



European Research Council
Scientific Council

Established by the European Commission

ERC SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL 83rd PLENARY MEETING 9-10 December 2021, Videoconference MINUTES

Scientific Council members present (in alphabetical order): Maria LEPTIN (ERC President), Genevieve ALMOUZNI, Paola BOVOLENTA, Margaret BUCKINGHAM, Eveline CRONE, Ben FERINGA, Mercedes GARCIAL ARENAL, Gerd GIGERENZER, Liselotte HØJGAARD, Dirk INZE, Andrzej JAJSZCZYK, Eystein JANSEN, Michael KRAMER, Rodrigo MARTINS, Kurt MEHLHORN, Barbara ROMANOWICZ, Nicola SPALDIN, Jesper SVEJSTRUP, Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS, Alice VALKÁROVÁ and Milena ŽIC FUCHS.

ERC Executive Agency staff present: Waldemar KUTT, Jose LABASTIDA, Anthony LOCKETT, Mila BAS-SANCHEZ, Angela LIBERATORE, Laurence MOREAU, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Philippe CUPERS, Niki ATZOULATOU, Anisoara ULCELUSE-PIRVAN, Ben TUBBING, Nikola CAR, Alice RAJEWSKY, Gwennael JOLIFF-BOTREL, Anita KUCHARSKA, Gian Franco CASULA, Monique SMAIHI, Ben TURNER, Laura PONTIGGIA, Dace RAMBAKA, Dagmar MEYER, Anna PELAGOTTI, Elena TOMA, Elena VOLPI, Madeleine DRIELSMA, Samantha CHRISTEY, Noëlie AUVERGNE, Marcin MONKO, Lino PAULA, David KRASA, Fiona KERNAN, Jhansi KOTA, David KURZ, Srdjan PERKO, Roberta MAGGIO, Nicole HEINE, Dina PAPADAKI, Helena GONZALES SANCHO, Filipa FERRAZ DE OLIVEIRA, Agni KORTSIDAKI, Gabriel KARAJIAN, Simona ROMAGNOLI, Eleni CHATZICHRISTOU, Miguel PESQUERA, Katja MEINKE, Eleni ZIKA, Anne BERGER, Sabine SIMMROSS, Andrea POLYAK, Severina SHOPOVA and Brigitte ETIENNE.

Chairs of the meeting: Maria Leptin (ERC President)

Rapporteur: Severina SHOPOVA, ERC Executive Agency.

Thursday 9 December 2021

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

The meeting took place via videoconferencing for all participants. The ERC President welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the main points to be discussed during the plenary meeting. She noted that Gerd GIGERENZER would only join the afternoon session of the plenary meeting as he was currently in the USA.

2. Adoption of the Agenda of the 83rd Plenary Meeting of the ERC Scientific Council

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

3. Adoption of the Minutes of the 82nd Plenary Meeting

The ScC approved the Draft Minutes from the 82nd plenary meeting.

4. Action Points Summary of the 82nd 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 all action points had either been completed or were work in progress.

5. Update on Recent Meetings and Activities

Maria LEPTIN reported from recent meetings and events that she had attended, as well as invitations that she had already received and many interviews that she had given. She reported on meetings with Wolfgang BURTSCHER, Director General of DG Agriculture and Rural Development and former

Deputy Director General of DG RTD and the Falling Walls Conference in Berlin. Several events took place on the margins of the Falling Walls Conference, including one organised by the Berlin Universities Association and a panel discussion, which included Uğur ŞAHİN, among others. Maria LEPTIN had taken part in both and had interesting discussions. She emphasised the value of the ERC and noted that better communication of research to the general public was needed. Maria LEPTIN also attended an event organised by the Robert Bosch Foundation on diversity. The ERC President mentioned that she had introductions with some political leaders in Brussels and national governments. She also repeated her main focus as ERC President, which is to protect, strengthen and possibly expand the ERC and she would continue to publicise the value of curiosity-driven science. As regards relations with the Commission, Maria LEPTIN had fruitful discussions with Commissioner Mariya GABRIEL and the DG RTD Director General and would continue to have regular exchanges with them. Maria LEPTIN participated at a recent EIC event where she spoke to Mark FERGUSON, Chair of the EIC Advisory Board. They had agreed on the complementarity of the aims of the ERC and the EIC and that the two organisations should continue to cooperate. Maria LEPTIN met with the Deputy Director General in charge of ERC, Joanna DRAKE, and had a discussion on the reporting templates, as well as had another meeting with Deputy Director General Signe RATSO on the association of third countries. The ERC President met with the President of the ERC Grantees Association and attended a meeting on the new ScC members due to be appointed in January. The four new members will join the Council early next year.

