

Meeting of the European Regional Science Association Council

Vienna, August 26th, 2016

MINUTES

Jouke van Dijk opens the meeting and welcomes all the participants.

Participants briefly introduce themselves.

Item 1. Approval of the meeting agenda and appointment of an ERSAC member responsible for verification of meeting minutes

The agenda (attached to the minutes in appendix 1) has been approved. Katarzyna Kopczewska has been chosen as the ERSAC member responsible for verifying the minutes.

Jouke van Dijk informs that point 4 of the agenda will include also a proposal of a summer school in Slovakia. Also item 6 will include an item on the EPAINOS prize.

No other changes are requested.

Item 2.i. Long range discussions. Future organisation of the ERSA office and roles of EOC members

Jouke van Dijk opens the discussion on the draft document circulated prior to the meeting (available in appendix 2). He explains that Richard Kelly has left the office which created a need to re-structure the way in which tasks are allocated and performed. Following the discussions on future organisation of ERSA activities. The circulated proposal includes a job description including tasks on congress organisation and office-related tasks. Other tasks, relating to the communication strategy should be taken on by EOC members with financial assistance from ERSA.

Tuzin Baycan asks for a clarification of EOC and ERSAC structure and duties.

Jouke van Dijk explains that the ERSAC is the main decision making body while the EOC is to undertake tasks related to congress preparation as well as other strategic issues. The EOC forwards recommendations to the Council to discuss.

Tuzin Baycan comments that two terms of EOC members can add up to 10 years and suggests that the issue should be considered in the future.

Gunther Maier comments that the revision of the Constitution needs to be thoroughly prepared before any discussion takes place.

Maciej Turala suggests that proposals are submitted prior to the next EOC meeting in February 2017 so that a decision can be made next year by the Council, if needed.

Jouke van Dijk emphasises that the proposal under discussion is to include the EOC members in execution of tasks and asks the members of the ERSAC to vote on the circulated proposal in that respect.

The ERSAC Council unanimously accepts the proposal.

Maristella Angotzi leaves the meeting room.

Jouke van Dijk opens a discussion on filling the post of the Executive Director, in line with the circulated proposal's job description, by Maristella Angotzi.

Andre Torre adds that the tasks of the Executive Director relate to the organisation of the Congress as well as the day to day running of the office.

Gunther Maier adds that there are also tasks related to public relations which should be outsourced.

Lars Westin asks if Maristella will have the personal capacity to maintain contacts with the sections as Richard Kelly did.

Jouke van Dijk explains that Maristella will be supported in the task of maintaining relationships with section by the Vice President and Secretary of the Association.

Maciej Turala explains that he is willing to take up the tasks in terms of contacts with the sections as this used to be the role of the Secretary before the ERSAC professionalization.

Jouke van Dijk asks the members of the ERSAC to vote on appointing Maristella Angotzi as Executive Director of ERSAC.

The ERSAC Council unanimously accepts the proposal.

Maristella Angotzi re-enters the meeting room.

Item 2.ii. Long range discussions. Networking and collaboration update (EU/CORE workshops at the EU Week of Regions and Cities 2016, lectures with DG Regio)

Jouke van Dijk reports that a series of lectures has been organised at CORE under the label of ERSAC. What is more, ERSAC participated in the EU Week of Regions and Cities.

Leila Kebir reports on the activities by ERSAC at the EU Week of Regions and Cities. This year two workshops were organised and more joint work with AESOP and Regional Studies Association was carried out. She concludes that this event is an important one for ERSAC also because it allows collaboration with two other major associations.

The other part of the meeting in the master class, which is a great opportunity for students to meet both scholars as well as policy makers.

Jouke van Dijk adds that this is a large meeting, meaning that this is very good for ERSAC's exposure and strengthen the relations between science and policy.

Item 2.iii. Long range discussions. Social media and communication with the members, website update and newsletter

Andre Torre reports that together with Maristella Angotzi they have updated the ERSA website as well as the newsletter.

Maristella Angotzi adds that the new website is more up to date. Having said that, it will be continuously changed to embrace the social media as much as possible.

The report is approved by the ERSAC.

Item 2.iv. Long range discussions. Relationships between RSAI, ERSA and sections

Jouke van Dijk reports that the cooperation between ERSA and RSAI is fine. RSAI has set up a fund for stimulating activities, including the ERSA summer schools.

