



European Research Council
Scientific Council

Established by the European Commission

ERC SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL 78th PLENARY MEETING Videoconference 10-11 December 2020 MINUTES

Scientific Council members present (in alphabetical order): Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON (ERC President ad Interim), Prof. Genevieve ALMOUZNI, Prof. Manuel ARELLANO, Prof. Paola BOVOLENTA, Prof. Margaret BUCKINGHAM, Prof. Eveline CRONE, Prof. Ben FERINGA, Prof. Mercedes GARCIAL ARENAL, Prof. Gerd GIGERENZER, Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK, Prof. Eystein JANSEN, Prof. Tomas JUNGWIRTH, Prof. Michael KRAMER, Prof. Kurt MEHLHORN, Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ, Prof. Jesper SVEJSTRUP, Prof. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS, Prof. Janet THORNTON, Prof. Milena ŽIC FUCHS and Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER

Scientific Council members excused (in alphabetical order): Prof. Lene VESTERGAARD HAU

ERC Executive Agency staff present: Waldemar KUTT, Jose LABASTIDA, Mil BAS-SANCHEZ, Angela LIBERATORE, Laurence MOREAU, Niki ATZOULATOU, Dirk COSTENS, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Martin PENNY, Philippe CUPERS, Anthony LOCKETT, Anisoara ULCELUSE-PIRVAN, Nikola CAR, Francesca SGRITTA, Ben TURNER, Laura PONTIGGIA, Matteo RAZZANELLI, Jasmin SADAT, Maria CHACON MOHEDANO, Katja MEINKE, Madeleine DRIELSMA, Dagmar MEYER, Anna PELAGOTTI, Elena TOMA, Elena VOLPI, Monika POLINSKA, Claudia MARENCO, David KRASA, Alice RAJEWSKY, Sabine SIMMROSS, Eleni ZIKA, Jaime ROSER-CHINCILLA, Severina SHOPOVA, Brigitte ETIENNE.

Chairs of the meeting: Prof Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON (ERC President Ad Interim)

Rapporteur: Severina SHOPOVA, ERC Executive Agency.

Thursday 10 December 2020

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

The meeting took place via videoconferencing for all participants. Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON welcomed everyone and outlined the goals of the meeting. He also noted that three ScC members will be leaving at the end of the year, namely Prof. Janet THORNTON, Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER and Prof. Tomas JUNGWIRTH, and new members will be joining the Council in 2021. A farewell event has been scheduled for the departing members. Also, there have been some developments around the budgetary discussions with €4 billion extra being secured by the European Parliament for Horizon Europe. Finally, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON noted that the year 2020 has been a difficult one for many and there is an outstanding event that needs to be organised to commemorate the tragic loss of Dr Theodore PAPAZOGLOU. The idea was to organise the event in December but given that all meetings still take place online, it was decided to postpone it to next year so that it can be organised with physical presence.

2. Adoption of the Agenda of the 78th Plenary Meeting of the ERC Scientific Council

The Draft Agenda of the meeting was approved by the Scientific Council (ScC) with a minor modification, exchanging items 9. ERC and Open Science Activities and 13. Continuous Improvement Initiative.

3. Adoption of the Minutes of the 77th Plenary Meeting

The ScC approved the Draft Minutes of the previous plenary meeting.

4. Action Points Summary of the 77th Plenary Meeting

The ERCEA informed the ScC on the state of play of the various action points from the previous ScC plenary meetings in October. It was noted that the action points have either been completed or are work in progress.

5. Update on Recent Meetings and Activities

The ERC Interim President reported on his recent meetings and activities, including among others the Board meeting on 20 November 2020.

Update on the ERCEA Establishment Plan (including the Cost-Benefit Analysis)

The ERCEA Director reported on the cost-benefit analysis exercise being performed by DG Budget for all Executive Agencies.

Update on the Delegation Act

The ERCEA Director gave an update on the state of play of the Delegation Act for the Agency.

Update on the process to appoint a new President

Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER reported that the Search Committee has started working.

