

**European Research Council
Scientific Council
100th plenary meeting
23-25 June 2025, Durham, UK
Minutes**

Scientific Council members present on site (in alphabetical order): Geneviève Almouzni, Harriet Bulkeley, Mercedes García-Arenal, Gerd Gigerenzer, Tom Henzinger, Liselotte Højgaard, Dirk Inzé, Eystein Jansen, Leszek Kaczmarek, Maarit Karppinen, Maria Leptin (President of the ERC), Sylvie Lorente, Luke O'Neill, Björn Ottersten, Torsten Persson, Tomaž Prosen, Giovanni Sartor, Nicola Spaldin, András Stipsicz, Jesper Svejstrup and Milena Žic Fuchs

Assistants of the ERC Vice-Presidents present on site (in alphabetical order): Linling Chen, Elisabeth Corcelle Termeau and Pamela Rossel

ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA) staff present on site (in alphabetical order): Mila Bas Sanchez, Pascale Cid, Madeleine Drielsma, Josefina Enfedaque, Raluca Ionescu, Gwennael Joliff-Botrel, Alban Kellerbauer, David Krasa, Angela Liberatore, Laurence Moreau, Lino Paula, Martin Penny, Laura Pontiggia, Sejla Sedic, Sabine Simmross, Wieland Staessens, Ben Turner

DG RTD staff present online for point 11: Marc Lemaître, Director-General and Johan Michiels (Policy Assistant to the Director-General)

ERC Executive Agency staff additional participants online (in alphabetical order): Niki Atzoulidou, Nikola Car, Philippe Cupers, Rachel Harvey-Kelly (Chair of the ERCEA Staff Committee), Anita Kucharska, Frank Kuhn, Claire Levacher, Dagmar Meyer, Carole Micmacher, Alexis-Michael Mugabushaka, Athanasia Papathanasiou, Anna Pelagotti, Miguel Pesquera, Andrea Polyak, Monique Smahi, Elena Toma, Anisoara Ulceluse-Pirvan, Philippe Vijghen, Elena Volpi, Soudaina Wala, Eleni Zika

Chair of the meeting: Maria Leptin, President of the ERC

Rapporteur: Severina Shopova, ERC Executive Agency

Monday 23 June 2025

1. **Welcome, Plans and Goals of the 100th Plenary Meeting**

Maria Leptin welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined key discussion points the plenary. She also announced the new Head of Unit A1, Alban Kellerbauer, who introduced himself.

2. **Adoption of the Agenda of the 100th Plenary Meeting**

Maria Leptin announced a small modification to the Draft Agenda, changing the order of the points on ERC governance and Interdisciplinarity, and noted that Eystein Jansen would chair the Wednesday morning session in her absence. The Scientific Council approved the Draft Agenda for the meeting.

3. **Adoption of the Minutes of the 99th Plenary Meeting**

The Scientific Council provisionally approved the Draft Minutes of the previous plenary meeting, pending revision by the ERC President.

4. **Action Points of the 99th Plenary Meeting**

Unit A1, represented by Laura Pontiggia updated the Scientific Council on the action points from the February plenary meeting.

5. **Update on Recent Meetings and Activities**

Jesper Svejstrup reported on plans for the Scientific Council plenary meeting and the high-level event in Copenhagen in October 2025, with Enrico Letta and Manuel Heitor confirmed as participants.

Gerd Gigerenzer represented the ERC at a workshop on *'Reformation of science publishing: The Stockholm Declaration'*, organised by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm in June 2025.

Eystein Jansen reported on several events where he represented the ERC. On 2 May he was in a panel at the European Geosciences Union (EGU) on *'How should the global geoscience community respond to attacks on science?'*. On 5 May he met the Norwegian Minister for Science and Higher Education during the annual meeting of the Norwegian Academy and discussed the 10th Framework Programme (FP10). On 12 May Eystein Jansen gave a congratulatory speech at the inauguration of the ERC SyG CODICUM grant, which studies medieval history of Northern Europe. On 22 May he represented the ERC in a panel *'From labs to market: How Big Science is shaping Europe's new economic horizon'* during the first GITEX¹ Europe conference in Berlin. On 5 June he attended the award ceremony and banquet for the Holberg Prize where he met policymakers and grantees. On 11 June he took part as Scientific Council observer during the interviews for the position of Head of Unit for B4 in the ERCEA. Finally, on 19 June he took part in the workshop in Brussels, together with Torsten Persson, organised by the ERC Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) task force with leading experts on M&E.

¹ GITEX is a major exhibition venue for the tech sector with plans to become an annual event.

Giovanni Sartor reported from a well-attended meeting on 15 May in Milan with ERC PIs. Additional events were scheduled to take place in Bari and Rome.

