



European Research Council
Scientific Council

Established by the European Commission

**ERC SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL
81st PLENARY MEETING
22-23 June 2021
(Videoconference)**

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. Liselotte HØJGAARD, Prof. Dirk INZE, Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK, Prof. Eystein JANSEN, Prof. Michael KRAMER, Prof. Rodrigo MARTINS, Prof. Kurt MEHLHORN, Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ, Prof. Nicola SPALDIN, Prof. Jesper SVEJSTRUP, Prof. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS, Prof. Alice VALKÁROVÁ and Prof. Milena ŽIC FUCHS.

ERC Executive Agency staff present: Waldemar KUTT, Jose LABASTIDA, Anthony LOCKETT, Mila BAS-SANCHEZ, Angela LIBERATORE, Laurence MOREAU, Niki ATZOULATOU, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Martin PENNY, Philippe CUPERS, Anisoara ULCELUSE-PIRVAN, Nikola CAR, Alice RAJEWSKY, Carole MICMACHER, Gwennael JOLIFF-BOTREL, Ben TURNER, Laura PONTIGGIA, Dace RAMBAKA, Dagmar MEYER, Anna PELAGOTTI, Elena TOMA, Elena VOLPI, Madeleine DRIELSMA, Samantha CHRISTEY, Noelie AUVERGNE, Marcin MONKO, Monika POLINSKA-GENTENS, Francesca SGRITTA, Monique SMAIHI, David KRASA, Fiona KERNAN, Jhansi KOTA, David KURZ, Miklos NAGY, Eleni CHATZICHRISTOU, Susana NASCIMENTO, Pascal DISSARD, Silvia NICOLAU SOLANO, Carmen GARCIA FERNANDEZ, Laura LOBATO BAILON, Lino PAULA, Katja MEINKE, Eleni ZIKA, Severina SHOPOVA and Brigitte ETIENNE.

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

Rapporteur: Severina SHOPOVA, ERC Executive Agency.

Tuesday 22 June 2021

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 highlighted the main recent developments. He also announced that the ScC will hold a short closed session after the end of the morning plenary session.

2. Adoption of the Agenda of the 81st 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 80th Plenary Meeting

The ScC approved the Draft Minutes from the ScC 80th plenary meeting.

4. Action Points Summary of the 80th Plenary Meeting

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

5. Update on Recent Meetings and Activities

The ERC Interim President reported on recent meetings and activities, including among others the Board meeting on 27 May 2021.

Prof. Eveline CRONE reported on recent meetings she attended. Those included a meeting on 17 May of the ERC ScC and EIC Advisory Board, which she enjoyed very much. Other recent activities of Prof. Eveline CRONE included a meeting on 31 May at TU Eindhoven with Commissioner Mariya GABRIEL, with the Dutch Minister of Science, Ms Ingrid VAN ENGELSHOVEN and the Dutch Secretary

of State for Economic Affairs, Ms Mona KEIJZER. The event was a high-level lunch organised by Robert-Jan SMITS, who is currently the Chair of TU Eindhoven. Finally, Prof. Eveline CRONE reported that on 9 June she gave a speech at the Holberg Prize Ceremony. The event was supposed to take place in Bergen but it took place virtually given the situation.

Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK reported on recent meetings and events he attended. Those included the virtual meeting “Open Science – Standards and Good Practices” on 12 May, which was organised by the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (KRASP) and attracted 200 participants. In addition, on 20 May he participated in the IEEE Symposium on Authorship and Open Access for Poland, where he presented the ERC’s funding opportunities. Furthermore, on 10 June Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK attended a conference Genesof Deans of Mathematics and Computer Science Departments of Polish Universities. He took part in a panel and presented the ERC. Finally, on 17 June he attended a conference to promote Norway Funds, organised by NCN (the Polish National Science Centre) with 160 participants. On the same day another event took place, which Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK attended, namely the ICC (International Conference on Communication) 2021, which is one of the IEEE Communications Society’s two flagship conferences. A ‘Young professionals’ session devoted to funding opportunities with NSF and ERC was organised as part of the event and Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK presented the ERC opportunities.

