

Meeting of the European Organizing Committee

Lisbon, August 25th, 2015

MINUTES

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

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

The agenda (attached to the minutes in appendix 1) has been approved. Tomasz Kossowski has been chosen as the EOC member responsible for verifying the minutes.

Item 2.i. Long range discussions. Networking EASSH and EUGEO – update

Andre Torre reports on the possibilities of cooperation with the European Association of Social Sciences. The potential cooperation could cover organising joint events and applying for grants together.

The report is approved.

Item 2.ii. Long range discussions. Collaboration update (EU workshops, EU Open Days 2015, AESOP specials sessions, workshops. lectures; ERES joint Summer school)

Jouke van Dijk reports on a series of lectures organised jointly between AESOP and ERSA in Brussels. Also ERSA is to be represented in the EU Open Days – during the next Open Days ERSA will organise two workshops: one on rural development and another on energy (jointly with AESOP).

Andre Torre reports that ERSA is now involved in the so-called ‘masterclass’ organised by the EU. Hopefully next year ERSA will enlarge its presence in those events.

Jouke van Dijk asks for suggestions and remarks.

Jouke van Dijk reports also that AESOP is very open for organising joint events and they seem to be complimentary to ERSA activities. There are thus multiple opportunities for organising joint workshops and other events.

The report is approved.

Item 2.iii. Long range discussions. Sponsorship

Jouke van Dijk reports that ERSA is performing well in terms of finance but is still looking for ways to secure sponsorship other than the annual congress. One of the initiatives is a COST initiative.

Yannis Psycharis reports that COST is a initiative which supports summer schools and workshop organisation. The requirements are that there should be at least five COST countries participating in the event organisation and dissemination of results. The next deadline for application is September 8th, 2015. Contacts have been made with various colleagues and currently nine countries are involved. The proposal should be evenly spread across Europe. The Congress will be used to develop the proposal further. The COST support will support networking activities, much like the earlier PREPARE project for summer schools.

Gunther Maier asks about the possibility of meeting the September deadline.

Yannis Psycharis explains that the work started earlier this year and the April deadline was missed. Now, the material has been uploaded once more and the application will be repeated.

The report is approved.

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

Richard Kelly reports on ERSA office activities:

- a bi-monthly newsletter has been maintained;
- a communication action plan has also been produced together with Andre Torre;
- a new website design has also been prepared.

Vicente Royuela suggests not to make the newsletter more frequent than once every two weeks and asks about the number of followers on Facebook as the frequency of sending out news on Facebook could be much greater.

Francisco Carballo Cruz asks about the number of people who open the newsletter.

Richard Kelly explains that there are usually over a thousand leads.

Andre Torre reports that the website is no longer flexible enough, difficult to handle. There is an idea to have a new system for website management.

Richard Kelly adds that the content management is no longer as easy as necessary. There were discussions with three website designers. The current website designer was not ready to offer a solution that would be in line with the association's needs. On the other hand one of the independent designers proposed a solution based on Wordpress and requiring up to two months to work out and implement. The estimated cost of this solution is about 2,500 EUR.

Jouke van Dijk summarises that the present website is outdated and needs to be improved to allow the office to work with the website directly. It is suggested that ERSA invests in this development.

Gunther Maier says that Wordpress is a good choice – it is widely used and is thus well-supported.

Tomaz Dentinho agrees that the website needs to be up-to-date and flexible in day to day usage.

The EOC agrees that Richard Kelly and Andre Torre continue with these developments.

Item 2.v. Long range discussions. Regional Science Academy – integration with the ERSA Congress

Karima Kourtit and Peter Nijkamp join the meeting.

Peter Nijkamp thanks for the invitation to present the idea which has already been presented to a number of other people and organisations. In the view of many people it would be important to come up with some more strategic agenda on how to secure a sustainable future of our field. Some inspirations have been drawn from a paper by Antoine Bailly published several years ago which outlined the gap between the current state of the discipline and its future state.