Andres Rodrigues-Pose confirms that the past two years have been spent on building three programmes: (1) Nurturing New Talent – funding workshops and training courses, (2) Building Bridges – providing subsidies for individual researchers to attend large scientific meetings, (3) Thinking Big – supporting young researchers (35 years or less or not more than five years after their Ph.D.) to make bids to research councils.

Jouke van Dijk adds that some activity has happened with regards to new sections. Hopefully the next ERSA Council meeting will be able to decide on recognising a new section in Bulgaria.

Daniela Constantin reports that an association was set up earlier in June bringing together two large groups of researchers. The association is currently awaiting for registration in the Bulgarian courts. During the next general assembly a decision should be made to apply for membership in ERSA.

Jouke van Dijk reports further that work is in progress on establishing a new section in Armenia.

Anahit Harutyunyan reports that the association has not yet applied for legal status in Armenia. One barrier that the association is facing is a financial one. Provided that cooperation with universities, the government and the central bank proves successful the section should continue in its development.

Item 2.v. Long range discussions. Replacements for EOC members (Francisco Carballo Cruz, Tomaso Pompili, Yannis Psycharis, Andres Rodriguez-Pose, Jose Villaverde) whose terms end in 2016

Yannis Psycharis, Tomaso Pompili and Katarzyna Kopczewska leave the meeting room.

Maciej Turala reports that five candidates have been put forward by different section to fill the upcoming vacancies:

- Vicente Royuela nominated by the Spanish section (AEER);
- Katarzyna Kopczewska nominated by the Polish section;

- Yannis Psycharis nominated by the Greek section;
- Tomaso Pompili nominated by the Italian section;
- Francisco Carballo Cruz nominated by the Portuguese section.

The EOC agreed to recommend the candidates to the ERSA Council for election in its previous meeting.

The ERSAC unanimously appoints:

- Vicente Royuela;
- Katarzyna Kopczewska;
- Yannis Psycharis;
- Tomaso Pompili;
- Francisco Carballo Cruz

in individual voting for EOC members for the term 2017-2021.

Yannis Psycharis, Tomaso Pompili and Katarzyna Kopczewska re-enter the meeting room.

Item 2.vi. Long range discussions. Extension of Andre Torre's mandate as the ERSA Councillor for the second term

Andre Torre leaves the meeting room.

Maciej Turala reports that Andre Torre's first term as the RSAI Councillor is ending this year and proposes that the EOC recommends that the ERSA Council nominates Andre Torre for another term as the RSAI Councillor from ERSA.

The EOC agreed to recommend the candidate to the ERSA Council for election in its previous meeting.

Andres Rodriguez-Pose adds that Andre has been an excellent RSAI Councillor in his first term.

The ERSAC unanimously appoints Andre Torre as an RSAI Councillor from ERSA for the term 2017-2019.

Andre Torre re-enters the meeting room.

Item 2.vii. Long range discussions. Replacement for the ERSA Councillor with the RSAI to complete the term 2016-2018 (seat vacated by Jouke van Dijk following the decision of RSAI to include Presidents of supra-national sections in the RSAI Council)

Jouke van Dijk reports that following the RSAI's decision to include Presidents of supra-national sections in the RSAI Council, a seat held by Jouke van Dijk in the term 2016-2018 become vacant. The EOC delegated a task to the President and Vice resident to find a suitable candidate.

A candidature of Francisco Carballo-Cruz is put forward for ERSA Council's consideration.

The ERSAC unanimously appoints Francisco Carballo-Cruz as an RSAI Councillor from ERSA for the term 2017-2018.

Item 2.viii. Long range discussions. Composition of the ERSA Council and voting rights – proposal to include ERSA President, ERSA Vice-President and RSAI President as three additional voting members stipulated in the Constitution

Maciej Turala reports that the ERSA Constitution stipulates that the voting rights in the ERSA Council lie with section representatives and up to three other persons. No specific persons / functions have been specified to date.

The EOC meeting agreed to recommend to the ERSA Council that:

- RSAI President and Executive Director are permanently invited to ERSA Council meetings without voting rights;
- ERSA President and Vice President are included as voting members of the ERSA Council, with voting rights limited when deciding about who should become President and Vice President.