Andrzej JAJSZCZYK reported from recent meetings and events that he had attended. Those included an IGLO online meeting on 27 October where 26 people attended and he had given a 30min presentation on widening European participation in ERC, followed by a fruitful discussion. On 24 November Andrzej JAJSZCZYK had attended an in person Workshop in Luxembourg, organised on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Science Europe. The topic for discussion had been research culture in the European Research Area (ERA) and the event had 60 participants in person and another 70 online. The DG RTD Director General, Jean-Eric PAQUET had given a video address. His talk had referred to supporting sustainable and effective research culture in ERA and he had focused on applied research funding by the Commission, while not forgetting basic research. He had also stressed that the ERC is the most remarkable platform ever and had mentioned the ERC Nobel Prize Winners. Other attendees at the event had included the Swiss State Secretary for Research. The DFG President and the GRC Chair, Katja BECKER had also addressed the event. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK reported that he had some useful discussions with Konstantinos GLINOS from DG RTD on open science.

Eveline CRONE reported from recent meetings and events that she had attended. She noted that she had been quite busy with shaping the ESOF 2022 conference during which several ERC activities will be organised.

Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS reported from recent meetings and events that he had attended. Those included an event on 12 November on how to prepare a successful ERC application, organised by the Young Fellows of EAS- European Atherosclerosis society, where he had given a presentation. He had also attended the Step 1 LS domain panels briefing online on 22 November, where he had presented the ERC overall evaluation strategy. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS had taken part in national events, such as the German-Greek Chamber of Commerce and Industry meeting in Athens on 24 November, which was organised remotely and had also been attended by Commission Vice-President, Margaritis SCHINAS. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS had presented initiatives about health and technology, as well as the ERC. On 6 December Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS had taken in a meeting about the new strategy for European Universities, the Higher Education Initiative. The discussions at the meeting had focused on how to link universities with entrepreneurs and how to capitalise on the research developed in universities. The role of basic research had also been discussed, as well as how it provides the foundation for everything else.

Margaret BUCKINGHAM reported on recent meeting that she attended, which had included discussions with young researchers funded by the CNRS in France during which she had presented

the ERC. She had also attended an online meeting with a group of Japanese cardiovascular researcher who were very interested in the ERC.

Eystein JANSEN reported from a meeting that he had attended on 11 November, organised by the Young Academy of Europe (YAE) in collaboration with the Academia Europaea Budapest Knowledge Hub. The event had been dedicated to researchers from EU13 and Associated Countries who are interested in applying for the next round of ERC StG. 170 participants, mainly from EU13 countries, had attended this successful event. Eystein JANSEN had noted that YAE is a good partner for the ERC.

Geneviève ALMOUZNI reported from her participation at a forum on Horizon Europe. The event had also been attended by Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON who spoke about the ERC, while she had been part of the innovation table. Geneviève ALMOUZNI reminded the ScC that France is in charge of the EU Presidency next year and so a series of events will be organised and the ERC President will be invited to several of them. Maria LEPTIN had already received and accepted an invitation to the Paris Open Science European Conference (OSEC 2022) in early February, where she will contribute to the final round table on 'Research Assessment and Open Science'.

Paola BOVOLENTA reported from an EU-Life policy webinar on research assessment that she had recently attended and presented the ERC's approach to the assessment of individual researchers when they apply for an ERC grant. Paola BOVOLENTA also mentioned that the day before the plenary, she had participated in a stakeholder meeting on reforming the research assessment system organised by the Open Science Unit of DG RTD.

