

A stylized illustration of a solar system on a dark blue background. It features a large yellow sun in the top left, several planets of various colors (orange, blue, yellow, white) on curved orbital paths, and a satellite with solar panels. The text 'eur@PLANET AISBL' is positioned in the upper right, with the '@' symbol integrated into a circular orbital graphic.

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ANNUAL REPORT

2023

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Europlanet AISBL

Annual Report

2023

10 November 2023

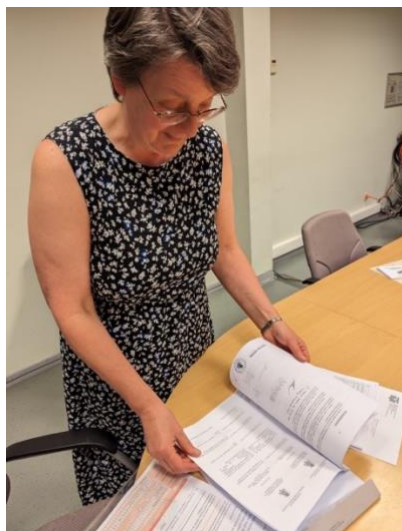
Europlanet AISBL (Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif - 0800.634.634) is hosted by the Planetary Atmospheres Group of the Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy (BIRA-IASB), Avenue Circulaire 3, B-1180 Brussels, Belgium.

Europlanet 2024 RI has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 871149.

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	4
2. Aims	4
3. Objectives	5
4. Organisational Framework	6
4.1. Europlanet AISBL Governance	6
4.2. Europlanet Society Governance	7
5. Membership	7
5.1. Full Members	7
5.2. Associate Members	8
6. Activities	8
6.1. Activities of the Europlanet AISBL	8
6.2. Activities of the Europlanet Society	8
6.2.1. Activities of the Executive Office	8
6.2.2. Activities of the Europlanet Society Committees	10
6.2.3. Europlanet Early Career Network	12
6.2.3.1. EPEC Overview & Activities	12
6.2.3.2. EPEC Annual Week	13
6.2.3.3. EPEC @ DPS-EPSC	15
6.2.4. Meetings	15
6.2.4.1. ERIM 2023	15
6.2.4.2. DPS-EPSC Joint Meeting 2023	17
6.2.5. Grants	18
6.2.5.1. Bursaries	18
6.2.5.2. Committee Funding Scheme	18
6.2.5.3. Public Engagement Funding Scheme	21
6.2.6. Prizes	22
6.2.6.1. The Farinella Prize 2023	22
6.2.6.2. The Europlanet Prize for Public Engagement 2023	22
6.2.7. Webinars	23
6.2.8. Diversity	23
6.2.9. Outreach and Education	23
6.2.10. Policy and Industry	24
6.3. Europlanet Research Infrastructure	24
6.4. Proposals	26
7. Financial Report	26
8. Future Planning	27

1. Executive Summary



President Elect, Ann Carine Vandaele, receives the signed statutes and Royal Decree for the new Europlanet Association. Credit: Europlanet.

2023 has been a transformational year for Europlanet. The establishment of the Europlanet Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif (AISBL), hosted by the Planetary Atmospheres Group of the Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy (BIRA-IASB), has provided a secure legal structure for the sustainability of Europlanet's activities.

The membership of the Europlanet Society has reached over 600 for the first time, and this cohort will elect new members of the Executive Board, to be announced on 10 November 2023. The structures of the Europlanet Society, including its Regional Hubs and Europlanet Early Career (EPEC) Network, are also undergoing transition, with many new Chairs and volunteers taking on roles within the last 12 months. The Society has supported the

community through bursaries, grants and prizes totalling over €60,000 over the year.

The Society organised a hybrid joint meeting of the Europlanet Science Congress (EPSC) with the American Astronomical Society's Division of Planetary Sciences (DPS) in San Antonio, Texas, USA and online, during which a quarter of the 918 participants came from Europe. 23 members of the Society were supported to attend the meeting through bursaries for early career professionals and students, researchers from under-represented states and amateur astronomers.

