



European Research Council  
Scientific Council  
Established by the European Commission

**European Research Council**  
**Scientific Council**  
**101<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting**  
**9-10 October 2025, Copenhagen, DK**  
**Minutes**

**Scientific Council members present on site (in alphabetical order):** Conny Aerts, Geneviève Almouzni, Harriet Bulkeley, 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

**Scientific Council members present remotely:** Mercedes García-Arenal

**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, Philippe Cupers, Madeleine Drielsma, Josefina Enfedaque, Raluca Ionescu, Gwennael Joliff-Botrel, Alban Kellerbauer, David Krasa, Laurence Moreau, Lino Paula, Martin Penny, Laura Pontiggia, Sejla Sedic, Sabine Simmross, Severina Shopova, Wieland Staessens, Elena Toma, Ben Turner, Elena Volpi.

**ERC Executive Agency staff online (in alphabetical order):** Dia Anagnostou, Niki Atzoulidou, Colm Carroll, Nadia El Mjiyad, Vanessa Fivet, Cristina Gabellieri, Carlos Hernandez Ferreiro, Jhansi Kota, Frank Kuhn, Odeta Limaj, Roberta Maggio, Mike Mugabushaka, Florin Patras, Miguel Pesquera, Dace Rambaka, Janne Salo, Sara Serrano Perez, Giuliano Scalzi, Jana Sifta, Monique Smahhi, Ena Strika, Line Volkers, Eleni Zika

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

**Rapporteur:** Severina Shopova, ERC Executive Agency

## Thursday 9 October 2025

### 1. **Welcome, Plans and Goals of the 101<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting**

Maria Leptin welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined key discussion points for the plenary and added an item on external panel observers under any other business. She welcomed Conny Aerts, the new Scientific Council member, who introduced herself. Maria Leptin excused Mercedes García-Arenal, who could not attend the plenary meeting. She also informed the Scientific Council of the appointment of Philippe Cupers as Head of Department B.

### 2. **Adoption of the Agenda of the 101<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting**

The Scientific Council adopted the Draft Agenda of the meeting.

### 3. **Adoption of the Minutes of the 100<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting**

The Scientific Council approved the the Draft Minutes of the previous plenary meeting.

### 4. **Action Points of the 100<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting**

Unit A1 updated the Scientific Council on the status of action points from the June plenary meeting and the Board meeting on 10 September.

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

Jesper Svejstrup reported on a successful event organised by the French Embassy, in partnership with the ERC, on 17 September in Copenhagen with Minister Christina Egelund to reflect on the future of European research, as a prelude to the ERC high-level event of 7 October.

Gerd Gigerenzer announced that on 20 October, he would stand in for Maria Leptin at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB) and participate in a discussion titled *“What Makes Science Strong.”* On 5 November, he will deliver a talk at the Paris Institute for Advanced Study to an audience of 40 university presidents and vice-presidents about the role of the ERC in addressing challenges in science.

Eystein Jansen had attended the final step of the SyG 2025 evaluation on 9 September as an observer. He had also attended the step 1 evaluation and noted that similar procedures were applied across domains. The workload was reported as a concern by panel members.

Liselotte Højgaard had delivered the opening keynote at the 47<sup>th</sup> international conference of the IEEE Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society in July 2025, in Copenhagen. She had attended the same French Embassy event as Jesper Svejstrup, which also included a pre-meeting with Minister Christina Egelund. Liselotte Højgaard had attended the Danish Diabetes and Endocrine Academy Summer School on Diabetes, Metabolism & Classical Endocrinology for PhD Students where she spoke about biomedicine research and the ERC.

Dirk Inzé had attended the RTD Research and Innovation days in September 2025 and took part in a panel with Conny Aerts where they presented the importance of the ERC and fundamental research as a foundation for innovation.

Conny Aerts had spoken in the session *“Can Europe become the world’s R&D capital?”* at the Competitive Europe Summit organised by POLITICO on 2 October in Brussels.

Torsten Persson had organised a panel at the 8<sup>th</sup> Lindau Nobel meeting in Economic Sciences in August, which was chaired by Maria Leptin (see more below).

