



European Research Council
Scientific Council

Established by the European Commission

EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL 92nd PLENARY MEETING 14-15 December 2023, Brussels, BE MINUTES

Scientific Council members present (in alphabetical order): Geneviève ALMOUZNI, Harriet BULKELEY, Eveline CRONE, Ben FERINGA, Mercedes GARCÍA-ARENAL, Gerd GIGERENZER, Liselotte HØJGAARD, Tom HENZINGER, Dirk INZÉ, Eystein JANSEN, Leszek KACZMAREK, Chryssa KOUVELIOTOU, Maria LEPTIN (ERC President), Sylvie LORENTE, Björn OTTERSTEN, Giovanni SARTOR, Nicola SPALDIN, Jesper SVEJSTRUP, Alice VALKÁROVÁ and Milena ŽIC FUCHS

Scientific Council members participating online: Laszlo LOVÁSZ

Scientific Council members excused: Luke O'NEILL

DG Research and Innovation Director General: Marc LEMAÎTRE (Agenda on Friday)

ERC Executive Agency staff: Laurence MOREAU, Jose LABASTIDA, Anthony LOCKETT, Angela LIBERATORE, Mila BAS SANCHEZ, Pascale CID, Niki ATZOULATOU, Philippe CUPERS, Gwennael JOLIFF-BOTREL, Raluca IONESCU, Josefina ENFEDAQUE, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Lino PAULA, Philippe VIJGHEN, Ben TURNER, Eleni ZIKA, Laura PONTIGGIA, Elena VOLPI, Elena TOMA, Dagmar MEYER, Anna PELAGOTTI, Miguel PESQUERA, Madeleine DRIELSMA, Katja MEINKE, Sabine SIMMROSS, Srdjan PERKO, Severina SHOPOVA, Andrea POLYAK, and Brigitte ETIENNE

Chair of the meeting: Maria LEPTIN, ERC President

Rapporteur: Severina SHOPOVA, ERC Executive Agency

Thursday 14 December 2023

1. Welcome, Plans and Goals of the 92nd Plenary Meeting

Maria LEPTIN welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the main points to be discussed during the plenary. She informed the Scientific Council that Laszlo LOVÁSZ would participate online and Luke O'NEILL¹ was expected to join online as well whenever he was available. Maria LEPTIN welcomed the new Scientific Council member Leszek KACZMAREK who introduced himself. Maria LEPTIN expressed her deep gratitude, also on behalf of the full Scientific Council, to Eveline CRONE (whose term as Scientific Council member was coming to an end) for all her support and her kind and thoughtful contributions over the years. She stressed that Eveline CRONE had been a wonderful Scientific Council member and Vice-President.

¹ Finally, he was unable to attend the plenary meeting.

2. Adoption of the Agenda of the 92nd Plenary Meeting

The Draft Agenda of the meeting was approved by the Scientific Council.

3. Adoption of the Minutes of the 91st Plenary Meeting

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

4. Action Points of the 91st Plenary Meeting

Unit A1 informed the Scientific Council on the various action points from the previous Scientific Council plenary meeting in October.

5. Update on Recent Meetings and Activities

Maria LEPTIN reported from her recent meetings with the following individuals:

- Mario DRAGHI, in charge of preparing a Report on the future of European competitiveness;
- Manuel HEITOR, former Research Minister in Portugal, now chair of the Expert group advising DG Research and Innovation on Framework Programme 10 (FP10);
- Marc LEMAÎTRE, meeting to prepare the Scientific Council plenary meeting exchanges;
- Lina GALVES, Member of the European Parliament, who was very supportive of the ERC and constructive in discussions;
- Michiel SCHEFFER, President of the European Innovation Council (EIC), who expressed his desire to align efforts with the ERC with regard to the next Framework Programme discussions;
- A visit to Spain, including attending a PI information event, followed by meetings with the Ministry, and the Spanish Rectors Association;
- A visit to Italy, accompanied by Giovanni SARTOR, to celebrate the centenary of the CNR, as well as a meeting with Minister Anna Maria BERNINI, who expressed interest in visiting the ERC in January to prepare Italy's position for FP10;
- A visit to Germany, accompanied by Gerd GIGERENZER, on the occasion of 'Falling Walls' and including meetings with the office of the German Chancellery, the German Foreign Office, German Federal Minister for Research and an exchange with the Research Committee of the German Parliament;
- Meetings with representatives of the scientific community, such as the COIMBRA group at their high-level event and a meeting of the G6 Presidents in November;
- Celebrating the achievements of ERC-funded research in Stockholm at the Nobel Ceremony and Banquet, including meeting both of the ERC grantees awarded Nobel Prizes this year.

