



European Research Council
Scientific Council
Established by the European Commission

ERC SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL 73rd PLENARY MEETING, Brussels (BE) 5-6 December 2019

MINUTES

Scientific Council members present (in alphabetical order): Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON (ERC President), Prof. Genevieve ALMOUZNI, Prof. Manuel ARELLANO, Prof. Paola BOVOLENTA, Prof. Margaret BUCKINGHAM, Prof. Eveline CRONE, Prof. Ben FERINGA, Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK, Prof. Eystein JANSEN, Prof. Tomas JUNGWIRTH, Prof. Kurt MEHLHORN, Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ, Prof. Martin STOKHOF, Prof. Giulio SUPERTI-FURGA, Prof. Jesper QUALMANN SVEJSTRUP, Prof. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS, Prof. Janet THORNTON, Prof. Michel WIEVIORKA and Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER.

Prof. Mauro FERRARI (ERC president-elect)

Scientific Council members excused (in alphabetical order): Prof. Michael KRAMER, Prof. Mercedes GARCIAL ARENAL and Prof. Lene VESTERGAARD HAU.

ERC Executive Agency staff present: Waldemar KUTT, Jose LABASTIDA, Theodore PAPAZOGLU, Angela LIBERATORE, Niki ATZOULATOU, Laurence MOREAU, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Thierry PROST, Martin PENNY, Michel VANBIERVLIET, Philippe CUPERS, Anthony LOCKETT, Richard FRIZON, Carmen GARCIA FERNANDEZ, Francesca SGRITTA, Madeleine DRIELSMA, Dagmar MEYER, Elena TOMA, Matteo RAZZANELLI, Laura PONTIGGIA, David KURZ, Sabine SIMMROSS, Severina SHOPOVA, Diane BASTIANELLI, Brigitte ETIENNE and Christine SCHIEL.

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

Rapporteur: Severina SHOPOVA, ERC Executive Agency.

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

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON welcomed everyone and outlined the goals of the meeting. He excused Prof. Mercedes GARCIA-ARENAL, Prof. Michael KRAMER and Prof. Lene VESTERGAARD-HAU who could not attend the plenary meeting. Prof. Geneviève ALMOUZNI attended the plenary meeting partially via videoconference.

Furthermore, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON welcomed Prof. Mauro FERRARI, the next ERC President as of 1st January 2020, who attended this plenary meeting as an observer.

2. Adoption of Agenda of the 73rd Plenary Meeting of the ERC Scientific Council

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

3. Adoption of the Minutes of the 72nd Plenary Meeting of the ERC Scientific Council

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

4. Action Points Summary of the 72nd Plenary Meeting of the ERC Scientific Council

The ERCEA informed the Scientific Council of the state of play of the action points from the previous Scientific Council plenary meeting. They all moved forward appropriately.

5. Update on Recent Meetings and Activities

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON reported to the ScC members on recent developments, including the ongoing overall budget negotiations (Multiannual Financial Framework or MFF) and the potential impact on the Horizon Europe budget. Moreover, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON shared with the ScC that his hearing at the ITRE Committee, which took place on 12 November 2019, went well. He chose to be accompanied by an ERC grantee, Prof. Antje BOETIUS, who gave an excellent presentation. In addition, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON reported from his participation at the Falling Walls conference and the various political appointments that he had in Berlin around the event. Finally, he mentioned his participation at the World Science Forum in Budapest and his recent visit to Slovenia. He noted that he was impressed with the positive developments in this country over the past few years when it comes to research.

Prof. Eveline CRONE reported that she met the Dutch Science Minister with whom she had a very productive exchange. In addition, she met with Dutch MEPs from the conservative and the socialist parties. The MEPs were concerned with the underperforming countries and keep on asking how this could be explained.

6. Next Steps in the Preparation of Horizon Europe

The initial orientations towards the Work Programme 2021

The ERCEA reminded the ScC that the ERC is the only framework programme part where the establishment of the Work Programme has been entrusted by the co-legislators to an external independent body, and that the annual ERC Work Programme exercise was the most important decision the ScC had to discuss and to take every year. It was noted that the Work Programme reflects the ERC funding strategy, under the remit of the ScC, and serves also as the formal financing decision for the operational budget of the year, under the Commission's responsibility.

The Work Programme 2021 is set to be the first Horizon Europe Work Programme and therefore its final adoption can only take place after the Horizon Europe legislation itself has been adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

Draft of the ERC Rules for Submission (RfS)

The ERCEA presented the main revisions of the ERC Rules for Submission to the ScC. The Scientific Council is expected to further review the draft document and provide feedback during the plenary meeting of February.

State of discussions on the Corporate Model Grant Agreement (MGA)

The ScC was informed that the European Commission was preparing a corporate MGA for all EU funding programmes including Horizon Europe.

7. Panels Restructuring (2021-2022)

Following up on the discussion at the October plenary meeting in Krakow, the ScC unanimously agreed the proposed changes for the years 2021-2022 for all evaluation panels.

8. State of Play of Dynamic Panels Modelling

The ERCEA gave an update on the work performed on the dynamically arranged panels' model.