Maria Leptin reported on various events. She attended a meeting on metascience in London and met with Katja Becker, the President of the DFG, and the President of the German Rectors' Conference, Walter Rosenthal, to discuss the successful German excellence strategy of increasing university funding for structural changes, and a possible format in which they could be complemented Europe wide. During the 8<sup>th</sup> Lindau Nobel meeting in Economic Sciences, which took place from 26 to 30 August 2025, Maria Leptin chaired a panel with Mario Draghi, Thomas Schafbauer, Jean Tirole and Steven Chu which had been organised by Torsten Persson on *“Research and Innovation in a Tripolar World”*. During her visit to France on 2 September, Maria Leptin met with representatives from the CNRS, Inserm, Inria, CEA and the French Ministry of Science. She had been invited by the President of the Paris Université Cité to Paris to meet with the University Presidents for a roundtable discussion about the role of the ERC in the next Multiannual Financial Framework. She also met with the Head of the French National Research Agency (ANR). Other activities of Maria Leptin included a meeting at the Italian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Genoa titled *“Why Fund Frontier Research? The Role of Journalism in Answering a Crucial Question for Society,”* which developed into a discussion on science journalism and provided her with an opportunity to engage with ERC grantees and IIT leadership.

## **6. 10<sup>th</sup> EU framework programme for research and innovation**

Unit A 1 presented an overview of the proposals of the Commission for the next long-term EU budget and funding programmes for 2028 - 2034, which had been adopted on 16 July 2025. The Commission had proposed an ambitious increase to the overall budget from around EUR 1.2 trillion to around EUR 2 trillion, with EUR 275 billion for a new European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) and EUR 175 billion for the framework programme for research and innovation, Horizon Europe. Unit A1 also presented an analysis of the Agency of the changes between the current legislation and the proposed new legislation. Overall, the proposed new legislation maintained most of the features of the current legislation in terms of the mission and governance of the ERC. However, there were some changes which were of potential concern.

Conny Aerts noted that the high-level expert group chaired by Manuel Heitor had proposed a higher research and innovation budget than the current proposal of the Commission. Maria Leptin confirmed that both Draghi and Heitor had requested larger budgets. The Scientific Council discussed the elimination of administrative support for the Vice-Presidents and the imposition of the corporate policies of the Commission in the FP10 proposal.

The Office of the ERC President reported that EU Member States, under the Danish presidency, had already voiced disagreement with the Commission proposal to align ERC to corporate policies. Maria Leptin was scheduled to appear before the Budget Committee of the European Parliament on 13 October, which presented an opportunity to advocate for an increased budget for the next

framework programme. Additionally, Maria Leptin was scheduled to meet with several members of the European Parliament.

## **7. ERC Plus Grants**

Department B presented the ERC Plus Grants for 2026, along with the planned evaluation methods and outlined the objectives, conditions and structure. It was noted that the grant aimed to support Principal Investigators with particularly ambitious projects. The Scientific Council discussed panel members recruitment, evaluation and communication of the ERC Plus Grant scheme. Communication about the ERC Plus Grant scheme will unfold in the coming months.

Unit A1 reported on the Work Programme 2026 amendment and the expected timeline for adoption.

## **8. Strategic areas**

Maria Leptin provided an overview of strategic topics, including a new one discussed in the Committee on Panels. Ongoing projects were new grant schemes, carbon neutrality, interdisciplinarity, ethics review, and mitigation measures. She also mentioned completed strategic projects and implemented changes.

## **9. Mitigation measures**

Department B presented submission numbers for calls 2021-2025 and new mitigation measures being considered to deal with rising application numbers. The Scientific Council discussed the proposed measures.

## **10. Strategic areas: interdisciplinarity**

Milena Žic Fuchs, chair of the project team, reported on scenarios for improved communication between cross-panel reviewers, including the possibility of cross-panel reviewers' participation in discussions. The project team will present its conclusions at the November plenary meeting.

## **11. Strategic areas: ad hoc group on AI**

Nicola Spaldin reported on the Commission guidance note on AI use in applications and evaluations which requires applicants to declare AI use in proposals, whereas the stance of the Scientific Council on the subject does not include such a requirement. The Scientific Council, guided by input from a pre-discussion in the AI Coalition of the Willing ad hoc working group, discussed this disparity. The Scientific Council decided not to require applicants to declare AI use in proposals.

For AI use by reviewers and panel members, Nicola Spaldin noted that the ERC lacked explicit guidelines, so guidance on issues like confidentiality and copyright would be beneficial.

Tom Henzinger, Liselotte Højgaard, Giovanni Sartor and the ethics review team of the Agency were tasked with monitoring ongoing ethics developments.

## **12. Follow up from morning discussions and presentations**

Maria Leptin revisited the earlier FP10 discussion, with the aim to consolidate a Scientific Council position on the Commission proposal.