The Europlanet 2024 Research Infrastructure (RI) project's second periodic report was submitted and approved by the European Commission in 2023, and over 100 research visits to facilities and field sites have been completed to date through its Transnational Access programme. The first Europlanet Research Infrastructure Meeting (ERIM) 2023, held in Bratislava in June, brought the community together for discussions, workshops and training on Europlanet RI services, and provided an opportunity to revitalise the networks and structures of the Europlanet Society. ERIM also kick-started a sustainability roadmapping programme for Europlanet that will result in a draft operational and business plan to be presented in September 2024.

2. Aims

Articles for the creation of the Europlanet Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif (AISBL) were submitted on 18 January and signed by Royal Decree on 14 February 2023. The purpose of the

Europlanet AISBL is to promote planetary sciences, planetary exploration and any other related field for the benefit of the community, by encouraging the creation of new knowledge, by promoting education, by stimulating innovation and by enhancing accessibility and transparency.

The aims of the Europlanet AISBL are:

- to allow the community of Europlanet stakeholders to speak with one voice to defend and represent its interests;
- to promote coherence between policy and the research priorities of the European Union and the activities coordinated by the association.

3. Objectives

The Europlanet AISBL works to achieve its goal by pursuing a series of activities, including:

- 1) Supporting the planetary science community through the activities of the Europlanet Society and its structures, including the Europlanet Science Congress (EPSC);
- 2) Establishing strategic collaborations to support planetary science;
- 3) Developing and maintaining infrastructures to support planetary sciences.

The Europlanet AISBL provides the legal structure for the sustainability of Europlanet activities, including the [Europlanet Society](#), and gives Europlanet a framework in which to:

- Provide clear ownership of the Europlanet brand and assets, including EPSC;
- Directly participate as a beneficiary in EU funded projects;
- Join organisations as an independent entity;
- Sign contracts with service providers;
- Sign memoranda of understanding with other organisations;
- Act as a stakeholder in ventures.