Harriet Bulkeley reported from a meeting on transformative change organised by DG RTD on 2 and 3 June. A conference on transformative change was planned to take place during the Danish EU presidency in December 2025.

Maria Leptin reported on a series of meetings and events, starting on 30 April, when she met with NATO Deputy Secretary-General Radmila Šekerinska to discuss the role of science in security and the potential for a joint workshop to showcase the expertise of ERC grantees. On 2 May, she met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Brussels. She stressed the need for a higher budget for the ERC and addressed research (including climate) data status concerns. On 7 and 8 May, Maria Leptin attended the United Nations Forum for Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs in New York, to speak on AI investment. She met key figures like the EU Ambassador to the UN and UK officials. On 13 May, she met the Minister-President of Flanders Matthias Diependaele to discuss the need and rationale for an increase of the ERC budget. On 14 May, she had meetings with Ester Lakos, Hungarian Member of the European Parliament and ITRE Committee member and Johannes Ten Broeke, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra, responsible for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, and discussed the vision for ERC in FP10 and how to collaborate on climate issues. On 18 to 22 May she attended the 13th Annual Global Research Council meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. On 22 and 23 May, Maria Leptin attended the 600th anniversary of Leuven University and met Danish Science Minister Christina Egelund. On 23 May, she addressed the Research Ministers at the Competitiveness Council and met Lithuanian Vice-Minister Regina Valutyte. During her visit to Lithuania on 9 and 10 June, Maria Leptin engaged with the Prime Minister and other officials, and stressed the importance of the ERC and discussed future improvements. On 11 June, in Estonia, she delivered a keynote at the Estonian Academy of Sciences and engaged with several educational leaders to discuss enhancing the research success of Estonia. On 13 June, Maria Leptin met French Science Minister Philippe Baptiste, who expressed the support of France for the future of the ERC. Finally, on 19 June, she discussed FP10 and the future of the ERC with Marc Lemaître, Director-General of DG RTD.

6. New ERC funding instrument – part I

Maria Leptin reminded the Scientific Council of its decision on additional funding for relocation costs, for which the limit had been increased to EUR 2 million, and the ERC ‘supergrants’ discussions to be implemented in Work Programmes 2026 and 2027. She presented broader reflections on the ‘supergrants’, including applications, evaluation process and funding, following which the Scientific Council members had a discussion

7. Allocation of R0 credits for 2025

The ERCEA presented scenarios for the allocation of additional funds (the R0 credits) to the remaining 2025 ERC calls, which the Scientific Council discussed.

8. Closed session

The Scientific Council held a closed session.

9. New ERC funding instrument – part 2

The Scientific Council resumed discussions on ‘supergrants’, including considerations on the objective of the grant scheme and how to organise the evaluation process.

Tuesday 24 June 2025

10. Mitigation measures

The ERCEA presented possible mitigation measures to protect panel members from excessive work loads and the Scientific Council discussed those.

11. 10th EU framework programme for research and innovation

Marc Lemaître joined the Scientific Council plenary meeting online for an exchange with the Scientific Council. They discussed the current system of ERC governance and possible future modifications. Marc Lemaître proposed annual or biannual dialogues between the Commission and the Scientific Council to discuss topics like framework conditions, IT tools and policy. Scientific Council members welcomed the proposal of Marc Lemaître of regular meetings between the Scientific Council and DG RTD. Marc Lemaître underlined the success of the institutional setup of the ERC and expressed hope for increased funding for excellent research in FP10, while also agreeing on the importance of a transparent and open relationship between the Commission and the Scientific Council, as emphasised by the Scientific Council. Maria Leptin concurred, noting the need of structured, regular dialogue between the two entities and gave the ongoing dialogue as a positive example.

12. ERC governance

The ERCEA Staff Committee engaged in a discussion with the Scientific Council regarding the letter sent to the President of the European Commission by the Scientific Council about future ERC governance. The Scientific Council members stressed the crucial role of ERCEA staff and of Brussels as the location for the ERC head quarters. Concerns about the future working environment of the ERC were also discussed.

13. Strategic areas: interdisciplinarity

Milena Žic Fuchs reported on a workshop on interdisciplinarity held on 5 June, which gathered Scientific Council members and ERCEA staff who supported the work of the interdisciplinarity project team. The objectives of the workshop were to discuss preliminary measures to improve the evaluation of crosspanel or cross-domain proposals.

14. Follow up from morning presentation and discussion

No items were discussed under this agenda point.

15. ERC Rules of submission

The ERCEA explained that the ERC rules of submission needed to be updated due to the adoption of a new Financial Regulation. The Scientific Council was asked to review and approve the update, focusing on specific changes.

16. ERC annual conference in 2026

Maria Leptin reminded the Scientific Council about the annual conference organised by the ERCEA, initially aimed at inviting ERC grantees to speak to staff, but which has since become more public. The Scientific Council discussed whether these conferences should be large public events with the Scientific Council involved from the onset or smaller internal events managed by the ERCEA..

