

**EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL
SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL
93rd PLENARY MEETING
29 February-1 March 2024, Brussels, BE
MINUTES**

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

Scientific Council members participating online: Chryssa KOUVELIOTOU, Laszlo LOVÁSZ

ERC Executive Agency staff: Laurence MOREAU, Jose LABASTIDA, Anthony LOCKETT, Angela LIBERATORE, Mila BAS SANCHEZ, Pascale CID, Raluca IONESCU, Josefina ENFEDAQUE, Alejandro MARTIN HOBDEY, Philippe CUPERS, Lino PAULA, Eleni ZIKA, Niki ATZOULATOU, Gwennael JOLIFF-BOTREL, Philippe VIJGHEN, Wieland STEASSENS, Anne NIELSEN, Ben TURNER, Laura PONTIGGIA, Irene PALOMO NUÑEZ, Elena VOLPI, Elena TOMA, Dagmar MEYER, Anna PELAGOTTI, Miguel PESQUERA, Madeleine DRIELSMA, Katja MEINKE, Sabine SIMMROSS, Srdjan PERKO, Isabelle ORTMANS, David KURZ, Carlos HERNANDEZ FERREIRO, Severina SHOPOVA, Andrea POLYAK and Sejla SEDIC.

Scientific Council Vice-Presidents' assistants: Elisabeth CORCELLE TERMEAU, Pam ROSSEL, Linling CHEN (online)

Chair of the meeting: Maria LEPTIN, ERC President.

Rapporteur: Severina SHOPOVA, ERC Executive Agency.

Thursday 29 February 2024

1. Welcome, Plans and Goals of the 93rd 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 Chryssa KOUVELIOTOU and Laszlo LOVÁSZ would participate online. Maria LEPTIN welcomed Torsten PERSSON who recently joined the Scientific Council. Torsten PERSSON introduced himself.

2. Adoption of the Agenda of the 93rd Plenary Meeting

The Draft Agenda of the meeting was approved by the Scientific Council with a minor change: points 10 and 14 were exchanged.

3. Adoption of the Minutes of the 92nd Plenary Meeting

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

4. Action Points of the 92nd Plenary Meeting

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

5. Update on Recent Meetings and Activities

Maria LEPTIN noted that she had sent a report by email of her recent activities and meetings to the Scientific Council members.

Gerd GIGERENZER reported from his recent activities as follows:

- In January he met with the Helmholtz Foundation President, Otmar WIESTLER, in Berlin;
- Gave a talk in Berlin at the conference APE 2024 (Academic Publishing in Europe) on funding and journal reform.

Jesper SVEJSTRUP reported from his recent meetings and activities as follows:

- On 16 January he participated, together with Liselotte HØJGAARD, in a round table on Research assessment at the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters on the topic ‘*Valuing diversity in career trajectories*’;
- On 6 February he attended an online round table discussion with ERC grantees of VIB Leuven and the EU-LIFE CEO Marta AGOSTINHO in the context of Maria LEPTIN’s visit to VIB, organized by Dirk INZÉ;
- On 13 February he met with the CEO of the Danish National Research Foundation to discuss how to monitor and assess scientific impact;
- On 12 February he attended the celebration of the UK re-association to Horizon Europe together with Maria LEPTIN and Harriet BULKELEY.

Eystein JANSEN reported from his recent activities and meetings as follows:

- In January he attended an Arctic frontiers conference aimed at politicians and academics;
- He met with the Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs to discuss science diplomacy and frontier research.

Dirk INZÉ commented that the visit of Maria LEPTIN to VIB Leuven was very much appreciated and the discussions with representatives of EU-LIFE had been very fruitful.

Liselotte HØJGAARD reported from her recent meetings as follows:

- ✓ On 26 February she attended the Elite Research Prizes Ceremony in the presence of Queen Mary of Denmark and the Danish Minister for Higher Education and Science and discussed the ERC and the forthcoming Danish Presidency of the EU in 2025;
- In the week before the plenary, she chaired a panel in Luxembourg on evaluating excellent research. On that occasion she also spoke to the Minister for Higher Education and Research about DG Marc LEMAITRE.

Sylvie LORENTE reported from her recent activities as follows:

- ✓ On 1 Feb she represented the ERC at the UN at an event organised around the topic of elections and democracy. ERC grantee Michael BRUTER also gave a presentation and he will also take part in the Nobel Dialogue on 5 March, an event co-organised by the ERC.

Alice VALKÁROVÁ reported from her recent activities as follows:

- ✓ On 27 February she gave a presentation on widening activities at the IGLO (Informal group of R&D liaison offices) ERC Working Group, which was followed by an interesting discussion.