Lars Westin comments that the bottom-up structure that is proposed is appropriate. He suggests to consider also the payments of fees from section to both ERSA and RSAI.

Jouke van Dijk asks the ERSA Council to vote on the proposal.

The ERSA Council unanimously approves the proposal.

Item 3.i. Congresses. 2017 Congress in Groningen – progress report

Paul Elhorst reports that the all the members of the Groningen LOC are in Vienna collecting experiences. In general terms organisation is on schedule: hotels are blocked, menus have been decided. What is more, there are already five major sponsors secured so a deficit is not a realistic threat.

Finally, two keynote speakers have already been invited and the LOC is awaiting for their formal confirmations. A scientific committee is currently being formed – most approached people have agreed.

The report is approved.

Item 3.ii. Congresses. 2018 Congress in Cork – proposal

Declan Jordan reports that the British and Irish section has unanimously decided to put forward Cork's candidature as a venue for the 2018 ERSA Congress.

Cork is a small city (125,000 inhabitants) in the South of Ireland. This means that the ERSA Congress will be a great event for Cork. The Irish Tourist Board has already committed sponsorship (over 15,000 EUR) for promotion purposes.

Cork is an accessible, friendly, cosmopolitan city. Accommodation can be organised in hotels as well as student dormitories.

The suggested dates are August 28th (Tuesday) to August 31st (Friday).

University College Cork is proposed as the venue for the Congress. The opening session as well as the Congress Dinner will be organised in the City Hall in Cork.

There is strong support from officials to organising the Congress in Cork meaning that the sponsorship will be sufficient to avoid a loss.

Isabelle Thomas comments on accessibility. She suggests that extra assistance is given to delegates.

Fabio Mazzola asks about a number of keynote speakers.

Declan Jordan explains that there are two keynotes planned for one plenary session held in the City Hall.

The ERSA Council unanimously approves Cork as the venue for the ERSA Congress in 2018.

Item 3.iii. Congresses. Future Congresses

Jouke van Dijk reports that until now no official nominations have appeared for 2019 and later. He asks for any suggestions or declarations of interest.

Item 4.i. Summer Schools. 2017 Summer School in Lesvos, Greece

Jouke van Dijk reports that two proposals were submitted for 2017 but it has been agreed prior to the ERSA Council meeting that the summer school is organised in Greece in 2017 and in Slovakia in 2018.

Yannis Psycharis presents a proposal to organise the 2017 Summer School in Lesvos, Greece. The organisation assumes the format of previous summer schools, including lectures, hands-on training and technical excursions. The LOC is now in place, supported by the Greek section. A number of speakers have been approached and some have now been confirmed.

What is more, the provisional programme is already in place. The facilities are sufficient to support the event.

Jouke van Dijk confirms that this would be an ideal location for the summer school and asks Stefan Rehak to present the proposal by the Slovak section.

The ERSA Council unanimously approves Lesvos, Greece as the venue for the Summer School in 2017.

Item 4.ii. Summer Schools. 2018 Summer School in Bratislava, Slovakia

Stefan Rehak reports that the Slovak section is open to organise the Summer School in 2018. The programme will concentrate on the regional policy and practice, involving representatives from the chosen DGs. The section has experience of organising the Congress in 2012 and some winter

seminars. It was also considered to organise a Winter School but the logistics would be too troublesome to be overcome easily.

Roberta Capello suggests to use the existing contacts with the DG Regio to invite speakers.

The ERSA Council unanimously approves Bratislava, Slovakia as the venue for the Summer School in 2018.

Item 4.iii. Summer Schools. 2018 Summer School in Lille, France

Andre Torre reports that there was potential interest to organise a Summer School in 2018. Options will be further researched.

Item 5.i. Finances. 2015 budget closing – approval and absolution

The Treasurer's report is available in Appendix 3.

Laura Resmini reports that 2015 ended with a surplus of about 36,000 EUR.

The Congress is the main source of revenue for ERSA. This creates a significant risk related to the level of participation at the Congress.

The expenditures are mainly on scientific activities (Congress organisation, Summer School and some workshops) and management and running costs of ERSA. The day-by-day costs and travel were decreased in 2015.

At the end of 2015 there was a reserve of about 270,000 EUR allowing ERSA to survive for at least one year even in case of a major shock.

The ERSA Council unanimously approves the report and gives its absolution.

