

Minutes of the EERA Council Meeting at the University of Lisbon, 11th September 2002

Present:

Michel Caillot, President
Margaret Kirkwood, Secretary General
Raymond Bourdoncle
Kyriaki Doulas
Martin Lawn
Jorge de Lima
Sverker Lindblad
Bernard Schneuwly
Staffan Larson(substituting for Kirsten Lycke)
Palmira Juceviciene

Apologies:

Ingrid Gogolin
Jules Pieters, Treasurer

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved, subject to correction of the spelling of Jorge's name.

3. Matters arising (not elsewhere on the agenda)

There were no matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda.

4. ECER 2002 Lisbon

(a) Report on the pre-conference

The contributions within a two-day programme, appraised by the delegates as of high quality, proved to be diverse, raised challenging questions and promoted good discussion. The feedback from two senior researchers was highly valued by the delegates. There seemed to be a good balance between informality and more organized occasions. The very good cooperation with the Portuguese organizers was noted. The need to cater better for students' specialized research interests leads naturally to the question of how the Post-Graduate network can form stronger links with the other EERA networks. The administration of the Pre-Conference could be combined with that for the ECER main conference. Work has begun to structure the network with convenors from different European countries.

(b) Report on the local organization for the main conference

Two buildings rather than three were being used. Only one building would be open until 9.30 for any network meetings. Tea/coffee and lunch were available in both buildings, and the facilities in both buildings should be used to avoid congestion. Student helpers were positioned strategically to direct delegates to rooms and within easy reach should anything go wrong. Powerpoint equipment was available in all of the rooms where it had been requested. There had been great difficulties for the local organizers in fixing rooms and securing adequate Powerpoint equipment because of the closure of the University of Lisbon during the summer months and the difficulty this created because the necessary information on the programme could not be made available before the closure. The informal social events following the last session on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday would take place in the Courtyard. The EERA Council's appreciation of the high quality of the local organizers' preparations for the conference was expressed. A meeting would take place during the conference between Michel Caillot, Margaret Kirkwood and Antonio Novoa to discuss the many difficulties that had arisen so that lessons could be learned for the future. Antonio would also be invited to join the Council Meeting on Saturday afternoon for the agenda item which reviews the conference.

(c) Main conference:

It was remarked that, following the breakdown of the EERA Office after it was transferred from SCRE and especially around the time of Colette's departure, the communications and functioning had much improved. Nevertheless great difficulties were experienced with constructing the programme, partly because the information from some networks arrived late but also because of the complexity of the task which has grown as the number of networks has expanded. The late submission of proposals by the majority of the delegates was however the root cause of the problem of very tight deadlines because it necessitated a two-stage review process which meant that the timespan for review had to be increased. It was proposed to intimate a strict deadline for proposals to be submitted for ECER 2003 in Hamburg and to adhere to it. Convenors and member associations would need to be active in publicizing the conference and alerting delegates to this change by providing regular reminders to them to get their proposal forms in on time. This new policy should be reviewed following ECER 2003. It was also proposed that the reasons for rejection of proposals should be examined during the next phase of review for ECER 2003.

The programme booklet production was delayed because the database output was of a very poor quality in terms of presentation and was also incomplete, and therefore the programme and delegates list had to be produced manually, which had considerable implications for the workload of the Office staff and the Secretary General during July and August. The processing of registration payments was also difficult, and was made more difficult by the late decision to refund delegates from low GDP countries and by the poor level of service from the Royal Bank of Scotland. Refunds and receipts would therefore be issued after the Conference. All of the staff in the Office were new to the task and had done a very good job under extremely difficult circumstances.

A change in the order of the keynotes had necessitated a change in the chairing arrangements. Presenters had been asked to speak for fifty minutes, allowing ten minutes for questions at the end. A session on the 6th EU framework programme presented by Angelos Agalianos had

been scheduled for Friday morning and it would be intimated to the convenors at the joint meeting of Council/Convenors.

The Secretary General had prepared and previously circulated for comment a set of guidelines for chairpersons and a session feedback form which would enable the parallel sessions to be monitored. Packs had now been prepared for each network convenor to collect from the Registration area before the first parallel session.

5. Joint Council/ Convenors Meeting

The Secretary General had begun consultations with the convenors and council members concerning proposed revisions to the arrangements for ECER 2003, reflected in a draft Call for Proposals circulated to them, also a set of guidelines for chairpersons and procedures for monitoring parallel sessions for ECER 2002, and the need to update the network descriptors.