Prof. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS reported about his recent meetings and activities. He noted the European Molecular biology meeting co-organised with EMBO on 21 May, which was a major event that attracted more than 2000 people in the field, including a lot of ERC grantees as speakers. In addition, Prof. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS highlighted another major event in biology, taking place on 21- 24 June, namely the International C. elegans conference. Many ERC grantees also participate in it and a session on funding opportunities in Europe will be organised where the ERC will be presented.

The ERCEA/Director announced a new Head of Unit at the ERCEA, who recently started, Ms Carole MICMACHER, Head of Unit D2 (Human Resources). He also noted the upcoming departure of Mr Martin PENNY who will be leaving the Agency in July. The ScC thanked him for all his dedication and efforts throughout the years of service to the ERC.

Prof. Ben FERINGA informed the ScC members that he met the Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Frans TIMMERMANS, as well as had contact with the Dutch Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Ms Mona KEIJZER at a conference. At both occasions he emphasised the important role of the ERC.

Prof. Geneviève ALMOUZNI informed the ScC that the Académie des Sciences de Paris has an Open Access WG and next year French President Emmanuel MACRON is planning to organise a meeting at the Académie on Open Access. ERC should keep an eye on it so that it can participate. Furthermore, Prof. Geneviève ALMOUZNI noted that she has been involved in organising some meetings, such as the EMBO-EMBL conference with over 700 attendees, including ERC grantees. In addition, she represented Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ at the Gender Summit in April.

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON reported on his recent meetings and activities. He noted particularly his recent exchanges with Portuguese Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Manuel HEITOR on the Conference on the Future of Europe. Also, he attended the “Forschungsgipfel”, an event where all major German players were present, including Chancellor Angela MERKEL, who gave a remarkable speech on the interaction between research and innovation. Moreover, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON attended the Global Research Council meeting and gave one of the opening speeches of the EU-Africa Summit on Research and Innovation.

6. State of play of Horizon Europe implementation

The ERCEA gave an update on the state of play of the Horizon Europe preparations:

– Update on the association of third countries

The ERCEA reported on the state of play of the association of third countries. It was noted that it is expected for the Association Agreements to be put in place by the end of the year;

– Update on reporting templates

The ERCEA gave an update to the ScC on the state of play of the reporting forms and templates.

7. Update on Work Programme 2022

The ERCEA reported on the state of play of the validation of the Work Programme 2022.

8. ERC Rules for Submission and Evaluation

The ERCEA asked the ScC to adopt the ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe. The ScC members unanimously endorsed the Rules.

9. ERA and Pact for Research and Innovation

The ERC Interim President introduced this agenda point, giving some background on the European Research Area and the discussions related to the Pact for Research and Innovation. The ScC members had an exchange on the topic and endorsed an ScC position on the Pact for Research and Innovation.

10. Nomination of a ScC member in the ERCEA Steering Committee

The ERC Interim President introduced this point and noted that, as Prof. Margaret BUCKINGHAM's mandate as ScC member is coming to an end on 31 December 2021, she will need to be replaced at the Steering Committee by another ScC member. He very much thanked her, on behalf of the ScC, for all her dedication and efforts. Prof. Milena ŽIC FUCHS to replace Prof. Margaret BUCKINGHAM.

Prof. Margaret BUCKINGHAM explained the importance of being a representative of the ScC at the Steering Committee.

The ScC then unanimously (in the absence of Prof. Milena ŽIC FUCHS who left the meeting for the vote) voted in favour of appointing Prof. Milena ŽIC FUCHS as second ScC Steering Committee representative as of 1 January 2022, the other one being Prof. Kurt MEHLHORN.

11. Update from the ScC Standing Committees and Working Groups (WG)

The various Standing Committees and WGs that met recently reported on their activities:

– Standing Committee ColME

Prof. Eveline CRONE noted that there are no new developments to share with the ScC at this stage;

– Standing Committee PRIME

Prof. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS reported from the recent discussions at the PRIME Committee;

– WG on Innovation and Relations to Industry

Prof. Kurt MEHLHORN gave an update on the state of play of the activities of the Innovation and Relations to Industry WG. He noted the ERC ScC-EIC Advisory Board meeting on 17 May, which was a very good one, and resulted in a joint press statement being published that was well received. Furthermore, he highlighted the forthcoming Cell and Genes Therapies joint workshop of the ERC and the EIC that will take place on 29 June. PREPARATIONS FOR IT ARE ONGOING;

– WG on Widening European Participation

The Chair of the Working Group on Widening European Participation, Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK informed the ScC members on recent developments related to the Mentoring Initiative;

– WG Gender Issues

Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ reported from the meeting of the GIWG, which took place on 21 June;

– WG on Open Science

Prof. Paola BOVOLenta reported on recent activities of the Open Science WG, including the recent agreement by the WG members during the meeting on 18 May to change the rather long name of the WG to simply WG on Open Science;

– WG on Science Behind the Projects

Prof. Michael KRAMER reported on the latest activities of the WG.