Update on the Establishment of the European Research Council

The ERCEA Director reported on the state of play of the Establishment of the ERC.

6. State of play in the Preparation of Horizon Europe

The ERC Interim President and the ERCEA/A1 gave an update on the state of play of the Horizon Europe preparations.

Horizon Europe Budget latest developments

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON reported on the latest developments regarding the Horizon Europe budget negotiations.

Submission forms

The ERCEA gave an update to the ScC on the state of play of the discussions with the DG Research and Innovation Common Implementation Center as regards the submission forms.

Reporting forms

The ERCEA reported that a discussion has taken place at the ScC PRIME Committee meeting as regards the reporting forms confirming the principles stated already in the plenary in October.

Model Grant Agreement (MGA)

The ERCEA informed the ScC that there are no further developments on the MGA since the last plenary meeting.

ERC Rules for Submission and Evaluation

The ERCEA reported on the state of play of the Rules for Submission.

Work Programme 2021

The ERCEA updated the ScC on the status of the Commission adoption process of the ERC Work Programme 2021 established by the ScC in April.

7. Work Programme 2022: Orientation debate

The ERCEA showed the customary calendar for the preparation of the ERC Work Programmes, following which the ScC had an orientation debate on the Work Programme 2022 based on the information available at this time.

8. Update from the ScC Standing Committees and Working Groups

The Chairs of the WGs that met recently reported on their activities.

Updates from the Chairs of the Standing Committees CoP, ColME and PRIME

The Chairs of the various Standing Committees and WGs that met recently reported on their activities.

WG on Widening European Participation: Implementation of the Mentoring Initiative

Prof. Tomas JUNGWIRTH reported on the WG's discussion as regards the implementation of a Mentoring Initiative that the ScC has recently discussed and endorsed. Also, the WG has discussed and agreed on a new Chair as of next year, Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK. The ScC endorsed this nomination.

9. Continuous Improvement Initiative

The ERCEA Director introduced the point and noted that the Continuous Improvement (CI) exercise has been initially inspired by the Cost Benefit Analysis exercise run by the Commission. The ERCEA then gave an update on the state of play of the CI exercise to the ScC members.

10. ERC-EIC joint activities

Prof. Kurt MEHLHORN gave a progress report on the activities of the ERC-EIC Contact Group, including information on the main topics discussed and future planned activities and actions.

11. ERC Gender Equality Plan 2021-2027

Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ presented the ERC Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for 2021-2027, including highlights of its main objectives and planned actions.

Farewell to departing colleagues 18:00 – 19:00

The ScC organised a remote farewell event for the two departing ScC Vice-Presidents, Prof. Janet THORNTON and Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER, and for Prof. Tomas JUNGWIRTH, member of the ScC Steering Committee.

FRIDAY 11 December 2020

12. ERC and Open Science Activities

Prof. Paola BOVOLENTA reported on recent meetings and activities of ERC on Open Science issues, including a report from the recent meetings of the WG and plans for future activities and actions.

13. ERC External Communication Strategy

The ERCEA presented the plans for the ERC External Communication Strategy 2021 to the ScC, including some overall objectives, target audiences, key messages and activities. The plan was approved by the ERC Scientific Council with minor modifications.

14. Communication Activities Update

The ERCEA/A2 reported on recent communication activities.

Research Highlights around the 10 000th grantee event

The ERCEA gave an update on recent discussions related to producing some research highlights around the ERC 10,000th grantee event planned to take place in 2021.

Upcoming events

The ERCEA noted some recent and upcoming communication activities and events. It was highlighted that the ScC budget statement was published on the ERC website on Monday and promoted on social media. It has received so far 300 retweets, 104 quote tweets and 407 likes and so it has been very much appreciated on social media. The ERC is expecting to receive soon questions on the final outcome of the budget talks from journalists.

Furthermore, it was noted that the CoG highlights have been published while promoting the results of the calls, together with the CoG results also published this week. This has generated many

reactions on social media with 330 media articles within 24 hours of the publication of the CoG results.

