



European Research Council
Scientific Council

Established by the European Commission

ERC SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL 79th PLENARY MEETING Videoconference, 4-5 March 2021

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, Dirk COSTENS, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Martin PENNY, Philippe CUPERS, Anisoara ULCELUSE-PIRVAN, Nikola CAR, Alice RAJEWSKY, Ben TURNER, Laura PONTIGGIA, Matteo RAZZANELLI, Dace RAMBAKA, Dagmar MEYER, Anna PELAGOTTI, Elena TOMA, Elena VOLPI, Katja MEINKE, Madeleine DRIELSMA, Samantha CHRISTEY, Noëlie AUVERGNE, Maria CHACON MOHEDANO, Monika POLINSKA-GENTENS, Monique SMAIHI, David KRASA, Lino PAULA, David KURZ, Konstantia VIGLI - PAPADAKI, Agnes KULCSAR, Miguel PESQUERA, Sabine SIMMROSS, Eleni ZIKA, Severina SHOPOVA, Brigitte ETIENNE.

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

Rapporteur: Severina SHOPOVA, ERC Executive Agency.

Thursday 4 March 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, introduced the five new ScC members and outlined the goals of the meeting. He asked the new members to briefly introduce themselves. Prof. Nicola SPALDIN, Prof. Alice VALKÁROVÁ, Prof. Dirk INZE, Prof. Liselotte HØJGAARD and Prof. Rodrigo MARTINS took the floor and introduced themselves.

Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON highlighted some main recent developments, including the recent publication of the ERC Work Programme 2021 and the launch of the calls the week before.

Moreover, he informed the ScC that the DG R&I Director General has appointed the Deputy Director General, Mr. Patrick CHILD as directly responsible for ERC. This is a very positive development and it would make the contacts with DG R&I easier, quicker and simpler given the busy agenda of the Director General.

Furthermore, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON warmly congratulated Ms Angela LIBERATORE for officially taking on her duties as Head of the ERCEA Scientific Department B.

2. Adoption of the Agenda of the 79th Plenary Meeting of the ERC Scientific Council

The Draft Agenda of the meeting was approved by the Scientific Council (ScC) with a minor modification: one part of point 8, namely Report from the Gender Issues WG, was postponed to the afternoon session on Thursday.

3. Adoption of the Minutes of the 78th Plenary Meeting

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

4. Action Points Summary of the 78th Plenary Meeting

The ERCEA informed the ScC on the state of play of the various action points from the previous ScC plenary meetings in December. 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 22 January 2021. He noted that he has been heavily involved in finalising the Work Programme 2021 and has also been discussing with Commissioner Mariya GABRIEL various issues through weekly exchanges.

Furthermore, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON also mentioned ongoing discussions on the Associated Countries financial contributions and recent contacts that he has had with representatives of UK and Israeli universities and some UK, Israeli and Swiss officials. They will all fight to get associated. He spoke also of his exchange with the new NSF Director and some Japanese contacts.

On top of that he mentioned the launch of the African Research Initiative for Science and Engineering Pilot Programme (ARISE-PP) managed by the African Academy of Sciences. The programme aims at distributing 40 grants in the coming year to projects submitted by researchers based in an African country. He has been asked to serve *intuitu personae* on the Scientific Advisory Committee.

In addition, the ERC Interim President reported on his participation at the invitation of the Portuguese Minister Manuel HEITOR in the Informal Competitiveness Council organised on 3 February by the Portuguese Presidency of the EU where he gave a talk on researchers' careers. The day before a number of scientists participated in a conference to launch Horizon Europe during which, at the invitation of Minister HEITOR, they could exchange with many Ministers in presence of Commissioner Mariya GABRIEL.

Finally, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON noted that he is working on getting Research and Innovation as a topic to be discussed in the Conference on the Future of Europe planned to culminate in Spring 2022. He has developed contacts for that purpose in the European Parliament, in the Commission and also at the political level.

Prof. Eveline CRONE reported from recent meetings that she attended. Those included a meeting with Commissioner Johannes HAHN on 16 December, together with the ERC Interim President and ScC Vice-Presidents, a Dutch event on research on 6 January and a meeting with the DG R&I Director General on 1st February. Also, she mentioned an additional SH domain meeting, which took place on 17 February to discuss SyG applicants, the ScC extraordinary meeting on 22 February and the forthcoming launch event of the Horizon Europe programme in the Netherlands, scheduled on 4 March.

Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK reported from recent meetings he attended. Those included a panel discussion with high level Polish people on science and applications on 21 January, a webinar organised by the Polish NCPs on 9 February as part of a week dedicated to Horizon Europe and a special session on ERC. Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK noted that he spoke about excellence in research and ERC operations and grants. The online event attracted more than 600 people and was very successful. Finally, Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK highlighted two meetings he had with the new heads of Polish NCPs, focusing on the ERC Mentoring Initiative and explaining the rationale behind it.

Prof. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS reported from his recent meetings and events. Those included a conference organised by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation, which took place on 27 January. He reminded the ScC that the Foundation has been created after the model of the ERC. During the conference the Horizon Europe Programme was discussed. Furthermore, he noted that on 19 February he attended a meeting of the Regional Councils for Research and Innovation in Greece to discuss EU programmes and the ERC in particular. He stressed that the community is very

interested in the ERC. Finally, Prof. Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS highlighted his recent meetings with the Greek Education Minister and the Research and Innovation Minister.