Eystein JANSEN reported from his recent activities as follows:

- Delivered an editorial on the ERC evaluation process for the ERC Magazine, with the assistance of the ERCEA Communications unit;
- Attended a European webinar for early career scientists and machine learning and gave a presentation on ERC;
- On 24 and 25 October observed three PE domain panels of the AdG Step 1 evaluations;
- Continued to work on a sketch for the Bergen plenary meeting.

Jesper SVEJSTRUP reported from his recent activities as follows:

- Attended, together with Liselotte HØJGAARD, the biannual meeting with the Danish Research Ministry. The Ministry was eager to take up the FP10 discussions and decisions in 2025;
- Met with researchers in Copenhagen.

Eveline CRONE reported from her recent activities as follows:

- Attended the ERC annual conference on Diversity, which was very interesting;

- Had ongoing discussions with the SH domain Scientific Council members for an event to be organised in Italy in 2024.

Alice VALKÁROVÁ reported from her recent activities as follows:

- On 15 November attended the ERC Information Day for potential applicants in Prague;
- On 24 November attended a meeting on nuclear physics in Bratislava;
- On 6 December attended a workshop, funded by Horizon Europe, in Palermo.

6. Amendment of Work Programme 2024

ERCEA brought to the attention of the Scientific Council modifications that were needed for the Work Programme 2024, mainly related to allocation of credits Associated Countries contributions.

The Scientific Council decided to distribute the money by allocating €170 million to SyG and the rest with the aim of achieving an equal success rate of StG, CoG and AdG of 14.4%.

7. ERC position on the 10th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

ERCEA gave a presentation on the Framework Programme 10 (FP10) timetable, the expert group on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe and the soon to be published conclusions of the Horizon 2020 ex-post evaluation. The Scientific Council then discussed a statement on FP10 that it could share with key stakeholders.

8. ERC Work Programme 2025

ERCEA presented the timeline for the approval of Work Programme 2025 (WP2025) and several points to be included in WP2025, which required the decision of the Scientific Council.

9. Strategic Areas

Maria LEPTIN introduced the point and noted that the strategic areas were an ongoing discussion item. Several topics were shared with the Scientific Council related to new projects for 2024 and beyond, including interdisciplinarity, budget allocation among the domains and ERC funding schemes.

10. Ethics review process

ERCEA updated the Scientific Council on the ethics review process and developments since the last discussions at the Stockholm plenary meeting.

11. Lump sums in Advanced Grants 2024

Maria LEPTIN introduced the lump sums noting that information sessions had already been organised prior to the plenary for Scientific Council members to discuss details on the implementation of lump sums, as well as collect input from the Scientific Council. ERCEA provided a summary of the information session and gave an update on the developments related to the implementation of lump sums.

12. Rules for Submission and Evaluation

ERCEA informed the Scientific Council of the ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe, which required a few revisions. Also background information was provided on the purpose of the Rules of Submission and their structure.

13. Unconscious bias briefing

Maria LEPTIN introduced the point informing the Scientific Council of her discussions with the ERCEA to update the unconscious bias briefing by developing a presentation intended to be used during the panel briefings. The Scientific Council had a discussion on unconscious bias and possible material to be used for the panel briefings.

14. 2024 plan for the feedback to Policy activities (F2P 2024)

Due to lack of time this agenda item was postponed to the February 2024 plenary meeting.

15. Recent developments in Open Science

Due to lack of time this agenda item was postponed to the February 2024 plenary meeting.