Item 5.ii. Finances. 2016 budget update

Item 5.iii. Finances. Provisional budget for 2017 - approval

Item 5.iv. Finances. Future funding opportunities and long-term ERSA finances

Laura Resmini reports that the presented calculations are based on the Vienna LOC's budget presented in July. ERSA plans to cover this year's congress loss, should the provisional budget be confirmed.

Some money has been invested in three new computers for the office. The Summer School in Milan did not need to be supported financially as it was paid for by the fees, local sponsors and RSAI's contribution.

The general financial situation of ERSA is sound and stable. No major concerns exist in the short-run.

The ERSA Council approves the report and provisional budget for 2017.

Item 6.i. Other ordinary business. REGION journal – report

Roberto Patuelli reports that the journal needs to make more effort to ensure individual submissions, not related to special issues. REGION is ready to consider indexation with SCOPUS and one of Thomson-Reuters indexes.

There are between 3,000 and 5,000 page views per month. The editorial board plans to be more active in promoting EPAINOS participants to the Young Scholar's Letters Section.

More collaboration with other regional science journals may be considered in the future.

The report is approved.

Item 6.ii. Other ordinary business. Papers in Regional Science – report

Roberta Capello reports that there is a stable submission – over 200 papers submitted each year. The impact factor increase to 1.15 even though the number of papers was increased (one extra issue per year until 2018 when the contract with Wiley Blackwell ends) due to a very long backlog. What is more, there is a low level of self-citations.

The critical aspect is the backlog – over 90 papers are now waiting to be put into an issue. This means that the waiting time for putting in an issue is about two years. The rejection rate is 90% which is too high but the large backlog demands it.

Another critical aspect is to decide about the future publishing contract.

The report is approved.

Item 6.iii. Other ordinary business. ERSA – EIB prize – report

Erik Verhoef reports that this year's winner is prof. Bernard Fingleton. Also, the jury met earlier today to replace some of its members. One of the issues to consider for the prize is lack of diversity.

The report is approved.

Item 6.iv. Other ordinary business. EPAINOS prize – report

Eveline van Leeuwen reports that there were 10 EPAINOS sessions in Vienna. The quality of submitted papers was extremely high. She requests that the ERSAC members encourage their younger colleagues to submit papers for the EPAINOS competitions.

Gunther Maier reports that this year's EPAINOS prize was sponsored by city of Lienz and it may be a beginning of the long-standing cooperation.

The report is approved.

Item 7. Any other business

Tuyin Baycan reports that about ten delegates from Turkey could not attend this year's Congress and requests that the registration fees are reimbursed.

Gunther Maier adds that there is another Italian delegate who could not attend because of the earthquake.

Jouke van Dijk proposes that the President, Vice President and Chair of the LOC come to a fair and agreeable solution.

The proposal is approved.

The meeting is closed.

Meeting of the European Regional Science Association Council

Vienna, August 26th, 2016

APPENDIX 1 – MEETING AGENDA

Words of Welcome by the President

1. Approval of the meeting agenda and appointment of an ERSAC member responsible for verification of meeting minutes
2. Long range discussions
 - i. Future organisation of the ERSA office and roles of EOC members
(Jouke van Dijk)
 - ii. Networking and collaboration update (EU/CORE workshops at the EU Week of Regions and Cities 2016, lectures with DG Regio)
(Jouke van Dijk, Maristella Angotzi)
 - iii. Social media and communication with the members, website update and newsletter
(Maristella Angotzi, Andre Torre)
 - iv. Relationships between RSAI, ERSA and sections
(Jouke van Dijk)
 - v. Replacements for EOC members (Francisco Carballo Cruz, Tomaso Pompili, Yannis Psycharis, Andres Rodriguez-Pose, Jose Villaverde) whose terms end in 2016
(Maciej Turala)
 - vi. Extension of Andre Torre's mandate as the ERSA Councillor for the second term
(Maciej Turala)
 - vii. Replacement for the ERSA Councillor with the RSAI to complete the term 2016-2018 (seat vacated by Jouke van Dijk following the decision of RSAI to include Presidents of supra-national sections in the RSAI Council)
(Maciej Turala)
 - viii. Composition of the ERSA Council and voting rights – proposal to include ERSA President, ERSA Vice-President and RSAI President as three additional voting members stipulated in the Constitution
(Maciej Turala)
3. Congresses
 - i. 2017 Congress in Groningen – progress report
(Paul Elhorst)
 - ii. 2018 Congress in Cork – proposal
(Declan Jordan)
 - iii. Future Congresses
(Jouke van Dijk)