The ERCEA Director, Waldemar KÜTT noted that the post for his successor had been published. In the meantime, an acting Director for the ERCEA had been identified and this is Laurence MOREAU. He congratulated her for the position and stressed that he is confident that she will do a great job. The ERCEA Director informed the Council that he had attended a meeting with DG Budget on the third country credits. As regards human resources matters, he noted that a new Head of Unit for the ERCEA/B2 is being recruited and will be operational before the end of the year. However, the recruitment for the ERCEA/D1 and B5 Units is still not finalised. A new sector had been created in the Agency, namely the ERCEA/B0 on Scientific Impact and Feedback to Policy and it will be led by Eleni ZIKA.

6. State of play of Horizon Europe implementation

The ERCEA gave an update on the Horizon Europe implementations.

– Update on the association of third countries

The ERCEA noted that the UK association is still not clear. Also, the discussions with Switzerland had been put on hold since the summer and so Switzerland had been taken out of the transitional arrangements. Association of the other countries is proceeding as planned. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, Georgia and Israel had signed their association this week.

– Update on reporting templates

The ERCEA gave an update to the ScC on the scientific reporting forms and templates.

7. ERC Communication Strategy

The ERCEA discussed with the ScC the ERC External Communication Strategy 2022. Following the discussion, the ScC adopted the ERC External Communication Strategy 2022.

8. Update from the ScC Standing Committees and Working Groups

The various Standing Committees and WGs' Chairs reported on their activities. Details regarding the GIWG included below. The following groups had met recently:

| Standing Committee/Working Group name and Chair | Most recent meeting |
|---|----------------------------|
| Standing Committee PRIME (Chair Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS) | 8 December 2021 |

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Standing Committee CoIME (Chair Eveline CRONE) | 8 December 2021 |
| Standing Committee on Panels (Chair Maria LEPTIN) | 6 December 2021 |
| Innovation and Relations to Industry WG (Chair Kurt MEHLHORN) | 26 November 2021 |
| Widening European Participation WG (Chair Andrzej JAJSZCZYK) | 20 October 2021 |
| Gender Issues WG (Chair Barbara ROMANOWICZ) | 29 November 2021 |
| Open Science WG (Chair Paola BOVOLENTA) | 24 November 2021 |

– **WG Gender Issues**

Barbara ROMANOWICZ reported from recent activities of the GIWG. She reminded the ScC that she would be leaving the Council at the end of December 2021 and that she was pleased that her work had been appreciated. She also acknowledged all the work done by the ERCEA/A1 Secretariat and the Scientific Department and that Geneviève ALMOUZNI had kindly agreed to replace her as Chair of the GIWG. The Council thanked Barbara ROMANOWICZ for her excellent steering of the GIWG and reconfirmed its decision from the October plenary meeting where it had unanimously elected Geneviève ALMOUZNI.

9. ERC Work Programme 2023

The ERCEA gave an update on the Work Programme 2023.

10. Update from the ScC Standing Committees and Working Groups continued

– **WG on Science Behind the Projects (Results of the Science Behind the Projects Initiative & Appointment of the new chairperson)**

Michael KRAMER gave an update on the work done by the Science Behind (SBP) the Projects WG. He also reminded the ScC members that his mandate is coming to an end and a new Chair of the WG needs to be elected to take over as of 1 January 2022. To that end, he proposed Dirk INZE as Chair of the WG. The ScC unanimously agreed with the proposal. Michael KRAMER also thanked all the Agency staff involved in running the SBP exercise.

11. Communication Activities and Forthcoming Events

The ERCEA Communications unit reported on activities around the Nobel week. The ScC members were informed that the Davos Summit in January 2022 would be taking place in person. It would give the ERC the opportunity to bring its message to a very high-level public. The Communications unit also thanked the ERC President for taking the time to do many interviews in her first weeks after taking office. The ScC members were reminded of forthcoming events, such as an ERC information event in Poland on 14 December and information events planned for 2022 in Romania, Slovakia, as well as events targeting Africa in February 2022.