Also, a series of communication actions have been organised around Widening, including three information events, one with the participation of Commissioner Mariya GABRIEL in Bulgaria, another one with the participation of Prof. Milena ŽIC-FUCHS in Croatia and another event in Slovenia with the participation of the ERC Interim President.

The NCPs from Poland and the three Baltic countries have approached the Communication unit expressing their interest to organise such events next year, which is a very positive sign.

The ScC was also informed that the Communication unit is continuing the work on global outreach and since the summer a total of 16 webinars have been organised on a geographical basis. 17 ERCEA Scientific Officers have participated in those, together with 9 former ERC panel members. The 16 global outreach webinars have reached 2800 participants and have been organised for Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Brazil, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as for the events the signature of ERC implementing arrangements in New Delhi, India, and in Tokyo, Japan.

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON mentioned the two ERC webinars for Africa (one for French-speaking countries and one for English-speaking countries) and informed the ScC of the recent launch of ARISE, the African Research Initiative on Science and Engineering, modelled after the ERC, co-organised by DG-R&I and DG-DEVCO. He noted that it is a 25 M€ initiative that the African Academy of Sciences will be in charge of organising.

The experience has shown that working online has allowed ERC to reach out to a wider audience. What is more, it was noted that new video series have been produced, with the help of 5 ERCEA Scientific Officers, and have been already viewed over 25.000 times (link to the videos: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLtv6FnsXqnXAYRk6HCErwMxwML0ZKoMcy>). The videos have been very well received and people have commented that they find very practical advice in them.

Finally, as regards the next edition of the Public engagement with research award, the ScC was informed that another Prize is being planned for the year 2022.

Finally, the Communication unit thanked Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER, Prof. Janet THORNTON and Prof. Tomas JUNGWIRTH for the wonderful cooperation over the years. Also, Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER was particularly thanked for his dedication and efficiency as Chair of the Jury Award this year.

15. Operational Issues Reporting: Evaluation Analysis & Grant Management Activities

Update on calls

The ERCEA gave an update on the outcome of the CoG 2020 evaluation and the PoC 2020 Deadline 3, as well as an update on the AdG 2020 Step 1.

Conditional acceptance of panel member invitations

The ERCEA informed the ScC members that some of the experts who are invited to serve as panel members are accepting with the condition that they can attend the meetings remotely. Several experts remain concerned about travelling given the pandemic.

Update on granting activities

The ERCEA gave an update on the granting activities, including the main achievements and challenges throughout the year.

16. Any Other Business

Budget discussions

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON informed the ScC that, during the course of the plenary meeting, an agreement was reached during a night session of the trilogue on the extra money to be allocated. As a result, there has been a confirmation from the German Presidency that €1 billion in 2018 prices extra will be allocated to ERC. It will be part of the Horizon Europe budget and counting

in current prices the ERC budget will come to €16 billion. Then, the other outcome of the trilogue is that the associated countries' contributions will have to be broken down to the subprogrammes according to the countries' performances.

The ScC members discussed shortly the outcome of the budgetary discussions and noted that, while they were happy to be allocated the €1 billion extra, there was the feeling that the importance of frontier research has not been taken on board as much as it should have been by the Member States' governments. Also, the national governments should think whether the money they have allocated is enough to realistically create a good knowledge society. At the same time, the ERC is very grateful to all its supporters who spoke up in ERC's favour.

New Head of the ERCEA Scientific Department B

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON was pleased to be able to announce that Ms Angela LIBERATORE has been selected as the new Head of the ERCEA Scientific Department B. She will take office early next year. He congratulated her on behalf of the full ScC.

Last meeting for three ScC members

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON thanked one more time Prof. Janet THORNTON, Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER and Prof. Tomas JUNGWIRTH for their service. He also thanked the assistants of Prof. Janet THORNTON and Prof. Fabio ZWIRNER, Ms Brenda STRIDE and Mr Eugenio DEL NOBILE for all their efforts and dedication.