4. Summer schools
 - i. 2017 Summer School in Lesbos, Greece
(**Yannis Psycharis**)
 - ii. 2018 Summer School in Lille, France
(**Andre Torre**)

5. Finances
 - i. 2015 budget closing – approval and absolution
(**Laura Resmini**)
 - ii. 2016 budget update
(**Laura Resmini, Maristella Angotzi**)
 - iii. Provisional budget for 2017 – approval
(**Laura Resmini**)
 - iv. Future funding opportunities and long-term ERSA finances
(**Jouke van Dijk, Laura Resmini**)

6. Other ordinary business
 - i. REGION journal – report
(**Vicente Royuela**)
 - ii. Papers in Regional Science – report
(**Roberta Capello**)
 - iii. ERSA – EIB prize – report
(**Erik Verhoef**)

7. Any other business

Please inform the Secretary if you wish to raise an item under any other business.

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APPENDIX 2 – FUTURE OF THE ERSAC OFFICE: DISCUSSION MATERIAL

Professionalization of the ERSAC organization in the goal to make ERSAC a general platform of promotion of various activities in favour of regional development.

In the ERSAC Office four main types of tasks can be identified:

1. Organizational and Administrative tasks with regard to the annual ERSAC conference, summer schools, lectures series with DG Regio (mainly Maristella Angotzi)
2. Administrative tasks with regard to the website, the newsletter, contact with sections, finances (mainly Maristella Angotzi)
3. Academic tasks, which are partly related to the previous two tasks, but the academic input is finding suitable speakers, discussant, defining content for workshops on Open Days, (scientific) contacts with EIB, OECD, EU etc. The organisational part can be done with help of Maristella.
4. Networking, fund-raising and communication. Here we need a combination of academic input with regard to be convincing for the scientific content we offer and networking and communication skills to talk with private partners and policy makers, the press releases, etc.

Based on this in the EOC meeting last February in Vienna there was a first round of discussions on the future of the ERSAC Office.

Several options and suggestions were put on the table, but no final conclusions were drawn. It was agreed that we need a proposal based on a strategic document for August 2016. A task force composed of: Jouke van Dijk, Andre Torre, Gunther Maier, Laura Resmini, Tomaso Pompili and Maciej Turala is made responsible for preparing this document based on the suggestions put forward by the EOC members. After the meeting Maciej has send out several reminders to the EOC-members asking for suggestions, but none were received.

Therefore the ERSAC Board held a Skype meeting which resulted in the following conclusions:

The future strategy should be based on a more defined and narrow set of tasks for the office. Also the remaining tasks/projects need to be allocated to EOC members.

The main tasks of the ERSAC Office are performed very well due to the very good and hard work of Maristella Angotzi , together with some extra help from interns, Jouke and André and especially help by Leila Kebir for the organisation of workshops at the European Week for Regions and Cities in October 2016 in Brussels together with DG Regio.

This model where Maristella works in the ERSAC Office with interns and EOC-members do additional tasks, works quite well in practice, but needs to be formalized, because in the by-laws several tasks are explicitly assigned to the Executive Director and the workload should be spread more equally over EOC members.

Therefore we formally propose to the EOC and ERSAC:

1. To appoint Maristella Angotzi formally as the New Executive Director of ERSA, with the attached task list specified in Annex 1 (this needs to be prepared by Maristella together with Jouke and André).
2. To assign specific (temporary) projects to individual EOC-members based on clearly specified issues, for which also a limited budget is available (see Annex 2). These projects need to be specified in more detail and agreed upon by the ERSA Board (note: in my view the ERSAC should agree on the general principle and delegate this to the ERSA Board to be more flexible)

Annex 1: Tasks for the ERSA Executive Director

ERSA Executive Director

Proposal of the Job Description

Job description

- Execution of all decisions of the ERSA Board except when other assignments are specifically made by the Board.
- Represents ERSA when requested by the Board.
- Supports ERSA Sections representatives in the promotion of their respective activities.