9. Results of the Career Impact Study

The ERCEA informed the ScC of the results of the career impact study. The ScC was reminded of the aims and objectives of the study, namely to provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of ERC funding:

- On the careers of ERC PIs and their team members;
- On the ERC funded teams as units linked to a research activity; and
- On ERC Host Institutions and their practices in promoting the careers of their researchers.

As regards the scope of the study, it covered all ERC frontier research grants funded under FP7. The contractor was ICF with subcontractors CHEPS, Vitae and Elsevier. Moreover, the study lasted four years from the approval of the Work Programme 2015 to the final results in 2019.

10. Communication Activities Update

The ERCEA reported on recent communication activities, including a Media Interview Guide, which has been produced for ScC members explaining key messages, key figures, information sources and tips for media interviews. In addition, a report was given on the recent stakeholder survey in terms of the awareness and perceptions of ERC grants.

The ScC adopted the Communication Strategy 2020. Moreover, the ScC was reminded of some key communication opportunities in 2020, such as the WEF in Davos, the AAAS Annual Meeting in Seattle, the European Parliament Science Week, the Global Research Council meeting in Durban, the Summer Davos in Tianjin, China, ESOE 2020 in Trieste and the STS Forum in Kyoto, to name a few.

11. Reporting from Standing Committees and Working Groups

The Minutes from the Standing Committee on Panels and CoIME, that recently met were included under this agenda item and accepted by the ScC, together with the Minutes of the Gender Issues WG and the Innovation and Relations with Industry WG.

ERCEA Annual Conference with focus on Gender

Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ, Chair of the Gender Issues WG (previously called Gender Balance WG) reported that the WG is working in close cooperation with the Gender Activity Group in the ERCEA and the ERCEA Communications Unit on various issues, such as a possible conference with a focus on gender and a video addressing unconscious bias.

COIME: Analysis regarding possible sanctions to be imposed by the ERC for scientific misconduct

The ERCEA reported that during the last CoIME meeting the members have been discussing the question posed to them by some panel chairs during the ERC Workshop in February 2019, namely whether the ERC can be more effective in terms of sanctioning scientific misconduct.

It was explained to the panel chairs that, in the current legal and regulatory construction, the ERC does not have investigative powers and it therefore has to rely on the investigation and eventual adjudications made by the Host Institutions (HIs) involved in the alleged cases, since they are the employer of the PIs allegedly involved in misconduct.

Presentation of the status of ‘Science Behind the Projects’ (SBP) and perspectives

The ERCEA gave an update to the ScC on the state of play of the Science Behind the Projects exercise for Horizon 2020.

Standing Committee on Panels

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON reported on the last meeting of the SCoP and noted in particular the discussions on the reorganisation of the panels' structure and the discussions on re-invitations for panel members.

Innovation and Relations with Industry WG

Prof. Giulio SUPERTI-FURGA noted that the Innovation and Relations with Industry WG has been discussing the ERC's relationship with the EIC. It was noted that the ERC has been an inspiration to the EIC and the next ERC President should investigate how ERC should be interacting with it.

Gender Issues WG (GIWG)

Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ, Chair of the Gender Issues WG, reported from the last meeting of the WG in Krakow. She noted that there is now gender balance in the success rate of the ERC competitions. However, it is a fragile balance and the ERC needs to continue its efforts.

12. The Future of the Working Groups

Following up on the discussion at the ScC Krakow plenary meeting in October, Prof. Kurt MEHLHORN (also on behalf of Prof. Eveline CRONE who had to leave the meeting earlier), with the support of the ERCEA, asked the ScC to decide whether to discontinue some of the WGs and possibly replace them with ScC champions, as well as to decide on the membership rules.

After a discussion, the ScC decided to keep all of the current WGs. Moreover, it was suggested that, as it is very important that all three domains be represented in all WGs, the ScC members firstly express their interest to the Vice-Presidents who will discuss and present a proposal to the ERC President for his final decision on the membership. The ScC agreed with the proposed approach.

13. Operational Issues Reporting: Evaluation Analysis and Grant Management Activities

The ERCEA reminded the ScC of the evaluation planning for 2021 and 2022 and gave an update on the SyG 2020 submissions and on the Step 1 results for the AdG 2019 call.

Update on granting activities

The ERCEA gave an update on granting activities, including an overview of the planning of commitment credits as well their forecast for the end-of-the-year exercise.

Also, the ScC decided on the allocation of any remaining budget to the 2019 calls.

14. Any Other Business

ERC Visiting Fellowships

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON informed the ScC that the ERC received a proposal from Serbia for the ERC Visiting Fellowships Scheme. An exchange between the ERCEA and the Serbian Science Ministry had already taken place on the draft text of the proposal and some modifications have been made. The ScC agreed with the proposal submitted to the ERC.

Thank you to Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON

Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER, on behalf of the ScC members, thanked Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON for his continuous dedication and service to the ScC throughout all his years as ERC President¹. Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON received a warm round of applause from all ScC members and ERCEA staff present at the meeting.

¹ The ScC had the opportunity to thank the other departing ScC members (Prof. STOKHOF, Prof. WIEVIORKA and Prof. SUPERTI-FURGA) at a dedicated farewell dinner the preceding evening.