4. Organisational Framework

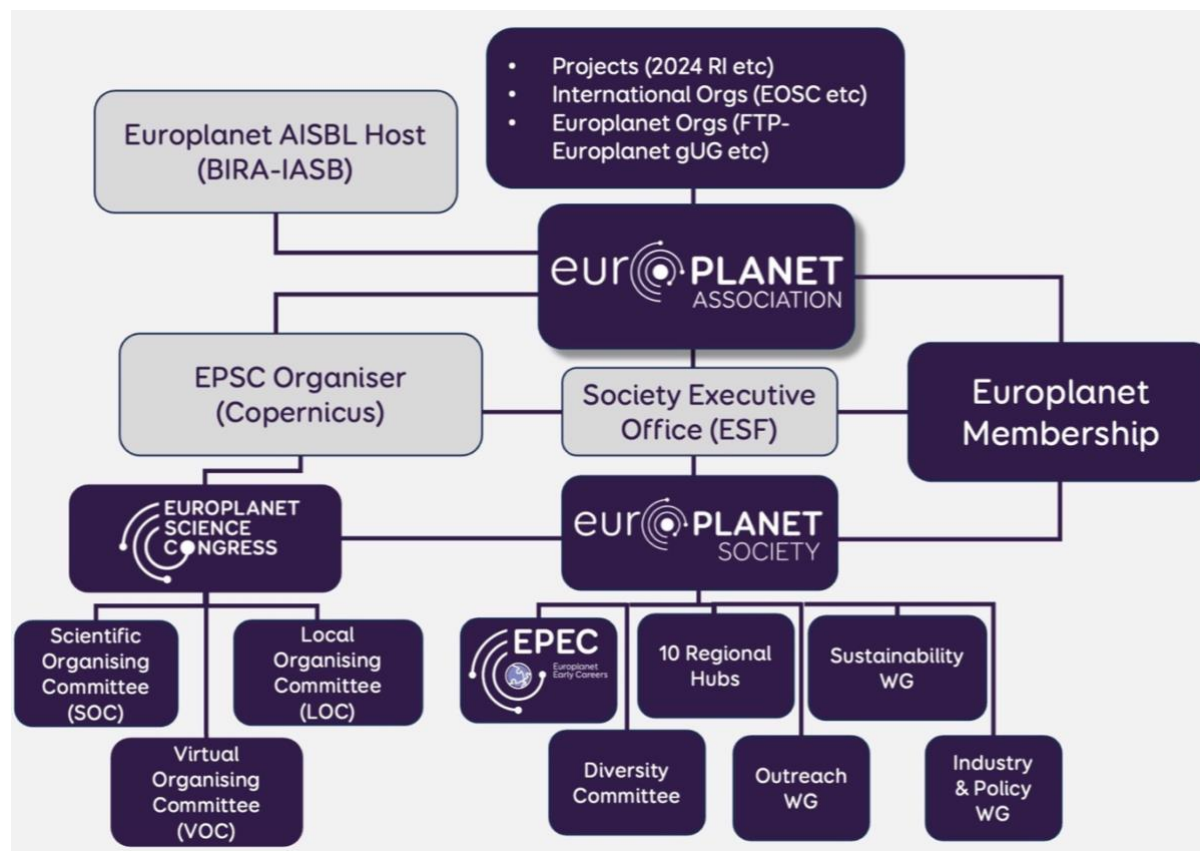


Figure 1: Organisational Structure of Europlanet

4.1. Europlanet AISBL Governance

The **Europlanet AISBL Executive Board** is the governing body of the AISBL and consists of the five Officers elected by the membership of the Europlanet Society:

- The President: Nigel Mason (elected 2019)
- Two Vice-Presidents: Ann Carine Vandaele (President Elect, 2022), Angelo Pio Rossi (elected 2019)
- The Secretary: Anita Heward (elected 2019)
- The Treasurer: Didier Moreau (elected 2021).

The Europlanet AISBL is hosted by the Planetary Atmospheres Group of the Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy (BIRA-IASB). The relationship and arrangements to facilitate and optimise the hosting and operation of the Europlanet Association by BIRA-IASB are set out in an administrative protocol.

4.2. Europlanet Society Governance

The Executive Board of the Europlanet Society is responsible for directing and controlling the affairs and property of the Europlanet Society, including EPSC. In addition to the Officers listed in 3.1, the

Europlanet Society Executive Board includes the following elected members:

- Maria Cristina de Sanctis (elected 2019)
- Leigh Fletcher (elected 2019)
- Livia Giacomini (elected 2019)
- Ricardo Hueso (elected 2019)
- Lora Jovanovic (elected 2019)
- Ewa Szuszkiewicz (elected 2019).

The members of the Europlanet Society Executive Board are elected for a four-year term. At the General Assembly on 10 November 2023, all members elected in 2019 will come to the end of their terms and these positions will be up for election. Members may stand for one more term.

The Europlanet Society Executive Board is supported by the Europlanet Society Executive Office (hosted by the European Science Foundation, ESF), which conducts the day-to-day activities, overall administration and financial management of the Europlanet Society and EPSC. The Executive Office carries out its responsibilities under the overall direction from the Executive Board.

The relationship between the Europlanet Society and the ESF is set out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed in November 2018. This MoU will be replaced by a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in 2024, following a scoping exercise taking place through 2023-2024.

5. Membership

Members of the Europlanet AISBL and Europlanet Society must:

- Pay the annual membership fee;
- Abide by the Constitution, Code of Conduct and decisions made by the governing bodies of the organisation;
- Notify the Secretary of any changes concerning their status that affects the conditions of their admission.

5.1. Full Members

The Officers elected by the General Assembly serve as Full Members and are responsible for supervising and providing a point of connection to the level of the administrative body for the

Committees and Working Groups of the Europlanet AISBL, Europlanet Society and Europlanet Research Infrastructure.

The Founders of the Europlanet AISBL and Full Members for the year ending December 2023 are:

- Nigel Mason
- Ann Carine Vandaele
- Angelo Pio Rossi
- Anita Heward
- Didier Moreau

5.2. Associate Members

Associate Members of the Europlanet AISBL, joining as Members of the Europlanet Society, include the following categories:

- Individual Members
- Student Members
- Organisational Members

As of 3 November 2023, the Europlanet Society has 619 individual members and 9 organisational members (supporting 37 of the individual memberships).