A list of items that might be proposed by the Council for the agenda of the joint council/convenors meeting was then tabled by the Secretary General for discussion.

This comprised:

- ECER 2002 practical arrangements during the conference, including chairing
- the updating of network descriptors and the need for annual network reports
- information on the reduced fee for delegates from low GDP countries
- planning for ECER 2003
- communications between the Office and convenors
- future development of the networks, EERA and ECER.

These items were agreed. Martin Lawn, who rejoined the Council meeting having just participated in the convenors' meeting, indicated that the convenors wished to discuss the effective functioning of the networks.

6. Preparations for the AGA

It was noted that the previous AGA had focused primarily on the network functioning. The main difficulty that was foreseen in relation to the forthcoming AGA was the absence of an annual treasurer's report. The main items would therefore be the reports from the President, Secretary General and EERJ Editor, and EERA membership and 2003 fees.

6a. Website (brought forward on the agenda from 15. Communications)

Jorge De Lima thanked Martin Lawn for his work on the website updating and redesign. The work was proceeding in two phases; firstly to update the content (this is mostly completed) and then to redesign the site layout, which was scheduled to happen around September.

Saturday 14th September 2002, 14.30-17.00

Present:

Michel Caillot, President

Margaret Kirkwood, Secretary General

Raymond Bourdoncle

Kyriaki Doulas

Ingrid Gogolin

Martin Lawn

Sverker Lindblad

Lesley Morrison

Bernard Schneuwly

Zoran Pavlovic and his colleague, Janez Kolenc from the Slovenian Educational Research Institute also attended the meeting as observers.

7. Review of ECER 2002

Margaret Kirkwood proposed that this discussion be postponed until Professor Novoa joined the meeting.

8. ECER Hamburg 2003

Margaret Kirkwood invited Ingrid Gogolin to discuss the venue for ECER 2003 at the University of Hamburg. Ingrid explained that Hamburg was an attractive host city because it is easy accessible and the University itself is within walking distance of the city centre. She asked Margaret to provide information on the likely number of rooms, student helpers and AV equipment needed. Margaret had asked Professor Novoa to provide her with a breakdown of what was needed at Lisbon, which she would pass on to Ingrid. In the meantime, Margaret estimated that approximately 30 rooms would be required in total. Ingrid explained that this would mean access to two buildings may be necessary. Dunja Meyer will be in charge of the local conference office and will work closely with both Margaret and the EERA office. In addition, there will be a local organising committee, two members of which have already been identified.

Martin Lawn stressed that the local organisers must contribute to the overall quality and purpose of the conference. Ingrid explained that this would be the responsibility of the Academic Committee who would preside over the choice of keynote speakers and organisation of special sessions. Margaret stressed that the German Association should be involved in this Committee as this may help to attract German researchers to the conference. Ingrid felt that as the German Association's conference is scheduled 6 months after ECER, it would be a good opportunity for initiating research and increased co-operation in Germany.

Sverker Lindblad expressed his gratitude to Ingrid for agreeing to host ECER 2003 as he felt it was important for EERA to strengthen its contacts with Central and Eastern Europe. He hoped that the dates for ECER would not clash with the BERA or EARLI conferences. Margaret assured him that this had already been checked before the dates were finalised.

Bernard Schneuwly thought that the attractive location would provide a good opportunity for EERA to increase delegate numbers. He therefore proposed that someone be charged with

developing a strong marketing strategy for conference publicity. Margaret agreed that, as there were over 850 delegates at Lisbon, Hamburg could attract up to 1000. Ingrid suggested that in addition to advertising the conference in English, it should also be publicised in German.

Kyriaki Doulas praised the success of the informal social events at Lisbon and was keen for this to be repeated at Hamburg. Everyone agreed that this should replace an official conference dinner. Ingrid said that this would be possible at Hamburg because the venue has terraces where people could socialise. She also felt that it would be appropriate to offer an optional tourist programme to give delegates something to do at the end of each day. This idea was unanimously approved and Margaret proposed that people could pay for this separately to avoid unnecessary difficulties with registration.

Margaret felt that because the Convenors need to meet both before and during the conference, the last slot on the Thursday could be set aside for a Convenor meeting instead of a session. It was agreed that the Convenors and Council did not have much time together at Lisbon. Margaret therefore proposed that on Tuesday afternoon the Council and Convenor meetings be held in parallel, before a joint dinner that evening. The joint Council/Convenor meeting could then take place on Wednesday morning. Ingrid highlighted that this would need to be confirmed so that rooms could be arranged.