Office management

- Manages the ERSA Office (day to day accounting and secretarial/administrative duties in conjunction with appropriate officers).
- Recruits/hires and manages association temporary staff personnel (like internships or students' job).

Events

- Manages the logistic set-up and promotion of ERSA events (Annual Congress, Summer School) in co-operation with the LOCs and provide supports to other events co-organised by ERSA (like Lecture Series or EWRC with the EU).
- Develops template documents for ERSA events like (Applications for the LOCs (Division of tasks LOC/ERSA Office), certificates of attendance, etc).

Communication

- In close cooperation with the ERSA President and Vice-President, plans and executes all Corporate (e-)communications which include monthly e-newsletters, banners, corporate presentations, etc.
- Enhances visibility of ERSA activities via different channels like ERSA website/e-news/social media but also via the section representatives.

Data development

- Maintains data knowledge linked to ERSA activities.
- Develops global statistics of ERSA events.
- Analyses of ERSA database of contacts (members/and non members) and reports for a better understanding of ERSA community and potential development (this is something I really like to find the time to work on in order to create a CRM database).

Annex 2: Issues and Guidelines for tasks and temporary Projects by EOC-members

Two issues where we need additional capacity have been identified:

- Communication (newsletters are not enough, communication can be more professional):
 - inside ERSA with sections, maintain regular relations with section on a day-to-day basis while an EOC based task force would assist with single events and issues (lead to be taken by Andre Torre with assistance from Maciej Turala and Maristella Angotzi);
 - external relations with outside partners (Open Days, lecture series, workshops; RSA, EASOP, ERES etc.;
- Fundraising – even though in the short-term ERSA is financially sound. Communicate a positive image and once that is done funding will become more available. There is a clear cause-effect relationship there.

A professional communication strategy is needed. The currently used website, newsletters and social media are not enough – there is no consistent strategy of communicating to the press and policy makers what ERSA is doing. Instead of assigning this task as a project to an EOC-member we might also consider to hire a professional like we do with the website and graphic design. To be discussed further also with Maristella.

This additional capacity / support can be arranged by creating projects and delegating them to individual EOC members who would be then responsible for recruiting junior academics (found in their surroundings / environments) to become Project Leaders to take care of the work.

In order to ensure continuity the EOC member would be requested to take care of a given project for several years and then to pass it on to another EOC member before his/her term comes to end.

List of considered tasks/projects includes:

- Open Days;
- Lecture series;
- Workshops;
- COST / other EU projects – be up to date with the funding programmes, monitoring and drafting of project proposals for appearing calls.

With regard to the budget available for this project the following rules and principles of expenses apply:

- 1) The maximum available budget for these projects is €20,000 per year.
- 2) Each project can be funded up to €4,000 per year, inclusive of all reimbursements, travel, and accommodation and delivery costs. EOC-members are not allowed to claim invested time. Within the budget, working time can be paid for assistance of junior academics.
- 3) Each EOC member who has agreed to manage a project has to present a short project proposal (objectives, deadlines, resources). The ERSA Board will approve the projects.
- 4) Pre-payments of up to 60% of total cost may be done before completion of the project with the remaining 40% paid out after completion and after the submission of a debit note.
- 5) No extra funds can be claimed by the EOC member taking care of a specific project.

Meeting of the

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APPENDIX 3 – TREASURER’S REPORT

THE ERSa FINANCIAL STATUS AND PERSPECTIVES 2015 balance sheet and provisional budgets 2016 and 2017

Laura Resmini
ERSa Treasurer

2015 Balance Sheet (final closing)

The 2015 financial year closed with a surplus of €36,388.40 net of taxes, other financial expenses, and depreciations (see Table 1 in the Appendix for details).

The income of the Association has been generated, as usual, by the annual congress. In 2015 conference income (fees and sponsors) amounted to 325,700.00€, 21% more with respect to the amount collected in 2014. This year income from exhibitors reached €3,450, the lowest level since 2012. Membership services and fees from the summer school do not change substantially.

Besides the usual considerations for the uncertainty that characterizes ERSa’s main source of income, the only matter of concern is the declining trend of the income from exhibitors. The latter offer a marginal contribution to ERSa’s total income. However, their presence is extremely important for our members. This point needs an in-depth analysis in order to understand how to make ERSa policy towards exhibitors more effective.