Dozens of people have been involved in generating ideas and developing this initiative. It still needs to be decided how to best go about implementing such an initiative which would become an umbrella for many disciplines.

Hans Westlund continues to say that the Regional Science Academy is to become a catalyst for research and teaching activities, a liaison for regional scientists, and a complimentary activity to those of RSAI, ERSA and sections.

The initiative is to focus on ideas, people and data performing four types of activities:

- think tank activities;
- education and training activities;
- data infrastructure activities;
- support activities.

Jouke van Dijk thanks for the outline of the initiative and emphasises the need to disseminate this information.

Gunther Maier asks why such an Academy would be needed. There are some interesting ideas for sure but it is not clear why these ideas could not be implemented within the existing framework. There is indeed a weak spot in ERSA in terms of teaching – this was clearly highlighted by the presentation. Finally, he asks about the cost of this initiative and the sources of funding.

Andres Rodriguez-Pose comments that any attempt to promote new ideas and to support the teaching aspect is commendable, although clarifying the organic relationship to the existing structure is required at this moment.

Peter Nijkamp replies that the initiative is based on a deep concern for the viability and sustainability of regional science in the future. Money is not the leading issue here – it is rather the capacity of the field to create concepts that would need to be tested and conceptualised. Regional science needs more to remain sustainable in the future.

The idea is to create an impulse that will rejuvenate the field of regional science. At the moment the initiative is an open agenda – it is meant as a forum of open discussion.

Jouke van Dijk thanks for the presentation.

Karima Kourtit and Peter Nijkamp leave the meeting.

Item 2.vi. Long range discussions. Relationships between ERSA and sections: additional activities and support for section activities

Richard Kelly reports that he has been actively contacting the section representatives concerning the dissemination of information and organisation of future events.

Tomaz Dentinho reports that the Russian section fails to pay its fee. Perhaps it should be considered to organise some more events there to help with the fee payments.

Richard Kelly reports that the Russian Section has paid its ERSA section fee.

Tomaz Dentinho adds that there is a newly developing section in Armenia and its representatives will attend the ERSA Council meeting as observers.

Jouke van Dijk adds that there is also news of a new section forming in Bulgaria.

Gunther Maier comments that all the communication which we produce is internal while there is a blind spot insofar as the communication with the outside world is concerned. This item (i.e. developing media strategy) should be considered for future discussions.

The reports are approved.

Item 2.vii. Long range discussions. Relationships ERSA – RSAI

Jouke van Dijk reports that ERSA and RSAI are working closely together.

Andres Rodriguez-Pose comments that in order to improve the relationship between RSAI and supra-nationals. In order to re-establish communication channels it is proposed that each president of the supra-national should become automatically an RSAI Councillor, thus increasing the number of councillors from 15 to 18.

Also the Bulgarian association of geographers has approached RSAI and possibilities of cooperation are currently researched.

The report is approved.

Item 2.viii. Long range discussions. Replacement for the ERSA Councillor with the RSAI (Andres Rodriguez-Pose) whose term ends in 2015

Jouke van Dijk proposes that he becomes an RSAI Councillor from ERSA to replace Andres Rodriguez-Pose.

The proposal is approved.

Item 2.ix. Long range discussions. Replacements for EOC members (Hans Westlund, Laura Resmini, Maciej Turala) whose terms end in 2015

Maciej Turala and Laura Resmini leave the room. Andre Torre assumes the responsibility for taking the minutes.

Jouke van Dijk proposes to put forward both these candidates to the ERSAC to re-elect them both.

The proposal is approved unanimously.

Maciej Turala and Laura Resmini re-join the meeting.

Jouke van Dijk introduces the candidature of Daniela Constantin as an EOC member and recommends that the EOC puts forward this candidature to the ERSAC.

Andres Rodriguez-Pose comments that this is an excellent candidature.

Andre Torre adds that this is a good nomination insofar as the gender balance is concerned.

The proposal is approved unanimously.

Item 3.i. Congresses. 2014 Congress in St. Petersburg – summary report

No report is given.