12. Communication Activities Update and Forthcoming Events

The ERCEA reported on recent communication activities, including information on the following:

- 10,000th grantee celebrations;
- Research & Innovation Days;
- ERC Magazine;
- Public Engagement with Research Award.

It was noted that an online ceremony was organised as a focal point of the communication campaign around the announcement of the ERC 10.000th grantee that includes the “15 Ways the ERC changed science”. Commission President Ursula VON DER LEYEN gave a speech during the event, together with other high level personalities, including Commissioner Mariya GABRIEL, David SASSOLI, the President of the European Parliament, Cristian BUSOI, Chair of the ITRE Committee, and Manuel HEITOR, the Portuguese Minister. Three ERC grantees participated also. Were noted about 800 spectators of the live transmission of the online ceremony on Youtube and 290 chat comments showing the viewers’ strong engagement.

In addition, in terms of the EU Research and Innovation Days, which will take place on 23-24 June, the ScC was reminded of the programme and events as follows:

- Main programme:
 - ✓ 23/6, 15h: ‘In conversation with the ERC’s Scientific Council’;
 - ✓ 23/6: 16h: “Scientific breakthroughs as opportunities to address societal emergencies”;
 - ✓ 24/6: 16h: “Disruptive innovators” led by EISMEA, in collaboration with DG CONNECT + ERC.
- ERC "House":
 - ✓ Chat live to a Scientific Officer: 15 min personal video calls.
- Virtual Exhibition:
 - ✓ 13 ERC projects featured-in RTD’s corporate videos, in panoramas and in podcasts.

The ScC was also informed of recent discussions on the EU Magazine with its Editorial Board.

As regards the Public Engagement with Research Award Ceremony (Mid-2022), an update was provided to the ScC. A couple of options have been considered to host the Award Ceremony.

13. Actions of the ERC Scientific Council in the Context of the Conference on the Future of Europe

The ERC Interim President reported on the preparations as regards the Conference on the Future of Europe. To that end, he noted that he has been in touch with Portuguese Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Manuel HEITOR.

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON explained to the ScC members that the JRC has been given the responsibility to handle the platform for the Conference and so they have developed some tools of machine learning to identify crosses or dominating opinion and gaps. The ScC then discussed how it could possibly mobilise the scientific community to motivate its members to take part in the Conference and approved a statement to this effect.

14. 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.

Wednesday 23 June 2021

15. Operational Issues Reporting

– Update on calls

StG 2021 Step 1 results

The ERCEA gave an update on the state of play of the StG 2021 Step 1 evaluation;

Format of panel meetings AdG 2021 Step 1 and CoG 2021 Step 2

The ERCEA had an exchange with the ScC as regards the plans for the format of panel meetings for the AdG 2021 Step 1 and CoG 2021 Step 2;

– Grant management activities: state of play

The ERCEA gave an update on the state of play of the grants’ management.

16. Follow-up on the discussions at the Final Panel Chairs Meeting of 9 March, 2021

ERCEA presented the input collected from the panel chairs during the Final Panel Chairs meeting, which took place on 9 March.

17. The Future of Panel Meetings

The ScC and the ERCEA discussed the future possible panel meetings' arrangements on the basis of informations collected from panel members and applicants.

18. Revision of the Criterion to Fix the PhD Reference Date for StG/CoG Applicants

The ERCEA discussed with the ScC a possible revision of the criterion to fix the PhD reference date for StG/CoG applicants.

19. Any Other Business

Next ERC President

The ScC discussed the (incomprehensible) delays in the announcement of the next ERC President.

ScC October plenary meeting

Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ raised the question of whether the ScC October plenary meeting will take place physically in Brussels or remotely. Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON reminded the ScC that the idea was to hold the meeting physically unless the pandemic takes a turn for the worse after the summer holidays.