Total expenditure in 2015 amounted to €291,002.54, an increase of about 18% with respect to the previous year. This increase is totally due to the expenses related to the organization of the annual congress. In 2015, the budget for organizing the Congress consisted exclusively of revenues from participants (80% of fees) and from exhibitors (50% of total revenues). Despite that, the income from the Congress allowed ERSa to cover all fixed costs linked to the organization of the annual congress (50,000€) and other running costs. The latter are in line with those of the previous year, amounting to €98,699.43. Savings have been registered in day-by-day office expenses (-50% with respect to 2014), travel & meeting expenses (-64%) and Fees (-41%). Personnel costs, instead, increased to €76,273.44 because of the severance pay ERSa had to make in favor of the executive director at the end of his contract (November 2015).

The above-mentioned savings are due to:

- 1) a reduction in the IT expenses due to the change of the congress software;
- 2) the office has internalized the French translation of the EOC/ERSAC minutes.

The updating of congress software has implied an investment in intangible assets of about €9,480.

At the end of 2015, reserves amounted to €315,483.15, with an increase in the saving account of about 18% with respect to the previous year (see Table 2 in the Appendix for details). The ratio of reserves to total expenditure was 1.08 to 1 (down from 1.17 to 1 in 2013). This ratio increases up to 3.1 when one considers ERSA management costs, only. This implies that the Association is able to cover management costs for three years, should a financial shock occur.

In conclusion, there is evidence that ERSA has reached a sound financial standing because of the financial consolidation policy implemented in the previous years.

The 2016 and 2017 provisional budgets

As for 2016, the financial trend reported in Table 1 in the Annex reflects the following facts:

1) The agreement signed with the LOC is similar to that adopted in 2015. This implies that 80% of participants' fees has made available for the conference budget and ERSA gets the remaining 20% of fees as capitation fees, and €50,000 included in the congress budget to cover fixed costs related to the organization of the conference. However, the LOC has already informed ERSA about the probability to close the congress budget with an imbalance of about €25,000. Therefore, ERSA will get less than 20% of fees.

2) Participants are about 750. Further cancellations may occur because of the chaotic situation in Turkey.

3) The summer school has been financed by participants' fees (€9,300) and by sponsors (Politecnico of Milano and RSAI) found by the LOCs. ERSA did not face any further financial effort.

4) The impact of the changes in the staffing level and structure of the office on ERSA running and management costs is not precisely estimable, yet. The amount reported in Table 1 still includes pending payments in favour of the former Executive director and the increase in salary recognized to Mrs. Angotzi for her new duties in the office.

5) Day-by-day office expenses include investments in information technologies (three new computers) of €3,255.74.

6) Membership fees do not record pending payments (two sections have not provided for the payment of membership fees yet).

Given these facts, in 2016 the expected total income is about €311,000 while total expenses are foreseen to be around €322.855,63. The financial year is expected to end up with a small loss, should the costs of the congress be confirmed.

The situation is expected to improve in 2017, when the annual congress will return to benefit from the financial contributions of local sponsors. This fact should reduce the risk of a potential negative result. On the expenditure side, the reorganization of the ERSA office is expected to yield, on the one hand, to further savings in personnel costs; on the other hand, to an increase in the other costs of €20,000 at most, because of the externalization of some tasks, as previously discussed. Despite that, the financial year should end up with a positive result.

Future perspectives

At the moment, the Association's overall financial performance is quite strong. General patterns of income and expenditure remain stable over the last years, reflecting the good position of the Association, especially in relation to reserves. The Executive Board will seek to continue this good progress for the future.

However, several areas of doubt remain. With the increased context of uncertainty in the financial markets, slow economic recovery in Europe and political and social tensions at the EU borders, the level of risk that the Association may face in performing its activities may increase, with a negative impact on the financial structure of ERSA. On the revenue side, the income of the Association is primarily derived from congress fees. Unfortunately, participations in big events like our annual congress may reduce in the future, while the risk of cancellation may go in the opposite direction, should political and social tensions in Europe persist. Even not considering this pessimist scenario, on the expenditure side it is worth noting that the costs of organizing these events has increased in the last three years because of the lack of sponsorships.

