



European Research Council  
Scientific Council

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# ERC SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL 62<sup>nd</sup> PLENARY MEETING, KALKARA (MT)

18-20 October 2017

## MINUTES

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

**Scientific Council members excused (in alphabetical order):** Prof. Athene DONALD

**ERC Executive Agency staff present:** Pablo AMOR, Theodore PAPAZOGLU, Jose LABASTIDA, Mechtild MAY, Thierry PROST, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Anna LONNROTH, Martin PENNY, Angela LIBERATORE, Laurence MOREAU, Francesca SGRITTA, Sabine SIMMROSS, Benjamin TURNER, Stefania ZANINELLO, Christine SCHIEL, Diane BASTIANELLI, Laura PONTIGGIA, Matteo RAZZANELLI, Madeleine DRIELSMA

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

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

### Wednesday 18 October 2017

#### Session 1 – Afternoon 14:30 – 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 and annotated agenda of the 62<sup>nd</sup> plenary meeting were adopted.

##### 3. Adoption of the Minutes of the 61<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting of the ERC Scientific Council in Geneva (CH) on April 2017

The Minutes of the 61<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting of the ERC Scientific Council (ScC) were adopted without any changes.

##### 4. Action Points Summary of the 61<sup>st</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 meeting on 18 September

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

## 6. Open Science Related Activities

Prof. Martin STOKHOF introduced this point of the agenda by reporting from the discussion at the Working Group meeting in the morning. He referred in particular to several pending issues debated, such as the possibility to support grassroots initiatives related to Open Science, the expected minimum standards to be met by publishers receiving APC/BPC funding from the ERC and recommendations on Open research data. He informed the Scientific Council members that no concrete decisions had been taken on any of these issues and that they would therefore be included again in the agenda of the next WG meeting in February 2018.

## 7. Brainstorming on ERC in FP9

The brainstorming discussion was split into two sessions, the first one in the afternoon of the first day and the second one in the morning of the last day of the plenary. During the first session, the Scientific Council members had a broad discussion on the various topics mentioned in the "Background paper on ERC in FP9<sup>1</sup>" sent before the plenary meeting. In the second session, some conclusions were drawn from the discussion and additional analysis requested from the agency in view of a further debate at the plenary meeting of December. This is the summary of the discussion over the two sessions.

The first session was initiated by a short presentation on the timeline for the adoption of next Framework Programme (FP9), explaining how the background paper had been put together, and setting out the expectations for the ScC brainstorming exercise. The members of the ScC were reminded that they had started their own discussion on the new FP already in April 2016 in Copenhagen, followed by a Participatory Workshop on the Future of the ERC in February 2017 and the adoption of an ERC statement on FP9 at the plenary meeting of April 2017 in Padova. The statement called for **continuity** of the ERC's current legal framework, for **agility** in terms of scientific strategy and operational flexibility, and **scale up** with a minimum yearly budget of €4 billion. It was noted that the statement has been very well received in the scientific community and the Commission, as well as by the Task Force and High level group in charge of the preparation of the new framework programme.

Complementary to this statement, at the Geneva Plenary meeting, the ScC agreed that in order to address the agility part of the statement, it was time for the ERC to engage in a self-review process. The agency has therefore undertaken an analysis of the ERC's functioning based on a desk study of the ERC's operations, on a benchmarking analysis of other funding agencies processes and on the conclusions of five focus groups discussions with 40 voluntary staff members from all units of the agency.

Some options in terms of rationalisation of documents and guidance were suggested, and the ScC members discussed various aspects of the ERC's evaluations. Concerning the impact of the ERC funding, the ScC agreed on the importance and need to assess, communicate and disseminate the results of what is being funded beyond the current focus on knowledge application and to invest more resources in the ex-post evaluation. Initiatives like the qualitative evaluation of completed projects have shown that, with its portfolio of projects, the ERC can show the way in demonstrating the impact of frontier research. It was agreed that a ScC Working Group on dissemination could be useful to advise the Council on the development of new approaches to get the general public excited about frontier research, going beyond potential applications, on the lines of what is being achieved by the Nobel Foundation through Nobel Media.

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<sup>1</sup> Grant Scheme and Grant Conditions Design, Planning and Publication; Call Management; Expert Management and Evaluation of Proposals; Grant Management, Financial and Scientific Reporting; Project and Programme Follow-up, Dissemination and Communication; and Recruitment, Business Processes, IT and Policy Development.

## Thursday 19 October 2017

### Session 2 – Morning 9:00 – 12:30

#### 8. Panel Recruitment & other Issues - Parallel Domain Meetings

The ScC held three parallel domain meetings (LS, PE and SH) in order to discuss the state of play of panel recruitment and other issues related to the ERC calls. The reports of the ScC delegates who recently attended evaluation meetings were circulated before the meeting.