6. Activities

6.1. Activities of the Europlanet AISBL

Since its creation, Europlanet AISBL has been registered on the Ultimate Beneficial Owners (UBO) register in Belgium and has established a registered office at BIRA-IASB, a [webpage](#) and is in the process of setting up a bank account, in line with its obligations as set out in the statutes of the AISBL. Moreover, following the Belgian Royal Decree of 13/03/2008 (Arrêté royal portant execution de l'article 423 de la loi-programme (I) du 24 décembre 2002), the association has put forward a request to be officially affiliated (agrégation in French) to BIRA-IASB.

6.2. Activities of the Europlanet Society

6.2.1. Activities of the Executive Office

The Executive Office has conducted day-to-day activities relating to the management and administration of the Europlanet Society and EPSC, including:

Society Management:

- Organisation and minutes for the monthly Europlanet Executive Board meetings
- Organisation of the nomination and election process for the Executive Board
- Organisation of the Europlanet Society General Assembly meetings (at ERIM in June and remotely in November)
- Coordination of funding programmes to support the Europlanet Society membership (committee funding scheme, EPSC bursaries)
- Support for the set-up of the Europlanet AISBL; meetings in Brussels
- Meetings with sister organisations for potential future collaborations (DPS, EGU, LPI/LPSC)

EPSC Management:

- Organisation and minutes for the regular EPSC meetings
- Supporting joint organisation of the DPS-EPSC 2023 with the EPSC committees; regular meetings with the DPS committees.
- Supporting organisation of the EPSC 2024 meeting with Copernicus and setting up EPSC 2024 committees

Administration:

- Membership and general queries
- Administrative and logistic support for the Europlanet Society committees & working groups (10 regional hubs, EPEC, diversity, industry, policy and outreach) and the 4 EPSC committees (EPSC executive committee, SOC, LOC and VOC).
- Administration of the Europlanet SharePoint document library
- Administration of the Europlanet committee email groups
- Follow-up on funded Europlanet committee projects
- Follow-up on EPSC prizes

Finances:

- Invoice control, processing, and payments
- Managing annual budgets for the Europlanet committees and funded activities, follow-up on expenses and processing EPSC bursaries
- Collection of membership fees
- Trimestral Financial reporting to the Executive Board Treasurer

Communication:

- Monthly newsletter composition and distribution
- Composition and distribution of individual mailers
- Supplying content for social media and website posts

Technical support:

- Website (main website and membership website) maintenance
- Set-up, maintenance and moderation of the Europlanet Discord server
- Membership website: setting up of the contact management system (CiviCRM) and associated communication and membership tools.

Attending Meetings:

- Europlanet Society stand (logistics, communication material and attendance) at DPS-EPSC 2023
- Europlanet Society stand for outreach at Fantasy Basel, in Switzerland (see section 6.2.9)
- ERIM 2023 attendance, logistic and communication support.

6.2.2. Activities of the Europlanet Society Committees

The activities of the Europlanet Society are organised through a series of Committees and Working Groups. These include:

- 10 Regional Hub Committees
- EPSC Executive Committee, Scientific Organising Committee (SOC), Local Organising Committee (LOC) and Virtual Organising Committee (VOC)
- Europlanet Diversity Committee
- EPEC Committee and Working Groups
- Industry, Policy and Outreach Working Groups

Following the pandemic and the lack of opportunities to meet and build the Europlanet community in face-to-face meetings, all committees and working groups have had issues with filling roles and have had a number of positions vacant for (in some cases) extended periods. A recruitment drive in 2023 has made some steps to rectify this, although there are still several positions that still need to be filled.

All members of the Europlanet Society have the right to nominate themselves or be nominated to take on a vacant role in a committee or working group. The relevant committee or working group

can then appoint or elect the candidate accordingly. The appointment of Chairs of committees and working groups is formally approved by the Executive Board on the recommendation of the relevant committee or working group.

In the past year, the following new chairs have been appointed:

- Italy Hub – Stavro Ivanovski (INAF)
- Northern Hub – Harri Haukka (FMI)
- Southeast Europe Hub – Nick Sergis (Hellenic Space Center)
- Spain-Portugal Hub –Alejandro Cardesín Moinelo (ESA-ESAC)
- Switzerland Hub - Sascha Quanz (ETH Zurich)
- EPEC – Melissa Mirino ("Giuseppe Colombo"(CISAS)-Università di Padova) and Jessie Horgan (Open University).

