



European Research Council  
Scientific Council

Established by the European Commission

## ERC SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL 61<sup>st</sup> PLENARY MEETING, GENEVA (CH)

5-6 JULY 2017

### MINUTES

**Scientific Council members present (in alphabetical order):** Prof. Klaus BOCK, Prof. Paola BOVOLENTA, Prof. Margaret BUCKINGHAM, Prof. Eveline CRONE, Prof. Athene DONALD, Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK, Prof. Tomas JUNGWIRTH, Prof. Eva KONDOROSI, Prof. Michael KRAMER, Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ, Prof. Nils STENSETH, Prof. Martin STOKHOF, Prof. Giulio SUPERTI-FURGA, Prof. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS (partially), Prof. Janet THORNTON, Prof. Isabelle VERNOS, Prof. Reinhilde VEUGELERS, Prof. Michel WIEVIORKA, Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER

**Scientific Council members excused (in alphabetical order):** Prof. Christopher CLARK, Prof. Kurt MEHLHORN

**ERC Executive Agency staff present:** Pablo AMOR, Theodore PAPAZOGLU, Massimo GAUDINA, Jose LABASTIDA, Georges Eric TE KOLSTE, Michel VANBIERVLIET, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Anna LONNROTH, Martin PENNY, Angela LIBERATORE, Marja HENNESSY, Elena TOMA, Francesca SGRITTA, Sabine SIMMROSS, Stefania ZANINELLO, Christine SCHIEL, Diane BASTIANELLI

**Chair of the meeting:** Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON, ERC President

**Rapporteur:** Stefania ZANINELLO, ERC Executive Agency

#### Wednesday 5 July 2017

#### **Session 1 – Afternoon 14:00 – 18:30**

##### **1. Welcome of ScC Members, Plans and Goals of Meeting**

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON welcomed everyone and outlined the goals of the meeting.

##### **2. Adoption of Agenda**

The draft agenda of the 61<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting were adopted.

##### **3. Adoption of the Minutes of the 60<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of the ERC Scientific Council in Padova (IT) on 25-26 April 2017**

The Minutes of the 60<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the ERC Scientific Council (ScC) were adopted without any changes.

##### **4. Action Points Summary of the 60<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of the ERC Scientific Council**

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON checked the state of play of the action points from the last ScC meeting.

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

### *5.1 ERC Board meetings on 4 April, 15 May, 12 June*

A short report was given from recent meetings, including the last Board meetings.

The minutes of the Board meeting of 15 May 2017 were slightly modified following some comments from the Agency's financial department.

## **6. Ethical Review Presentation**

The ERCEA/B1 gave a presentation on the current ERC Ethics Review Process, including the relevant legal base, the main areas raising ethical issues (with some examples), as well as the ERC process of ethical screening and the Ethics experts selection. The ScC members had an in-depth discussion on the matter. Various issues were raised, such as the ethical reviews length, efficiency and impact, the selection of the appropriate experts, the relation between national and European laws, as well as the differences among countries and the risk based approach. The ScC Members and the Agency agreed on the need to improve the revision process and discuss it in more detail at the December plenary meeting.

## **7. Panel Descriptors**

The Standing Committees on Panel (COP) reported from the meeting in Padova and presented the new panel structure for 2019 calls. The ScC members briefly discussed the suggested amendments and adopted the new panel structure unanimously.

## **Thursday 6 July 2017**

### **Session 2 - - Morning 9:00 – 12:30**

## **8. Standing Committees and Working Groups Reporting**

### ***Standing Committee on Panels (CoP)***

The Chair of the Committee, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON, reported that the recruitment of panel members is ongoing and that there are no major pending issues. He noted that a few resignations of panel members were registered.

### ***Standing Committee on Conflicts of Interest, Scientific Misconduct and Ethical Issues (CoIME)***

The Chair of the CoIME, Prof. Klaus BOCK, reported from the last meeting of the CoIME and the recent activities of the Committee. It was mentioned that at the meeting some cases of scientific misconduct were discussed and that a full list will be included in the ERC Annual report.

### ***Working Group on Gender Balance***

The Chair of the Working Group on Gender Balance, Prof. Isabelle VERNOS, reported from the last meeting and recent activities. The various analyses requested at the last meeting were provided by the ERCEA.

### ***Working Group on Relation with Industry***

The Chair of the Working Group, Prof. Klaus BOCK, reported from the last meeting of the WG and recent activities, such as the evaluation of the PoC scheme and the involvement in the EIC creation.

### **Working Group on Open Access**

The Chair of the Working Group, Prof. Martin STOKHOF, reported from the two last meetings and on recent activities. He mentioned in particular the 'Open Research Data – the Researcher Perspective' event organised by the ERC Executive Agency in May.

### **Working Group on Increasing International Participation**

The Chair of the Working Group, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON, gave an update on the developments of the activities in this domain.