16. Funding for Europe PMC

ERCEA provided background information on Europe PMC, a repository for publications, mainly for the life science, noting that it provided access and visibility to ERC funded research. The Scientific Council was also informed about options for future funding for Europe PMC.

17. Operational issues reporting

ERCEA reported on the number of proposals received in the StG, CoG and SyG 2024 calls. The Scientific Council was also reminded of the Initial Panel Chairs Meeting on 16 January 2024, which would be a remote meeting and Scientific Council members were encouraged to observe it.

Friday 15 December 2023

18. Closed session

The Scientific Council held a closed session.

19. 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 (CoP)*

The Secretariat reported from recent activities of CoP, noting the ongoing work on recommendations received from the ERC evaluation panels. Feedback from Scientific Council observers would also be considered and compiled together with the direct recommendations from the panels.

– *Standing Committee on Conflict of Interest, Scientific Misconduct and Ethics (CoIME)*

Eveline CRONE reported that many exchanges between the Committee members had taken place in writing over the year 2023. An ad hoc meeting of the Committee took place in Stockholm, followed by a meeting in October. The next meeting was scheduled to take place in February 2024 under the new Chair, Eystein JANSEN. Eveline CRONE thanked everyone who had worked with her on CoIME-related business over the past years for the good collaborations.

– *Standing Committee on Programme Impact Monitoring and Evaluation (PRIME)*

Jesper SVEJSTRUP reported that PRIME had had a very constructive recent meeting. The committee continued to work on mapping and reorganising the ex-post evaluation of ERC research. This was a substantial undertaking and would require more work before it could be reported to the Scientific Council.

- ***WG on Widening European Participation (WEP)***
Alice VALKÁROVÁ reported from the last meeting of the Widening European Participation WG, which took place in October. The discussions focused on applications from widening countries and an update on the ERC Mentoring Initiative.
- ***WG on Innovation***
Sylvie LORENTE reported from recent activities of the Innovation WG, noting a survey for ERC grantees who had patented results of their work, which was in progress. Other discussions of the WG included formalizing the procedure of selecting panel members for Proof of Concept (PoC) and collaborations with the European Innovation Council (EIC).
- ***WG on Gender and Diversity (GDWG)***
Geneviève ALMOUZNI reported from recent activities of the GDWG, including from the last meeting, which took place on 23 November. She noted the following areas on which work was ongoing: follow-up from the ERC Conference 2023 on Research on Diversity & Diversity in Frontier Research, work on diversity in the ERC context, disability definitions for Work Programme 2025, and work on the unconscious bias briefing to panel members.
- ***WG on Open Science***
Nicola SPALDIN reported from recent activities of the Open Science WG, including the incorporation of the topic of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the WG's remit. She noted that the Scientific Council had also published a statement on AI.

20. ERC external communication strategy and update on communication activities

ERCEA reported on communication activities, including recent events and activities for next year. The Scientific Council was informed about developments related to the Public Engagement with Research Award 2024 edition, the Science Journalism Initiative and the recent ERC Magazine edition on evaluation panels. Regarding forthcoming events the Nobel Prize Dialogue on 5 March 2024 in Brussels was highlighted, together with the EU Research & Innovation Week on 18 to 21 March 2024. The Scientific Council also discussed the ERC Communication Strategy 2024.

21. Any other business

-Thank you to Brigitte ETIENNE (Unit A1) leaving the Unit

Maria LEPTIN warmly thanked Brigitte ETIENNE from the Scientific Council support team of Unit A1 for her excellent work and dedication over the years.

22. Meeting with Marc Lemaître Director-General for “Research and Innovation” (RTD)

Marc LEMAÎTRE had an exchange with the ERC Scientific Council. The main topics discussed included the Tenth Framework Programme (FP10) preparations, widening participation in research, the ERC's contribution to youth, the green transition, health research, the quantum field, interdisciplinary research and artificial intelligence. Identifying priorities for Europe and maximising impact in light of the societal challenges were also touched upon. Maria LEPTIN warmly thanked Marc LEMAÎTRE for joining the Scientific Council and having an open and fruitful exchange. Marc LEMAÎTRE expressed his support for the ERC's key concepts of excellence, freedom of research and bottom-up dynamics.