants, organised in Budapest.

Mercedes GARCÍA-ARENAL reported from a meeting that she attended in Nantes, France.

Alice VALKÁROVÁ reported on a presentation she gave on the ERC at an early career researcher event in Prague, Czechia. On 2 June, she attended an event of The Guild on widening participation and presented ERC widening activities.

Maria LEPTIN thanked the Scientific Council members for their active participation.

## **6. Election of the SH Vice-President**

Maria LEPTIN informed the Scientific Council of the candidate for the position of the SH domain Vice-President, Gerd GIGERENZER. He would replace Eveline CRONE whose mandate ends on 31 December 2023. Gerd GIGERENZER would step down as representative of the Scientific Council on the Steering Committee. The Scientific Council voted unanimously in favour of Gerd GIGERENZER taking the position of Vice-President for the SH domain as of 1 January 2024.

## **7. ERC Executive Agency housing**

The ERC President reported on recent developments regarding the housing of the ERC Executive Agency. She reminded the Scientific Council members of the decision taken by the Commission to sign rental contracts for EU Agencies in an area that the local Belgium government had been trying to develop. Some agencies in the Covent Garden building had been asked to move to the new building. The ERCEA’s contract for the agency’s own space in the Covent Garden building would expire in September, and the ERCEA was thus considered by the Office of Infrastructure and Buildings (OIB) of the Commission to be an obvious candidate for moving into the vacated space. However, the proposed spaces and time schedules for moves did not match the needs of the ERCEA, and it was necessary instead to extend the current contract in order to safeguard the proper operations of the Agency. Discussions with the Commission were ongoing.

## **8. Implementation of lump sums in Advanced Grants**

The Agency gave an update on the work of the internal Task Force on Lump Sums.

## **9. Communication activities and forthcoming events**

The Agency reported on recent communication activities, including discussions on the joint organisation of a Nobel Prize Dialogue event by the ERC and the Nobel Prize Outreach on 5 March 2024 in Brussels. Other activities included support of the Widening European Participation WG and the Gender and Diversity WG, as well as press releases and media activities. The Scientific Council was informed about the outcome of the call for the Science Journalism Initiative.

## **10. 10th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation**

Maria LEPTIN noted a few key points that the Scientific Council should discuss regarding the Framework Programme 10. These included the budget to be allocated to the ERC and governance of the ERC. The Scientific Council discussed options.

## **11. Strategic discussion on gender and diversity issues**

The Chair of the Working Group on Gender and Diversity (GDWG), Geneviève ALMOUZNI, reported on discussions of the WG on parental leave over the past year. As a result of the discussions and analysis done by the Agency on data and scientific papers on the subject, the Scientific Council decided to maintain the current rules for the extension of eligibility for Starting and Consolidator Grants and established a new template to facilitate extension requests. Regarding diversity issues, the WG was asked to explore in more detail diversity terms and approaches of other organisations, as well as future possible ERC efforts on diversity.

The Agency reported that preparations were on track for the ERC Workshop on Diversity, scheduled to take place on 28 November.

## **12. Research assessment**

The Agency reminded the Scientific Council of the discussions on research assessment and short-term changes that had been agreed already. As regards long-term changes related to the ERC evaluation processes, those would be further considered by a dedicated group of Scientific Council members.

## **13. Light Dynamic Panels**

The Agency presented a “dynamic evaluation model” for consideration by the Scientific Council.

## **14. Scientific Council Working Groups and their remits and composition**

Eveline CRONE reminded the Scientific Council of past discussions about the WGs and their remits and composition. The Scientific Council members discussed the various WGs and considered their future formats. Eveline CRONE encouraged the Scientific Council to look into the remits and composition of its Standing Committees as well. Maria LEPTIN noted that the Scientific Council should find a good mechanism to consider feedback from the panels.

## **15. Closed session**

The Scientific Council held a closed session.