12. Update on the Conference on the Future of Europe

Maria LEPTIN reminded the ScC members of the numerous efforts made by her predecessor, Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON, to make science and research explicitly visible at the Conference on the Future of Europe. Unfortunately, this had not happened. Therefore, more efforts would be needed in that direction.

Friday 10 December 2021

13. Update on the Continuous Improvement Initiative

The ERCEA/Director's office and respective ERCEA staff members gave an update on the state of play of the Continuous Improvement exercise (CI), including a general update on running projects and an update on the CI project on Ethics Review Process.

– **State of Play**

The ScC members received an update on the CI program, including the CI strategy workshop with managers, which had taken place on November 26. Also, Focus groups with CI project leaders, members of the CIAC and interviews had taken place.

– **Ethics Review Process**

The ERCEA gave an update on the Ethics Reviews Process project.

14. Operational Issues Reporting

– **Update on calls**

The ERCEA gave an update on the state of play of the situation regarding the sending on the information to applicants for the StG2021, which was currently being delayed because of the UK association issue. The ERCEA gave an update on the outcome of StG 2021 Step 2 evaluation, as well as an update of the AdG 2021 Step 1 call. Also, the overall timeline of calls 2021 had been shared with the ScC members.

– **CoG 2021 applications per domain**

The ERCEA shared with the ScC members some information, following the request of the ScC at the October plenary meeting on the submission and success rates by domain.

– **Experts identification tool: Prophecy**

The ERCEA informed the ScC members about Prophecy, the support tool for the identification of potential panel members and remote referees for the evaluation of proposals.

– **Panel Structure in view of Work Programme 2024**

The ERCEA gave an update on the planning of the next revision of the ERC panel structure, as well as an update on panel recruitment.

15. Any Other Business

-Farewell to departing ScC members and the ERCEA Director

The ScC members had said farewell to three departing ScC members, namely Barbara ROMANOWICZ, Margaret BUCKINGHAM and Michael KRAMER, as well as the ERCEA Director, Waldemar KÚTT. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK noted that Barbara ROMANOWICZ had played an important role as Chair of the GIWG and had transformed the group from being the Gender Balance WG into the Gender Issues WG. On a personal note, he recalled their shared origin and language. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK noted that Michael KRAMER had successfully ran the Science Behind the Projects WG, during which they had also discussed their shared interests in the fascinating subject of astronomy. The Council would be losing two scientific giants with Barbara ROMANOWICZ and Michael KRAMER and thanked them for all their dedication during their term as ScC members. They would be very much missed. Barbara ROMANOWICZ and Michael KRAMER thanked the Council members and the ERCEA staff with whom they had been working throughout all the years and in particular the Secretaries of the WGs they led and all Agency colleagues involved in the work of the SBP WG and the GIWG. Maria LEPTIN noted that she had been working with Margaret BUCKINGHAM in the past and had been amazed by the depth of thought and input that Margaret BUCKINGHAM always brings. She hoped that she would be able to continue interacting with her in future. Margaret BUCKINGHAM noted that the ScC had been a fantastic experience and it had been a pleasure for her meeting and working with interesting and committed colleagues. Eveline CRONE noted that as Waldemar KÚTT would also be saying goodbye to the ERC, almost a second family. So this must bring mixed feelings for him. Eveline CRONE described Waldemar KÚTT as a person who valued harmony and good spirit and had remained calm and guided the Council and the Agency in these difficult past years. He had also always cared deeply about the people around him and had always emphasised the importance of the well-being of his staff. The Council thanked Waldemar KÚTT very much for his hard work, as he would be very much missed, while wishing him all the best in future. Maria LEPTIN added that even though she had only had the chance to interact with Waldemar briefly, he had been very helpful and easy to interact with. She hoped to be able to still interact in future. Waldemar KÚTT stressed that it had been a pleasure and a privilege to work with the Council. Being at the ERC had given him an opportunity to come back to the academic environment, which had been the best end of his career. The ERC is the perfect organisation one could work for and it should be kept this way he stressed. He also noted that he would miss the Council and his Agency staff very much.