#### 9. Panel Recruitment & other Issues - Common Session

The three domain coordinators reported from the domain specific meetings. The ERC President invited the ScC members to continue observing the panels and suggested them to participate also in evaluations of other disciplines than their own to understand how other communities work. Finally, he reminded the ScC of the Final Panel Chair meeting in Brussels on 13 February 2018. The Agency should send every year a final consolidated panel report from the three calls to all the ScC members. The ScC discussed further some common issues raised during the specific meetings, namely the panel structure and the possibility to expand the eligibility window. The possibility to add panels was evoked and supported by several members from three domains who argued that some recent changes in the sectors are not well mirrored in the panels. Another idea that emerged concerned the possibility to extend the eligibility window for the main schemes, and in particular for CoG.

### Session 3 – Afternoon 13:30 – 18:00

#### 10. Operational Issues Reporting: Evaluation Processes

The ERCEA/Dept. B made two presentations, the first one provided an update on the latest calls and the second one was on the "Evaluation scenarios" for the coming years in case of an increase in the number of applications.

The ERCEA/Dept. B sent in advance of the meeting a comprehensive presentation regarding the state of play of various calls and a shorter version was given at the plenary meeting. It included Step 2 results of StG 2017 call, the submissions for AdG 2017, provisional results of Step 2 CoG 2017 and data on the provisional submissions for StG 2018. The presentation recalled also the timeline and calendar for the 2017- 2018 calls.

The presentation of "**Evaluation scenarios**" provided an analysis on the implications on future (until the end of the current FP) calls of an increase in the number of applications based on the assumption that the mitigation measures taken so far would not be sufficient. Some possible solutions in the short and long terms were mentioned.

#### 10. Operational Issues Reporting: Granting Processes

The ERCEA/Dept. C made two presentations, one on the grant management and one on lump sums and what could be a pilot exercise with PoC2019. The first presentation included information on the granting situation and the consumption of credits. The presentation showed also the simplification features introduced in the Agency, following the latest version of the Model Grant Agreement and Annotated Grant Agreement and based on the lessons learnt from the first Horizon 2020 campaign. The state of play of the Open Research Data Pilot in ERC 2016 calls was also presented. It was reminded that in the ERC 2016 calls, the possibility to opt-in at proposal stage was offered and the PIs adhering received complementary information by the scientific department together with the evaluation results.

The ERCEA Grant Management Department made a presentation on the possibility to use lump sums at the ERC. The lump sum approach consists in setting up an alternative funding model (coined as "lump sums"), supported by DG BUDG and the Common Support Centre (CSC), which has a simplification potential. It would remove all cost reporting obligations towards the ERC grantee and the beneficiaries would no longer need to document the costs

they have incurred. Following the presentation, the Scientific Council had a broad discussion on the topic and was in favour to run a pilot exercise with PoC.

## **11. Communication Activities Update**

An update on recent and upcoming communication activities and including some updates on the ERC 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary campaign was given by the ERCEA Unit A2. The overall situation in terms of media coverage of the year was provided. Nearly 10 000 articles mentioned the ERC so far this year, with an increase of 2,000 from the equivalent period last year. The ERC 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary was the most visible topic, followed by the announcements of the results of ERC calls (AdG2016 and StG2017). In terms of social media coverage, the ERC's growing impact was noted, now counting nearly 40,000 followers on Twitter (rather good considering the size of the ERC "stakeholder community"). It was, furthermore, noted that the ERC has earned trust from stakeholders and media. It has a clear identity and constitutes a brand, distinguishable thanks to the ERC specific logo, the website and communication strategy, and with the possibility to engage in media relations. Some data on media impact of specific announcements such as StG 2017 results and the report of the ex-post evaluation of the ERC were also provided. In terms of communication projects, an update was given on the two CSAs - ERCcOMICS and ERC=Science<sup>2</sup> - that aim to go beyond ERC's usual audiences. Also, a selection of upcoming events was provided, including some ERC10 events. Finally, the Communication Unit presented the STOA-ERC event in the making, a main focus next year, planned for April or May 2018 (date to be confirmed!) in the European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg.

## **Friday 20 October 2017**

### **Session 4 – Morning 9:00 – 12:30**

#### **12. Preliminary Conclusions on ERC in FP9**

The report has been joined with that of 7.

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

- **Plenary meeting in February and April 2018**

Prof. BOURGUIGNON informed the Scientific Council that the Plenary meeting of April 2018 will take place in Brussels. The ScC members, except two, confirmed their availability to participate at the ERC/STOA event in Strasbourg on 18-19 April 2018.

- **Ethical panels**

Three members of the Scientific Council accepted the invitation to attend ethical panels as observers in November 2017 in Brussels.

#### ***12:30 Close of the Meeting***