## Friday 30 June 2023

### 16. Ethics review process

The Agency informed the Scientific Council about the review process for research ethics in applications for Horizon Europe funding, including the ERCEA ethics review. The Scientific Council had a discussion and stressed the importance of working together with the scientists with respect to ethics reviews.

### 17. Update from the ScC Standing Committees and Working Groups

The various standing committees and WGs that met recently reported on their activities.

- ***Standing Committee on Panels***

Maria LEPTIN reported that, at its last meeting, the Committee on Panels discussed re-invitations of panel members and the selection of panel chairs.

- ***Standing Committee CoIME***

Eveline CRONE reported from CoIME's recent activities, noting that the cases discussed were confidential.

- ***Standing Committee PRIME***

Jesper SVEJSTRUP reported from the recent meeting of PRIME. He noted that work had been done towards an integration of the Mapping Frontier Research WG into PRIME. The Mapping Frontier Research WG members had joined PRIME. The current membership of PRIME is as follows: Jesper SVEJSTRUP (Chair, LS), Maria LEPTIN (ERC President), Eveline CRONE (SH), Eystein JANSEN (PE), Gerd GIGERENZER (SH), Dirk INZÉ (LS), Chryssa KOUVELIOTOU (PE). The following members will be observers: Alice VALKÁROVÁ (PE), Giovanni SARTOR (SH), Harriet BULKELEY (SH), Luke O'NEILL (LS) and Tom HENZINGER (PE). Dirk INZÉ would continue to coordinate the mapping part of PRIME.

- ***WG on Mapping Frontier Research (MFR)***

Dirk INZÉ reported from recent activities of the MFR WG, including the meeting on 19 April.

- ***WG on Widening European Participation***

Alice VALKÁROVÁ reported from the meeting of the Widening European Participation WG, which took place on 25 April meeting.

- ***WG on Open Science***

Nicola SPALDIN reported on recent activities of the Open Science WG.

- ***WG on Innovation***

Sylvie LORENTE reported from recent activities of the WG, including the meeting, which took place on 15 May.

### 18. Allocation of associated-country credits

The Agency asked for agreement by the Scientific Council regarding the allocation of the additional budget of €156M.

### 19. Operational issues reporting

The Agency reported on the StG 2023 results.

The Agency reported on "PI-centric" and "HI-centric" events.

## **20. Strategic areas**

Maria LEPTIN suggested that due to the lack of time this agenda item should be postponed.

## **21. State of play of Horizon Europe implementation**

### **– *Update on the association of third countries***

The Agency informed the Scientific Council members on the developments of the association of third countries to the EU Framework Programme. The Scientific Council was reminded that the EU and Switzerland were re-discussing their relationship.

Regarding the UK, the Scientific Council was reminded that the UK had come to an agreement with the EU about association in December 2020 as part of an overall Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). In April the “Windsor Agreement” had been signed between the EU and the UK, which had opened the door for UK association. However, the UK would like to change the funding formula that had been agreed in December 2020. Discussions between the EU and UK were ongoing.

## **22. Any other business**

### **– *Scientific Council plenary meeting in Bergen, Norway in 2024***

Eystein JANSEN suggested a number of options for venues where the Scientific Council plenary meeting in 2024, which would focus entirely on strategic issues, could take place.

### **– *Scientific Council Steering Committee representative***

The Scientific Council was asked to approve Dirk INZÉ as candidate to replace Gerd GIGERENZER as representative of the Scientific Council on the Steering Committee as of 1 January 2024. The Scientific Council agreed unanimously.

### **– *Scientific Council plenary meeting in Pompeii, Italy in October 2023***

Maria LEPTIN reminded the Scientific Council of the plans to visit the archeological park in Pompeii on the occasion of the October plenary meeting. She also suggested that a tour of the excavations conducted by ERC grantee and panel member Maria-Luisa CATONI at the archeological site at Stabiae could be organized.