6. State of Play in the Preparation of Horizon Europe

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

Work Programme 2021

The ERCEA reported to the ScC that the ERC Work Programme 2021, established by the ScC in April, was adopted by the Commission on 22 February. Reported was also the good cooperation with DG R&I, which resulted in the adoption of the Work Programme on time to open the first calls. The basic legal acts for Horizon Europe were still not in force and, for this reason, the Work Programme had to be adopted conditional to the adoption of those acts, as explained in the Work Programme itself.

Submission forms and launching of the 2021 calls

The ERCEA reported that on 25 February the ERC StG call opened as the first programme published under Horizon Europe.

Model Grant Agreement (MGA)

The ERCEA informed the ScC about the developments on the MGA since the last plenary meeting. It was noted that things are progressing well and the MGA is now published on the participant portal.

7. ERC Rules for Submission and Evaluation

The ERCEA reported on the state of play of the Rules for Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe.

8. Update from the ScC Standing Committees and Working Groups

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

Standing Committee on Panels (SCoP)

The ERCEA SCoP Secretariat reported that the Committee recently had two meetings, one in December and an extraordinary meeting in February.

Standing Committee on Conflict of Interest, scientific Misconduct and Ethics (SCoIME)

The ERCEA SCoIME Secretariat noted that the Committee met on 8 December and discussed ongoing cases.

Standing Committee on Programme Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation (PRIME)

The ERCEA SPRIME Secretariat reported that there are no developments to share with the ScC since the last meeting of the Committee in December 2020.

WG on Open Access and related topics

Prof. Paola BOVOLENTA reported on recent meetings and activities related to Open Science.

WG on Innovation and Relations to Industry

Prof. Kurt MEHLHORN reported on recent meetings and activities of the Innovation WG. He noted that the WG has met three times since the last ScC plenary meeting discussing a number of points. He also reported on the activities of the ERC-EIC joint Contact Group.

WG on Gender Issues

Prof. Barbara ROMANOWICZ reported on the discussions at the Gender Issues WG meeting, which took place on 3 March. She highlighted that the ERC has been receiving requests from several organisations recently asking to take the COVID-19 impact on researchers into account. The ScC further discussed the matter and will be coming forth with some actions in an attempt to address that. However, those require further discussion and fine-tuning.

WG on Science Behind the Projects

Prof. Michael KRAMER reported on recent activities of the Science Behind the Projects (SBP) WG. He noted that the WG met on 19 January.

WG on Widening European Participation

Prof. Andrzej JAJSZCZYK reported on recent activities of the Widening European Participation WG. He noted that the ERC Mentoring Initiative has been launched on 16 February with a deadline for NCPs to submit proposals by local offices to the ERC by 20 April.

9. Draft Work Programme 2022

The ScC discussed the ERC Work Programme 2022. The ScC already had an orientation debate in December and now needed to bring its deliberations to a conclusion.

10. Priorities and Organisation of the Scientific Council for 2021

The ERC Interim President informed the ScC that, given the situation with the pandemic, the ScC April plenary meeting will still be held remotely. Also, the ScC was originally invited to hold its April 2020 plenary meeting in Finland. It was postponed to April 2021 because of the pandemic and now the Finish counterparts have to be informed that a physical meeting there has to be postponed again.

Furthermore, Prof. Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON noted that the Research and Innovation Days, initially scheduled for September 2021, will be held 23-24 June, overlapping a lot with the ScC June plenary meeting. The Commission encouraged ScC members to be present and to participate. To that end, the ERC Interim President asked the ScC's agreement to explore changing the June plenary dates. The ScC agreed.

The ERC Interim President noted that it is important for the ScC to have a physical meeting in Brussels, as soon as possible in Fall 2021. It is particularly important to reconnect physically with the ERCEA staff and also to get the new ScC members to meet face-to-face with other members and key members of the staff.

Also, in case the next ERC President is not yet in function, it would be good to meet him/her physically. The ScC members agreed that the October plenary meeting will take place physically in Brussels, if at all possible, or otherwise remotely.

Moreover, the ERC Interim President highlighted that the ScC should decide on some themes to work on in the year 2021.

Friday 5 March 2021

11. Horizon Europe Budget and its Impact on the Agency Human Resources

The ERCEA brought to the attention of the ScC the impact of the Horizon Europe budget on the Agency human resources, in particular the use of resources coming from Associated Countries.

12. ERCEA Continuous Improvement Exercise Update

The ERCEA gave an update to the ScC members on the Continuous Improvement (CI) exercise ongoing in the ERCEA.

13. Grant Reporting in Horizon Europe

The ERCEA operational departments brought to the attention of the ScC recent discussions in the Commission as regards the ERC Reporting in Horizon Europe.

14. Communication Activities Update

The ERCEA Communications Unit reported on recent communication activities.

10,000th grantee celebration

The ERCEA gave an update on the 10,000th grantee online event, which is being planned and the media campaign around it.

Research & Innovation Days (23-24 June)

The ERCEA gave an update on the Research and Innovation days, covering in particular the ERC's involvement.

Public Engagement with Research Awards 2022

The ERCEA gave an update on the Public Engagement with Research Awards planned for the year 2022.

15. Operational Issues Reporting

The ERCEA reported on recent operational activities.

Outcome of the surveys to panel members and staff

The ERCEA reported on the outcome of a recent survey to Panel Members and staff on remote meetings.

AdG2020 Call: preliminary results

The ERCEA shared with the ScC some preliminary results of the AdG 2020 call.

16. Any other Business

No items were discussed under this agenda point.