Therefore, we recognize the need for continuing financial prudence, which may imply, in the short run, to contain the managerial and operational costs of the Association as much as possible; and to reduce the costs of the annual congress by carefully targeting services and activities for members and cutting unnecessary expenses. Another possibility is to revise ERSA policy for exhibitors in order to increase their presence at each congress. However, potential increases of income from this source are rather limited.

Another opportunity is to find external funds to support ERSA activities. Given the nature of ERSA – a supra-national Association – it seems hard to find national sponsors, unless for the organization of local events. So, we need to find funding entities with an international/global perspective.

In order to do so, we need to develop: *i*) a database of potential foundations and other funding bodies with an international perspective; *ii*) credible projects to present to potential funding institutions. I refer here, for example, to broad projects concerning summer schools or specialized workshops on specific topics related to regional sciences but of potential interest for funding institutions. The location can be chosen according to the geographical area of reference or the national origin of that institution.

ERSA has to be the promoter of all these activities, which however, should be carried out in close cooperation with national sections in order to finalize specific initiatives, write project proposals, create networks of institutions, locate the opportunities, and so on. It is the task of the EOC/ERSAC to stimulate and promote national sections' participation in those initiatives.

Since it takes time to identify potential ideas, and transform them in credible projects, this strategy, although feasible and potentially interesting, may give some interesting results in the medium-long run, only.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Balance sheets by financial year.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 ^(*)	2017 ^(*)
Income	262.076,06	336.494,14	278.882,99	335.392,03	310.718,48	313.750,00
Congress	246.827,00	324.252,00	268.211,00	325.700,00	296.801,00	304.000,00
Registration fee	241.077,00	319.732,00	264.002,00	322.250,00	292.201,00	300.000,00
Sponsor	6.250,00	5.900,00	3.700,00	3.450,00	4.600,00	4.000,00
Past Conferences	-500,00	-1.380,00	509			
ERSA membership	6.560,00	3.405,00	4.940,00	4.750,00	4.750,00	4.750,00
Summer school	5.000,00	5.790,00	4.600,00	4.150,00	9.000,00	5.000,00
Registration fee		5.400,00	4600	4.150,00	9.300,00	5.000,00
Sponsor		390,00				
Other income	3.689,06	3.047,14	1131,99	792,03	167,48	
Expenses	232.873,58	290.216,29	245.660,43	291.002,54	318.433,34	288.000,00
Scientific activities	129.738,33	187.760,58	143.058,21	192.303,11	252.208,12	208.000,00
Congress	129.738,33	187.760,58	126.802,21	188.083,37	242.908,12	203.000,00
Summer school			14256	3.580,00	9.300,00	5.000,00
Workshop & seminar			2000	639,74		
Management costs	103.135,25	102.455,71	102.602,22	98.699,43	66.225,22	80.000,00
Day by day office	19.031,87	12.603,92	11.132,08	5.578,07	7.178,27	5.000,00
Employees	59.454,80	62.363,71	65.692,79	76.273,44	46.000,00	40.000,00
Fees	9.244,14	8.240,44	7.237,55	4.240,82	5.785,03	6.000,00
Travel & meeting	8.722,54	12.153,05	8.024,05	2.903,29	1.375,40	3.000,00
Insurance and premises	6.365,23	6.718,86	6.824,73	6.728,06	5.000,00	6.000,00
Other expenses	316,67	375,73	3.691,02	2.975,75	886,52	20.000,00
Result	29.202,48	46.277,85	33.222,56	44.389,49	-7.714,86	25.750,00
Depreciation	1.550,77	579,00		3160	4103,49	
Financial income	290,09	567,63	983,94	442,47	183,48	
Financial expenses	3.907,09	4.915,61	4611,1	5172,94	3347,4	
Result before tax	24.034,71	41.350,87	29.595,40	36.499,02	-14.982,27	
Tax	42,76	107,05	190,74	110,62		
Result after tax	23.991,95	41.243,82	29.404,66	36.388,40		

(*) estimates

Table 2. Financial situation, 2011-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 ^(*)
Bank accounts	220.437,63	255.992,90	285.586,46	315.483,15	472.783,15
Italian account	-	-			
Fortis-74	105,96	732,00	458,67	510,05	200.676,49
Fortis-82	220.315,62	92.480,73	50.332,33	37.126,78	9.096,26
Saving account		162.780,17	234.795,46	277.846,32	263.010,40
Petty cash	16,05				

(*) at June 30th 2016.