Item 3.ii. Congresses. 2015 Congress in Lisbon, Portugal – progress report

Tomaz Dentinho reports that hard work is continued and financially the situation is stable. Some concerns are raised by lunches and busses but work is in progress to solve those issues. There are around 900 participants.

The report is approved.

Item 3.iii. Congresses. 2016 Congress in Vienna – progress report

Gunther Maier reports that the preparations are going well and according to schedule. All the rooms are reserved in the university and the venue for the Congress dinner in the Rathaus. The LOC is in place.

There are two more issues that require attention – there are no sponsors yet, although a sponsoring concept is drafted, including a possibility of sponsoring individual events, even sessions during the congress. Excess sponsoring for the summer school will be used to fund the congress.

The other issue that requires attention is the keynote speakers. There are two keynotes required. Any suggestions and support are welcome.

Jouke van Dijk thanks for the report.

The report is approved.

Item 3.iv. Congresses. 2017 Congress in Groningen – proposal

Jouke van Dijk reports that the venue has now been reserved at the University of Groningen and help of the University's congress bureau has been secured. Some work on securing sponsorship (from the municipality, ministry and others) has also been done already.

The proposed theme is: “Smart Specialisation and Resilience for more Regional Well-Being”. The congress is planned between August 29th, 2017 and September 1st, 2017.

A more detailed proposal will be given to the ERSA Council.

The EOC supports the proposal.

Item 3.v. Congresses. Future Congresses

Richard Kelly reports that the British and Irish section should be ready with a proposal (Edinburgh, Glasgow or Dublin) by the end of 2015.

Jouke van Dijk adds that there is also possibility of a congress going back to Spain.

The discussion is closed.

Item 4.i. Summer schools. Summer School in 2015 in Vienna, Austria

Gunther Maier reports that the summer school was a joint ERSA-ERES event. Thus the topic was chosen so that it would be covering the area of interest of both associations: “Developers, Planners and the City”.

For some reasons there were only eighteen applications, all were approved and fifteen people participated. Paul Cheshire and Danny Czamanski gave presentations. The second half of the school was less theoretical and concentrated more on study tours and technical visits.

Jouke van Dijk thanks for the report.

The report is approved.

Item 4.ii. Summer schools. Future Summer Schools

Yannis Psycharis reports that the Greek section is ready to organise the summer school should the COST proposal be successful.

Roberta Capello adds that the Italian section is considering organising this event at the Politecnico Milano.

The report is approved.

Item 5.i. Finances. 2014 budget closing

Item 5.ii. Finances. 2015 budget update

The Treasurer's report is included in Appendix 2.

Laura Resmini reports that 2014 closed with a surplus of some 29,000 EUR. The situation is now stable. The general structure of the budget is as follows:

- income: over 95% of income comes from the annual congress;
- expenses: there are 2 main categories – (1) annual congress and the summer school as well as the workshops (60% of total expenses); (2) fixed costs which amount to 100,000 EUR per year (including the personnel costs, running costs, travel, insurance).

The reserves at the end of 2014 were 285,000 EUR.

Vicente Royuela suggests that the surplus could be now used to support local activities in regional science.

Laura Resmini replies that in 2014 ERSA has financed the summer school. ERSA has also assumed more of a financial risk with regards to the congress in 2015. To conclude, the structure of the budget has not changed significantly between 2010 and 2015, most expenditure is on scientific activities (62%) and less on the administration (38%). It seems prudent to maintain a conservative financial strategy as the future financial support for events, mainly congresses

The EOC agrees to recommend that the ERSA Council approves the budget closing for 2014 and the update for 2015.

Item 5.iii. Finances. Appointment of new internal auditor for ERSA finances

Jouke van Dijk proposes that Francisco Carballo Cruz takes this responsibility from Frank Bruinsma.

The proposal is approved unanimously.

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

Vicente Royuela reports that there are many submissions with most of them being rejected. Currently there have been 20 items published. Indexing options are currently being researched.

Regarding activities for promoting publications – special issue invitations are being sent out.