6. 10th EU framework programme (FP10) for research and innovation

Maria LEPTIN gave an update to the Scientific Council regarding the FP10 developments and a reminder of the calendar of activities related to it, including the ERC FP10 statement, which was published on 24 January. She noted an upcoming high-level report on competitiveness by Mario DRAGHI, expected in the summer of 2024, and a report expected at the end of 2024 by the expert group on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe chaired by Manuel HEITOR. Maria LEPTIN informed the Scientific Council members that she had shared the Scientific Council FP10 statement

with the Director General of DG R&I and the Commissioner for Research. She had also been receiving feedback from governments and various stakeholders (including G6, Coimbra group, Academia Europea) on the statement. Some countries already had expressed their positions on FP10 and had declared support for the ERC.

7. ERC Work Programme 2025

The ERCEA presented the draft Work Programme 2025 and highlighted issues that required a discussion and decision by the Scientific Council. The draft was approved with two modifications.

8. Research security

The ERCEA reported on developments related to research security, including recent initiatives on economic security (a Commission white paper and Council recommendations).

9. Strategic Areas

Maria LEPTIN introduced the point and reminded the Scientific Council the agenda item was based on recurrent discussions about strategic topics for exploration by the Scientific Council in 2024 and beyond.

10. Closed session

The Scientific Council held a closed session.

11. Diversity

Geneviève ALMOUZNI presented the work from the Working Group on Gender and Diversity on possible actions to support diversity, equality and inclusion, also providing some background on the topic. She also indicated the ERC activities that already support diversity, equality and inclusion under three categories, namely monitoring and transparency, raising awareness and enabling change.

ERCEA presented key take-aways from the ERCEA annual conference, which had taken place in November 2023, this year on the theme of Research on Diversity and Diversity in Frontier Research,.

12. Plan for the Feedback to Policy activities in 2024

The ERCEA presented the Feedback to Policy (F2P) in ERC, including background and overall purpose of the sector at the ERCEA dealing with it. Information on coordination and implementation and the work delivered in 2023 was also provided, as well as planned activities for 2024.

13. Recent developments in Open Science

The ERCEA presented the cOAlition S proposal 'Towards Responsible Publishing', pointing out its possible consequences on what to expect for scientific publications in FP10.

Friday 1 March 2024

14. Lump Sums in Advanced Grants 2024

The ERCEA gave an overview to the Scientific Council of the current state of the discussion on lump sums and preparations for the pilot exercise on lump sums for the Advanced grant 2024 call.

15. Update from Scientific Council Standing Committees and Working Groups

The various standing committees and working groups that met recently reported on their activities.

- ***Standing Committee on Panels (CoP)***
 Maria LEPTIN reported on recent activities and discussions of CoP, including on changes to subtitles and descriptors for some panels and the revised panel structure for 2025, which CoP had approved during its last meeting on 28 February. The Scientific Council endorsed the decision taken by CoP regarding the revised panel structure for 2025.
- ***Standing Committee CoIME***
 Eystein JANSEN reported from CoIME’s recent activities, noting that the Committee had been looking into various types of cases, mostly concluded without further demands or with light reprimands.
- ***Standing Committee PRIME***
 Jesper SVEJSTRUP reported on recent activities of PRIME, including discussions on the feedback to policy and updates regarding thematic studies in ‘hot’ research areas. Jesper SVEJSTRUP informed the Scientific Council that Torsten PERSSON had agreed to join PRIME. The Scientific Council endorsed his membership of PRIME. Finally, it was noted that the Committee was planning to meet next in May or June.
- ***WG on Widening European Participation (WEP)***
 Alice VALKÁROVÁ reported that the WEP WG met remotely on 26 February and discussed the participation of panel members from widening countries. She informed the Scientific Council that Ukraine applied to participate in the ERC Mentoring Initiative. Finally, she asked for the next meeting of the WEP WG to take place physically in Brussels on the margins of the April plenary meeting.
- ***WG on Innovation***
 Sylvie LORENTE reported on recent activities of the WG, including the last meeting of the WG on 28 February. The WG discussed the results of a survey of PIs on the use of patents resulting from their ERC-funded projects.
- ***WG on Gender and Diversity (GDWG)***
 Geneviève ALMOUZNI reported on recent activities of the WG, including the last meeting which took place on 23 January. She noted the ongoing work on diversity. She also thanked the ERCEA for organizing the very successful diversity conference, which took place in November 2023. Geneviève ALMOUZNI noted that Maria LEPTIN was working with the ERCEA to improve the presentation on unconscious bias given to evaluation panels. Finally, Geneviève ALMOUZNI informed the Scientific Council that Torsten PERSSON had joined the GDWG. The Scientific Council endorsed his membership.
- ***WG on Open Science (OSWG)***
 Nicola SPALDIN reported on recent activities of the OSWG, including a reminder of the forthcoming presentation about arXiv by Prof. Ralph WIJERS (chair of the arXiv Editorial Advisory Council) and Prof. Licia VERDE (chair of the arXiv Science Advisory Council), as part of the ERCEA Scientific Seminars series. Nicola SPALDIN noted that the next OSWG meeting would take place (online) on 15 March.