Ingrid asked if there was to be an official closing ceremony at Hamburg. Martin Lawn felt that this year's ceremony has been a success as it ensured that the relevant people were thanked before bringing the conference to a fitting end. Michel Caillot agreed but felt that 45 minutes was too long and that in future the closing ceremony should be restricted to a half hour session.

Margaret explained that she and Michel would meet with Ingrid and Dunja in Hamburg in October to discuss the contract and see the venue. Margaret stressed that care must be taken when setting the 2003 delegate fees because, as well as offering a 50% reduction to low GDP delegates and research students, EERA needs to ensure that the office and local organisation costs are also covered.

It was agreed that the official language of ECER 2003 would be English and German. Michel felt that this year the language problem had been more vivid than in previous years. Although the official rule is to have 2 working languages, he felt that this is not always put into practice. Martin Lawn agreed that one of the weakest parts of ECER is the failure of most English speakers to provide overhead transparencies or handouts of their presentations for the audience. He felt that next year this should be made compulsory. Zoran Pavlovic agreed and felt that both native and non-native English speakers should be asked to provide transparencies or copies of their paper to ensure the audience understand it.

Ingrid felt that English speakers should also provide a short German abstract. Bernard argued that as the dominant scientific language is English, those delegates presenting in German must also provide transparencies in English. He also stressed that native English speakers must bear in mind that non-native speakers have difficulty understanding different accents and jargon. Raymond agreed that the English must be easily understood because non-native speakers do not understand everything that native speakers do, such as humour.

Bernard felt that because ECER is, for many people their first international conference, it must be seen to be a truly international event with clear and open communication. Kyriaki Doulas felt that as people attend ECER to meet other Europeans, they need to speak English as it is the international language. Ingrid highlighted however that although many people understand spoken English, they are less confident about speaking it which may impede their participation in discussions.

Margaret suggested drawing up a set of guidelines for English-speaking presenters such as asking them to speak slowly, explain abbreviations etc. She agreed to ask her Department of

Language Education for advice on how best to do this, before preparing a document which she would circulate to Council for review.

Martin closed this discussion as he felt it could not be resolved at a Council meeting alone. Ingrid stressed that EERA must ensure it does not become an exclusive organisation. Margaret agreed and proposed that this topic be explored further at the Council/Convenor meeting during ECER 2003. This suggestion was widely supported.

9. Venue for ECER 2004

There was some confusion over whether the Dutch Association had actually agreed to host ECER 2004 in Amsterdam or if this had merely been a suggestion by Jules Pieters. When Sverker and Martin commented that Dutch members they had spoken to were unaware of such an arrangement, Margaret agreed to verify this point with Jules.

10. EERA Finances

10.1 Treasurer's Report

Michel expressed regret that Jules Pieters had been unable to attend and present the Treasurer's report. He was also unhappy that, since prior to the Lille Council meeting, there has been no written financial report which could cause potential problems with the annual audit. The other Council members also expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of a written financial report and agreed that this represented a serious problem. Margaret explained that under Scottish law, there may be a legal requirement for the Treasurer to present a financial report at the A.G.A.

10.2 EERA Office handling of finances, including banking and payment methods

In Jules' absence, Margaret reported on the handling of finances in the office. She explained that the office accepts a wide range of payment methods including cheque, credit card, invoice, bank transfer, internal and external purchase order. Problems arise due to difficulties in tracing bank transfers and individual credit card payments on the EERA bank statements and when some universities send payment without any indication of who it is for. It is therefore time-consuming and sometimes difficult to confirm who has actually paid their registration fee.

Margaret explained that one of the part-time secretaries, Nan Lawless, had been working 4 hours overtime a week to process payments. However, given the large number of delegates involved and the wide variety of payment methods and problems associated with each, it was clear that this was insufficient to cope with the workload. Margaret said she would discuss this matter with the office to see how this task could be managed more realistically.

Financial administration has been further impeded by the poor level of customer service provided by EERA's current bank. Margaret explained that they had mismanaged a bank transfer to the local organisers, made considerable surcharges for, and took up to 6 weeks to cash, foreign cheques. It was agreed that the EERA account should be moved to another bank and a new euro account be opened to facilitate the processing of payments. Margaret stated that she would investigate the services provided by other banks before deciding which one would provide the best service.