### **Working Group on Science behind the Projects**

The Chair of the Working Group, Prof. Nils C. STENSETH noted that the three-dimensional classification system which was in preparation for some time had been agreed and that work is ongoing on the classification of projects according to this system. The ERCEA/Dept B gave an update on the Science Behind the Projects exercise under Horizon 2020, which was recently launched.

### **Standing Committees Membership**

The ScC members were reminded of the updated membership of the Working groups and Standing Committees.

## **9. Communication Activities Update**

An update on recent communication activities and the ERC 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events in the rest of the world was given by the ERCEA Unit A2.

Some key events were mentioned, such as the WEF Annual Meeting of the New Champions 27 - 29 June in Dalian, China, with the participation of the ERC President and 10 ERC grantees. Regarding the ERC 10<sup>th</sup> year Anniversary, it was reminded that 155 events have been organised or will be organized in 38 countries and several national events took place in 18 countries, such as in FR (22), IT (19), ES (16), UK (10), DE (8), NL (6), AT (6).

In terms of promoting research in novel ways, three main ERC initiatives were mentioned:-

- "ERCcOMICS", which is a creative visual storytelling to innovate the way European science is communicated;
- "10 years, 10 portraits", a multimedia project (photos, images and sound) and a photo book, showing the impact of the ERC through people behind it: researchers, patients, supporters;
- "ERC=Science<sup>2</sup>" is a pan-European communications campaign using popular scientific themes such as 'cities of the future' or 'robotics' to highlight the scientific research funded by the ERC and the potential impact it can have on society.

Finally, Massimo GAUDINA, Head of the Communication Unit, informed the Scientific Council that, starting September 2017, he will occupy a new function at the EU representation in Milan. The ScC thanked him for the great job done in communicating on the ERC impact in the last 8 years.

## **11. Visit of Robert-Jan SMITS, Director General RTD**

The ScC welcomed the Director General of DG RTD, Robert-Jan SMITS, and had an extended exchange with him. Robert-Jan SMITS started recalling his involvement in the creation and launch of the ERC. He then encouraged the ERC to continue to communicate intelligently on the impact of frontier research. The task should be eased by the fact that the ERC has a great reputation, having the best peer review in the world and being frequently cited in several position papers and reports as a highly successful programme.

The ScC members confirmed the intention to focus on the core business of the ERC, to support frontier research, and on the importance that the ERC has acquired in the scientific

landscape over the years. They stressed also the excellent capacity of the ERC to meet its objectives thanks to an analytical spirit and capacity to react quickly. Robert-Jan SMITS praised the excellent work done by the ERC President to advocate for the ERC.

Robert-Jan SMITS mentioned the possibility to have a dedicated consultation with stakeholders to improve the operations and make some changes for the next FP. He warned against being idle with the simplification of procedures and supported the idea to have direct feedback from the main users. He encouraged the ScC to develop its own vision on future improvements without delay and reminded the Scientific Council to never allow other parties to set the ERC agenda and to keep talking to each other.

### **Session 3 - – Afternoon 14:00 – 18:00**

#### **10. Operational Issues Reporting: Evaluation and Granting Processes**

A first report for the 2017 granting processes and a report on the state of play of the concluded evaluation processes were provided by the ERCEA/Dept C and Dept B respectively.

##### ***Granting Processes***

The ERCEA/Dept. C reported on the state of play of the granting management processes. In terms of portfolio of running projects, the ERC is slowly phasing out from FP7 with 2508 projects and phasing in Horizon 2020 with 2909 ongoing projects.

##### ***Evaluation Process***

The ERCEA/Dept. B reported on the Consolidator Grant call 2017, on the outcome of Step 1 of the Starting Grants call 2017, the Step 2 interviews and also on the first two calls of the Proof of Concept call 2017. An update was also given on the state of play of the visiting Fellowships Programme and on the remaining calls calendar for 2017-2018. The ERCEA/Dept. B reported also on "double grantees" and "rolling grants".

Finally the ScC had a discussion on the data presented, including panels' behaviour under different circumstances.

#### **12. Preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme**

The Scientific Council discussed how to follow-up on its position statement on the preparation of the next Framework Programme and contribute further. Some issues raised in the statement are still open, including the reinforcement of the ERC's autonomy, the possible improvements to current operational hurdles and how to advocate the most efficiently for a potential budget increase and to handle it if it comes.

The discussion focused mainly on the agility and autonomy of the ERC. The President noted that ERC grantees seem to be expecting more efforts on the part of the ERC in terms of scientific networking, e.g. in relation with other parts of the FP. The ScC agreed that it is crucial and urgent for the ERC to engage in a self-assessment process, and that the preparation of FP9 provides an ideal window of opportunity for such a 'house-keeping' exercise. Given the positive outlook for ERC after the Horizon 2020 Interim evaluation and the Report of the High Level Group led by Pascal LAMY, this opportunity should not be missed.

#### **13. Any Other Business**