16. Communication activities

The ERCEA reported on recent communication activities and events, as follows:

- Public engagement with research award; the call had closed on 21 February.
- Science Journalism Initiative

A consortium had been selected in April 2023 and a first call for science journalism residencies had opened on 5 December with a deadline on 5 March 2024. Three categories had been identified, namely early career, mid-career and established science journalists with stays between 3 to 5 months.

- EU Research and Innovation week from 18 to 21 March

The following ERC sessions have been scheduled:

- 18 March: ‘Europe: A Scientific Powerhouse’: Nobel laureate and ERC grantee Anne L’HUIILLIER will give a short keynote speech (online), followed by a conversation with Harriet BULKELEY and two other ERC grantees;
 - 21 March: Closing session with Maria LEPTIN, Marc LEMAÎTRE and Manuel HEITOR.
- Nobel Prize Dialogue on 5 March at Bozar in Brussels: ‘Fact & Fiction: The Future of Democracy’

The Scientific Council members were informed that over 1600 places had been booked for the event so far, which has an impressive list of speakers confirmed, as follows: Oleksandra MATVIICHUK (Nobel, Peace); Maria RESSA (Nobel, Peace); Sir Paul NURSE (Nobel, Medicine); Ben FERINGA (Nobel, Chemistry, ERC); Demis HASSABIS (CEO Deep Mind); ERC grantees: Michael BRUTER, Emilie CASPAR, Stefania MILAN; and Commission Vice-President Věra JOUROVÁ.

17. Operational issue reporting

The ERCEA reported on the AdG 2023 evaluation results.

18. Grants Activities – Results 2023 & Forecast 2024

The ERCEA updated the Scientific Council on the grant management activities, including information on the 2023 budget execution, the 2024 forecasted activities, and an overview of the running grants, payments and amendments.

19. State of play of Horizon Europe implementation

Association to Horizon Europe

The ERCEA informed the Scientific Council that there was likelihood for the exploratory talks with Switzerland to move further before summer, but no concrete information has been officially shared yet.

Reporting templates

the ERCEA updated the Scientific Council on the Horizon Europe reporting templates recent developments.

20. Update on the future housing of the ERC

The ERCEA Director updated the Scientific Council on the future housing of the ERCEA. She noted that the ERCEA had provided its housing needs to the Commission central services, stressing the need for good evaluation facilities.

21. Any other business

- ***Documents for plenary meetings***

Liselotte HØJGAARD thanked Maria LEPTIN for the comprehensive meeting documents and material overall provided to Scientific Council members in relation to plenary meetings. She acknowledged a big improvement. Maria LEPTIN stressed that the thanks should go to Srdjan PERKO who developed the improved meeting document template. She also took the opportunity to thank

Srdjan PERKO for his overall contributions, as he was leaving the ERC, and to introduce her incoming Head of Office, Wieland STAESSENS. Maria LEPTIN added her thanks to all ERCEA staff who provide timely documentation for the Scientific Council plenary meetings.

- ***PoC grant scheme open to UKRI funded PIs***

Maria LEPTIN informed the Scientific Council of an issue related to ERC PoC grants and in particular, whether UKRI-funded PIs who had been positively evaluated in ERC calls could apply for ERC PoC grants.

- ***April plenary meeting***

Maria LEPTIN reminded the Scientific Council members that the plenary meeting in April would start in the afternoon of 24 April and finish with the afternoon session on 25 April.

- ***Bergen plenary meeting***

Eystein JANSEN informed the Scientific Council members that the Bergen plenary meeting would start already after lunch on 26 June with an extra plenary session and finish by noon on 28 June. More information will be provided soon to the Scientific Council members to enable them to plan their trips.

- ***Natural disasters text for Work Programme 2025***

Following the discussions under Work Programme 2025 on 29 February, updates on the wording of the section on ground for extension of the eligibility window related to disasters were shared with the Scientific Council.