The report is approved.

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

Jouke van Dijk reports that the ERSA-EIB prize is now controlled by Eric Verhoef. Some ideas are now considered to increase the visibility of the prize (i.e. announcing the winner in advance of the congress).

Andres Rodriguez-Pose comments that any development aiming at improving the visibility of the prize and thus maintaining the EIB sponsorship are welcome.

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

Roberta Capello reports that the Papers in Regional Science is developing well.

Item 7. Any other business

No other business is reported.

Item 8. Venue and provisional date for EOC meeting in Lisbon in August 2015

It is agreed that the next meeting of the EOC shall take place on **February 6th, 2016** (Saturday). The exact time and venue will be communicated at a later time.

The meeting is closed.

Meeting of the European Organizing Committee

Lisbon, August 25th, 2015

APPENDIX 1 – MEETING AGENDA

Words of Welcome by the President

1. **Approval of the meeting agenda and appointment of an EOC member responsible for verification of meeting minutes**
2. **Long range discussions**
 - i. **Networking EASSH and EUGEO – update** (Richard Kelly)
 - ii. **Collaboration update (EU workshops, EU Open Days 2015, AESOP specials sessions, workshops. lectures; ERES joint Summer school)** (Richard Kelly)
 - iii. **Sponsorship** (Jouke van Dijk & Richard Kelly)
 - iv. **Social media and communication with the members, website update and newsletter** (Richard Kelly and André Torre)
 - **Relationships between ERSA and sections: additional activities and support for section activities** (Richard Kelly)
 - **Relationships ERSA – RSAI** (Jouke van Dijk)
 - **Replacements for EOC members (Hans Westlund, Laura Resmini, Maciej Turala) whose terms end in 2015**
 - **Replacement for the ERSA Councillor with the RSAI (Andres Rodriguez-Pose) whose term ends in 2015**
 - **Regional Science Academy – integration with the ERSA Congress** (Peter Nijkamp, Karima Kourtiti)
3. **Congresses**
 - **2014 Congress in St. Petersburg – summary report** (Alexander Pelyasov)
 - **2015 Congress in Lisbon, Portugal – progress report** (Francisco Carballo Cruz)
 - **2016 Congress in Vienna – progress report** (Gunther Maier)
 - **2017 Congress in Groningen – proposal** (Paul Elhorst)
 - **Future Congresses** (Richard KELLY)
4. **Summer schools**
 - **Summer School in 2015 in Vienna, Austria** (Gunther Maier)
 - **Future Summer Schools** (Richard Kelly)
5. **Finances**
 - **2014 budget closing** (Laura Resmini)
 - **2015 budget update** (Laura Resmini, Richard Kelly)
 - **Appointment of new internal auditor for ERSA finances** (Richard Kelly)
 - **ERSA office work plan for 2015** (Richard Kelly)
6. **Other ordinary business**
 - **REGION journal – report** (Roberto Patuelli)
 - **ERSA – EIB prize – report** (Erik Verhoef)
 - **Papers in Regional Science – report** (Roberta Capello)
7. **Any other business**
8. **Venue and provisional date for EOC-meeting in Vienna in February 2016**

Meeting of the European Organizing Committee

Lisbon, August 25th, 2015

APPENDIX 2 – TREASURER’S REPORT

THE ERSA FINANCIAL STATUS AND PERSPECTIVES

2014 balance sheet and provisional budget 2015

Laura Resmini
ERSA Treasurer

1. 2014 Balance Sheet (final closing)

The 2014 financial year closed with a surplus of about €29,000 net of taxes, other financial expenses, and depreciations (see Table 1 in the Appendix for details).

The income of the Association, generated almost exclusively by the annual congress, in 2014 amounted at 278,883€ (fees and sponsors), 17% less with respect to the amount collected in 2013. Membership services increased from 3,405€ in 2013 to 4,940€ in 2014. Fees from the summer school amounted to 4,600€.