The SERA Treasurer, John Queen, has worked with the auditor on the 2001 audit. Margaret expected the auditor's report on the financial handling prior to Lille to be critical, due to an inability to trace transactions and link payments to the source. She explained that the office has tried as best it can with the current system to ensure that this has not happened this year. Following the conference, the office will be issuing receipts and refunds to those delegates from low GDP countries. She stressed that, although Eilean had made repeated requests to Council about how much of a reduction low GDP delegates should be offered, a decision

was never taken. Had this sorted out sooner, a great deal of work for the office and inconvenience to delegates would have been saved. Margaret explained that she would concentrate on removing the current inefficiencies of the financial system to ensure that procedures for 2003 are vastly improved.

10.3 Membership subscriptions

Michel said that the question of membership subscriptions had been resolved in the A.G.A. where it had been decided to increase the rate for National Associations from £500 to £600 and Institutes from £150 to £200.

11. EERA Office: database and staffing

Due to a number of problems with the current conference database, Margaret proposed that EERA invest in a new system to avoid the same problems next year. Michel agreed that this would be necessary to facilitate the work of the office. Margaret said that she would begin discussions with a commercial company and obtain costings for a new system. She emphasised that this would need to be done soon to ensure that a new system can be properly tested before the proposals arrive in the office.

Michel explained that Lesley Morrison's contract as Administrator expires in November 2002 and that EERA would be pleased if she would agree to extend it for a further year. Margaret said that Terri Freeman's secretarial contract has so far been extended on a monthly basis but she would now like her to be formally appointed for the forthcoming year. This would ensure that EERA had an office it could rely on for high quality support. Michel stressed the need to keep all staff for as long as possible because, as past experience has shown, staff turnover has a negative effect on EERA's efficiency and credibility.

12. EERA Council membership and President Elect

Michel explained that both his and Jorge de Lima's terms officially end in December 2002, Risto Rinne is the Finnish representative until December 2003 and Kirsten Hofgaard Lycke is the Nordic representative until December 2004. The three co-opted members are Martin Lawn, Sverker Lindblad, Kyriaki Doumas. Michel proposed that although Ingrid's term officially ends this December, it made sense for her to continue for a further year until after Hamburg. This was agreed.

Michel said that he had had no reply from Fuensanta Hernandez-Pina about her position on the Council. Martin proposed that Michel write to the Spanish Associations withdrawing their membership.

A discussion followed on a Council representative from either the Slovenian Association or Institute of Pedagogy. Zoran Pavlovic from the Slovenian Educational Research Institute explained that although there is a "virtual" Association, it is the Institute which is more of a working body. Martin said it would be legitimate for the Institute to have a representative on the Council.

In discussing the Presidency, Michel explained that he had initially been asked to hold the post for one year, until December 2002. A new President therefore needs to be found and Michel asked if there were any candidates. Martin thanked Michel for taking the post and stressed that the crucial part of the Council is its three main office bearers – President, Secretary General and Treasurer. He hoped that in the absence of any other candidate, Michel would agree to be President for one more year. Sverker agreed and hoped that, for EERA's interests, Michel would continue in the post. Margaret officially asked Michel if he would continue in the Presidency for a further year. Michel said he would be happy to continue.

Bernard stressed that from now on, the Council needs to think of candidates for the next President. Ingrid agreed that this was an important task which should be assigned to a specific

person. It was agreed that at the December Hamburg meeting, each Association should have some recommendations about the President-Elect. Communications with the Associations therefore need to start so that suggestions for candidates can be proposed. Sverker suggested that Bernard be the main contact to do this. Ingrid agreed to work with Bernard on the evaluation report drafted in Murcia and to prepare this for the December council meeting in Hamburg.

Margaret said it was important to bear in mind that the Convenors need representation at Council and it would make sense to have 1 or 2 Convenors as co-opted members. She would discuss the cost implications of this with Jules and hoped that by December, 1 or 2 Convenor representatives would be chosen

Raymond raised the problem of non-participation of some Council members and suggested contacting the absentees to see why they did not attend. It was felt that perhaps some members did not attend as they do not have a clear idea of what it means to be on the Council.

Michel closed the meeting by reading a report from Ian Stronach on feedback from the post-graduate pre-conference. This proposed that EERA develop research training networks across Europe and engage National research councils in this process. It also requested that EERA put in a bid to ESRC for an international research training workshop, co-ordinated by Ian Stronach and Jo Frankham, in collaboration with Kyriaki Doulas. Sverker suggested that Michel write to the speakers at the post-graduate conference to express EERA's gratitude.

Date of next Council meetings

- 14th, 15th December 2002 at the University of Hamburg
- 17th, 18th May 2003 at the University of Strathclyde