17. Carbon neutrality report

Harriet Bulkeley reported on the progress of the carbon neutrality project team. She reminded the Scientific Council of their mandate, given in June 2024, to conduct a benchmarking exercise to understand how European research funders deal with their climate and environmental footprint and that of the research they fund. The project team will work with the ERCEA on a sustainability strategy and to identify potential actions and their implications to climate change, together with their costs, and present these at the December 2025 plenary meeting.

18. Update on Agency activities and housing

The ERCEA Director, Laurence Moreau, reported that there were no new developments regarding housing.

19. Recollections of 100 plenary meetings

Maria Leptin and the ERCEA shared memories from 100 plenary meetings, including moments when the Scientific Council made significant decisions, such as the establishment of the various grant schemes. Maria Leptin used the occasion to thank Angela Liberatore, Head of Department B, for her dedicated service to the ERC.

20. Closed session

The Scientific Council held a closed session.

Wednesday 25 June 2025

21. Update from the Standing Committees and Working Groups

– Standing Committee CoIME

Eystein Jansen reported on recent activities of CoIME. He showed a graphic summary of cases reported to CoIME between 2019 and 2024, published on the CoIME webpage

- Standing Committee PRIME

The ERCEA reminded the Scientific Council of the need to appoint an additional member to PRIME to replace Chryssa Kouveliotou. Eystein Jansen took note to discuss this further.

Torsten Persson reported on the recent ERC workshop on evaluating research policies and practices, following the revised ERC Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and Framework.

– **Working Group on Widening European Participation**

Leszek Kaczmarek informed the Scientific Council that the Widening European Participation WG was discussing challenges faced by widening countries, supported by data, and considering how to show success stories along with potential measures and solutions for these challenges.

– **Working Group on Innovation**

Sylvie Lorente reported on informal discussions between the ERC and the EIC, with plans to organise a joint meeting in the fall of 2025. The ERC aimed to address ways to improve the EIC internships, established two years ago, which ERC team members had found difficult to access. The EIC was also interested to host a joint event and showcase successful companies created by ERC grantees that subsequently obtained EIC funding.

– **Working Group on Gender and Diversity**

In the absence of the Gender and Diversity WG Chair, Geneviève Almouzni, Harriet Bulkeley reported that a comprehensive review of the activities of the WG was planned for the October plenary meeting. Also, the Gender and Diversity WG webpage text had been updated to include references to non-binary, transgender and sexual orientation. The WG chair was also working on collecting suitable images for the Gender and Diversity WG website.

22. Innovation report

ERCEA presented a report² on a high-level ERC workshop discussing how research and innovation can enhance European competitiveness by addressing challenges such as market fragmentation, regulation balance, insufficient R&D funding, and data access barriers. The proposed strategic solutions included the completion of the single market, the strengthening of fundamental research, promotion of research-industry collaboration, and improved data infrastructure, with priority actions focusing on supporting fundamental research, creating innovation centres, and ensuring equality and data access. Participants emphasised the need for long-term, risk-tolerant support for science, coordinated efforts across the EU, and scaling successful funding models to leverage the strengths of Europe and remove structural barriers for sustainable prosperity.

23. Update on communication activities

The ERCEA gave an update on recent communication activities, including online classes to applicants about the application and evaluation processes and recent press and social media coverage. Press coverage on ERC plus grants and relocation support was extensive, with around 600 news articles mentioning the ERC. Major outlets such as Reuters, Bloomberg, Le Monde, and others reported the story. Maria Leptin had given interviews to the BBC, France 24, and Euronews. The doubling of ERC

² <https://erc.europa.eu/news-events/news/voices-industry-policy-and-science-align-driving-europes-competitiveness>

'additional funding' for researchers moving to Europe was featured in media like Público and ANSA, and the news had also spread on social media. The visits of Maria Leptin to the Baltics were covered by mainstream media, and she had a commentary in Science Business³ about funding high-risk science at the ERC.

24. Any other business

-Scientific Council new Vice-Presidents

Maria Leptin announced the three Vice-Presidents who will assume office on 1 January 2026: Liselotte Højgaard (LS), Torsten Persson (SH) and Nicola Spaldin (PE). All three accepted the appointments. Maria Leptin also thanked the three outgoing Vice-Presidents for their dedication and hard work.

-Evaluation panel observation

Mercedes García-Arenal reported on her observation of the StG SH6 panel on 18 June.

-Thanks to the hosts in Durham

The Scientific Council expressed warm thanks to the hosts, particularly Harriet Bulkeley and the university staff involved in organising the plenary meeting, including Abir Van Hunen and Anna Brown.

³ <https://sciencebusiness.net/viewpoint/european-research-council/viewpoint-novel-ideas-bold-bets>