Total expenditure in 2014 amounted to €245,660, a decline of about 15% with respect to the previous year. Total expenditures can be classified in two main groups: expenses related to the scientific activities of ERSA, which include the organization of the annual congress, the summer school, workshops and seminars organized in collaboration with other Associations or national sections, and the expenses related to the management of the Association. In 2014 scientific activities absorbed about 60% of total expenses. Besides the conference, ERSA supported the organization of the summer school (14,256€) and co-financed two seminars in co-operation with AESOP. The cost of the annual congress was about 127,000€, 32% less than the amount spent in 2013. Overall ERSA running costs remained more or less constant with respect to 2013. In 2014 they amounted to about €102,602, one of the lowest levels since 2010. Savings have been registered in day-by-day office expenses (-12% with respect to 2013), and travel & meeting expenses (-34%). Personnel costs, which represent about 60% of ERSA management costs, showed a modest variation with respect to 2013.

At the end of 2014, reserves amounted to 285,286€, with an increase of the saving account of about 40% with respect to the previous year (see Table 2 in the Appendix for details). The ratio of reserves to total expenditure was 1.17 to 1 (up from 0.88 to 1 in 2013). This ratio increases up to 2.8 when one considers ERSA management costs, only. This implies that the Association is able to cover management costs for two years, should a financial shock occur.

In conclusion, during 2014 the Association’s overall financial performance was good. General patterns of income and expenditures reflect the continued growth in the activities of the Association. This is a sign of a healthy and dynamic Association and the Board will seek to continue this good progress throughout 2015.

2. The 2015 provisional budget

In 2015 the Annual Congress will be entirely financed by fees, because of the lack of any sponsorships. This has led to a different allocation of congress fees between ERSA and the LOC. In particular, ERSA will get 20% of total fees as capitation fees. Moreover, ERSA fixed costs related to the organization of the conference have been reduced to 50,000€. ERSA will also cover travel costs of ERSA staffs related to the organization of the EOC and ERSAC meetings as well as the annual congress. This implies an increase in ERSA running costs and, mainly, travel costs.

At August 10th, ERSA income amounted at 312,245€. The expected cost of the Congress is around 182,000€. This implies that ERSA should be able to cover running costs.

With respect to 2014, some extra costs will arise because of the need to update the congress software – an extremely important tool in the organization of the conference – and re-design the website, the most important channel of communication and promotion of the Association in the scientific world. The update of the congress software is expected to cost around 10,000€. As for the web site, different alternatives will be carefully evaluated.

The expected surplus is about 18,000€. At August 10th, reserves of the Association show a small decrease due to the fact that the Association faced a liquidity shortage in the early July (9700€). The Board will seek to ensure that the financial position of the Association does not weaken over time.

3. Concluding remarks

Over the period from 2010 to 2014, the structure of the ERSA budget has not dramatically changed (see Table 1). ERSA revenues strongly depend on the annual congress. This source of income is quite reliable; the congress has increased in size over time, becoming a successful initiative. Despite that, we cannot deny that it is subject to a certain unpredictability, being based on the number of participants to the conference and on the amount of fees paid by each attendee. The latter has remained unchanged all over the considered period, as membership services did.

On the expenditures side, scientific activities have absorbed an increasing share of ERSA revenues – from 45% in 2010 to 51% in 2014 – representing in 2014 about 62% of total expenditures, from 58% in 2010. As for management costs, their share of total revenues has decreased from 44 to 42%, while its share of total expenditures has fallen down by 42% in 2010 to 38% in 2014.

All the considered years closed with a positive result. This has allowed ERSA to increase reserves over time. At the end of 2014, they covered the entire budget (Table 2). This has led to a strong improvement in solvability of the ERSA organization, and a reduction in its financial obligations – ERSA is responsible for the salaries of the ERSA officers (2 part-time people) – as well as to more confidence that ERSA may further develop and expand its own activities in the future. In order to ensure ERSA might continuously upgrade and expand its activities it is my view that it would be prudent to continue with the policy of financial consolidation, since it allows the Board time to respond proactively while safeguarding the employees' and, of course, members' benefits in the short term.