### **13. Dual Use research in FP10**

Unit B0 reported on the role of dual-use research in the FP10 proposal, noting that the exclusive focus on civil applications from previous framework programmes had been removed and dual-use actions were envisioned, and briefly elaborated on several aspects that remained unclear in the current proposal.

### **14. Operational issues reporting**

Unit B2 reported on the outcome of the StG 2025 call, including feedback from the evaluation panels and on the ERC SyG2025 call evaluation.

### **15. Update on Agency activities and housing**

Laurence Moreau, ERCEA Director, provided an update on housing and in particular the Agency requirements beyond 2026, including the evaluation platform.

### **16. Closed session**

The Scientific Council held a closed session.

## **Friday 10 October 2025**

### **17. Update from the Standing Committees and Working Groups**

#### **– *Standing Committee on Panels (CoP)***

Maria Leptin reported from the recent CoP meeting and the discussions, which included mitigation measures, panel members mandates and ERC Plus Grant evaluations.

#### **– *Standing Committee CoIME***

Eystein Jansen reported on the cases of misconduct encountered since the last plenary, which included breaches of the code of conduct, AI misuse in reviewing, copying and pasting from other reviews, lack of collaboration, and information misinterpretation, especially regarding referencing.

#### **– *Standing Committee PRIME***

Jesper Svejstrup informed the Scientific Council that PRIME had approved some language and clarification edits to the revised ERC Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) strategy following agreement at the April plenary. The final document with these edits would be sent to the Scientific Council for written agreement before publication. At the PRIME meeting on 29 September, the draft implementation plan of the strategy was presented by the task force set up by PRIME to prepare this plan.

#### **– *Working Group on Widening European Participation***

Leszek Kaczmarek reported on the WG compiling data, opinions and proposed actions for discussion by the Scientific Council.

– **Working Group on Innovation**

Sylvie Lorente reported on a meeting of the joint ERC-EIC working group on 25 September and the various initiatives discussed.

**18. Working Group on Gender and Diversity (GDWG)**

Geneviève Almouzni provided a historical overview of the activities of the GDWG. She thanked all WG members and relevant Agency staff for their contributions throughout the years. She noted that the ERC Gender Equality Plan (GEP) would need to be revised for FP10, to encompass broader diversity aspects. Geneviève Almouzni noted actions taken on mainstreaming equality and diversity, in three categories: monitoring and transparency, raising awareness, and enabling change. She mentioned eligibility extensions for parents and caregivers, diversification of career paths, and improved data capture as enablers of change. Geneviève Almouzni thanked Liselotte Højgaard for volunteering to take over as chair of the WG. Eystein Jansen and other Scientific Council members praised the work done by the WG.

**19. Update on communication activities**

Unit A2 reported on reactions to the document written by Maria Leptin and published on the ERC website about changes in submission and evaluation procedures. An analysis of responses, especially on social media, was shared with the Scientific Council during the presentation. Unit A2 also reported on media coverage on the FP10 proposal and the doubled budget for the ERC, recent results for 2025 calls, and events involving the ERC President and ERC Scientific Council members. Two recent webinars on the Work Programme 2026 received nearly 40,000 views. Communication actions planned for the ERC Plus Grants included a webinar and an interview with the ERC President. As ongoing actions Unit A2 mentioned the Choose Europe campaign, the Public Engagement with Research Award (PERA), science communication training for grantees, networking of trainees, and interviews with the new ERC Vice-Presidents and Scientific Council members. For the 20<sup>th</sup> ERC anniversary in 2027, several events and actions are being planned.

Harriet Bulkeley and Conny Aerts joined the ERC Magazine Editorial Board.

**20. Allocation of additional credits from Associated Countries**

Unit A1 presented the procedure and timeline for calculating and allocating R0 credits from Associated Countries to the ERC. The ERC budget and the funding sources were also explained, including EU funding, fines, European Free Trade Association contributions, and Associated Country funding.

**21. Appointment of the chairs of the Standing Committees and Working Group on Gender and Diversity**

Torsten Persson was appointed chair of PRIME, effective 1 January 2026. Nicola Spaldin was appointed chair of CoIME, effective 1 January 2026. Liselotte Højgaard was appointed chair of the

GDWG, effective 1 January 2026. Björn Ottersen was appointed Scientific Council representative at the ERCEA Steering Committee, effective 1 January 2026.

## **22. Follow up from morning discussions and presentations**

The Scientific Council took up its discussion on the FP10 strategy and agreed on future steps.

## **23. Any other business**

### ***-External panel observers***

Maria Leptin reported that the Agency had prepared a list of applicants for external panel observers and will proceed with the next steps.