As for the next years, major concerns refer to potential fluctuations in the congress revenues, which, because of the reduced support of sponsors, are the main source of financing of the Association. Reserves do not represent point of concern. However, it seems desirable not to reduce its current amount.

In order to cover ERSA management costs, it seems reasonable to expect that in the coming years a structural annual budget of about €100,000 should be raised. According to the present system of collecting revenues, an annual congress with more than 700 participants would allow to get such a money. However, in order to achieve a more sustainable situation, the involvement of local sponsors to ERSA main scientific activities – annual congress and summer school – is in my view necessary.

Therefore, my final recommendation is to increase efforts to find sponsors, especially as far as the annual congress is concerned.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Balance sheets by financial year

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 ^(*)
INCOME	345.777,62	444.346,33	262.076,06	336.494,14	278.882,99	316.995,00
Congress	308.793,85	352.719,47	246.827,00	324.252,00	268.211,00	312.245,00
registration fee	305.257,00	361.743,00	241.077,00	319.732,00	264.002,00	
sponsor	4.800,00	6.163,32	6.250,00	5.900,00	3.700,00	4.600,00
Past Conferences	-1.263,15	-15.186,85	-500,00	-1.380,00	509,00	
ERSA membership	5.815,00	5.190,00	6.560,00	3.405,00	4.940,00	4.750,00
Summer school	27.507,14	20.100,00	5.000,00	5.790,00	4.600,00	
registration fee	12.507,14	5.100,00		5.400,00	4.600,00	
sponsor	15.000,00	15.000,00		390,00		
Other income	3.661,63	66.336,86	3.689,06	3.047,14	1.131,99	
EXPENSES	270.313,43	383.340,56	232.873,58	290.216,29	245.660,43	299.000,00
Scientific activities	155.786,28	273.919,84	129.738,33	187.760,58	143.058,21	184.000,00
Congress	134.263,68	270.419,84	129.738,33	187.760,58	126.802,21	182.000,00
Summer school	21.522,60	3.500,00			14.256,00	
Workshops & seminars					2.000,00	2.000,00
Management costs	114.527,15	109.420,72	103.135,25	102.455,71	102.602,22	115.000,00
Day by day office	17.931,55	7.092,74	19.031,87	12.603,92	11.132,08	21.000,00
Employees	60.039,77	64.075,52	59.454,80	62.363,71	65.692,79	67.000,00
Fees	20.748,57	16.298,06	9.244,14	8.240,44	7.237,55	10.000,00
travel & meeting	10.401,87	15.195,37	8.722,54	12.153,05	8.024,05	10.000,00
Insurance and premises	5.405,39	6.541,41	6.365,23	6.718,86	6.824,73	7.000,00
Other expenses	0,00	217,62	316,67	375,73	3.691,02	
Result	75.464,19	61.005,77	29.202,48	46.277,85	33.222,56	17.995,00
depreciation	5.589,32	6.168,32	1.550,77	579,00		
financial income	-	436,19	290,09	567,63	983,94	
financial expenses	6.837,41	6.192,52	3.907,09	4.915,61	4611,1	
Result before tax	63.037,46	49.081,12	24.034,71	41.350,87	29.595,40	
tax	-	42,33	42,76	107,05	190,74	
Result after tax	63.037,46	49.038,79	23.991,95	41.243,82	29.404,66	

(*) estimates

Table 2. Financial situation, 2010-2015

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 ^(*)
Bank accounts	121.448,30	184.146,66	220.437,63	255.992,90	285.586,46	497.062,35
Italian account	30.339,60	50.241,00	-	-	-	-
Fortis-74 (Congress)	60.716,43	-	105,96	732,00	458,67	258.112,81
Fortis-82 (day-by-day)	30.311,66	133.762,45	220.315,62	92.480,73	50.332,33	13.868,00
Saving account				162.780,17	234.795,46	225.081,54
Petty cash	80,61	143,21	16,05	-	-	-

(*) At August 10th, 2015