The Ireland-UK Hub is undergoing a process of reorganisation and will announce its new committee membership in early 2024.

Séverine Robert (BIRA-IASB, Belgium), has acted as the Regional Hub Coordinator, with support from the Chair of the French Hub, Susan Conway (U. Nantes).

Efforts have also been made to coordinate links between Regional Hubs and existing planetary societies and organisations, for example:

- The Spanish Planetary Community (CPESS) has agreed to be the Spanish branch of the Spain-Portugal Hub. The Spain-Portugal Hub has also maintained links with Spanish and Portuguese amateur astronomers and contacts with representatives of the Spanish administration (CDTI) and AeroSpace Platform.
- The French Hub has met with the national planetary science body, the National Programme for Planetary Science (PNP), and a newly funded high-level structural project PI (PEPR Origins) on coordination for organising a national biennial planetary science meeting (currently held every 4 years) with involvement of the French Hub.

The structures of the bodies of the Europlanet Society, including the Regional Hubs and EPEC, have been reviewed during ERIM and subsequent discussions. EPEC has proposed to move from Working Groups to thematic areas, enabling more crossover and collaboration by its volunteers (see Section 6.2.3.2).

The evaluation, consolidation and (where needed) reform of the structures will continue to be discussed by the committees, board and membership throughout the operational roadmapping process started at ERIM and due for completion in September 2024.

Several Committees have received funding through the Europlanet Society Committee Funding Scheme to organise activities at national or regional meetings in 2023/2024 (see Section 6.2.5.2).

6.2.3. Europlanet Early Career Network

6.2.3.1. EPEC Overview & Activities

The Europlanet Early Career (EPEC) Network is organised *by* early-career researchers, *for* early-career researchers, and includes volunteers who have obtained their last degree within 7 years. The main objectives of EPEC include: (i) to form a strong network between young professionals, (ii) organise relevant events to support the community and (iii) bring a young voice into Europlanet Society to shape the future of planetary and space sciences and engineering.

Currently, the network engages in different projects through eight different Working Groups (WGs).

The Working Groups include:

1. [EPEC Annual Week WG](#), responsible for organising the EPEC Annual Week, which takes place in the spring of each year in various locations around Europe.
2. [EPEC @ EPSC WG](#), which represents early career researchers at Europlanet Science Congress, ensuring that the conference programme is attractive to them, and that they find their way through the meeting with ease.
3. [New Frontiers WG](#), which aims to investigate new research opportunities and collaborations, especially beyond Europe's borders and with emerging countries with young space programs.
4. [Future Research WG](#), which aims to organise events and publishes interviews with people who have had success in both academia and industry.
5. [Early Career Support WG](#), which provides useful information to young scientists active in different areas of planetary and space research and engineering, e.g. by posting job opportunities.
6. [Outreach WG](#), which highlights outreach activities carried out by early career researchers.

7. [Diversity WG](#), which aims to build a diverse working environment for the entire young and early career researcher community.
8. [Communications WG](#), which supports connects young professionals involved in planetary science and, through activities including EPEC social media accounts, ‘EPEC Profiles’, the EPEC Podcast ‘Stairway to Space’, allows them to have an active voice in the activities of the space sector.

The new EPEC Committee is facing a time of transition and is currently working on the restructuring of the EPEC Network. Some of the activities have paused as a result of internal changes or a lack of volunteers. Thus, EPEC aims to remove some of the Working Groups to facilitate a wider collaboration amongst the volunteers within the Network and to better distribute the tasks and the activities. The core activities will be preserved in the new structure, which will enable the continuation of the hard work done to shape EPEC by the previous WG Chairs. Upcoming changes will implement the preferences of current active members and the suggestions that have been gathered during the 2023 EPEC Annual Week (see 6.2.3.2.).

6.2.3.2. EPEC Annual Week



Participants in EPEC Annual Week 2023. Credit: EPEC

The 5th EPEC Annual Week, held collaboratively with the Europlanet Research Infrastructure Meeting (ERIM) 2023 (see 6.2.4.1), provided a structured forum for 45 participating members of EPEC, with 23 attending in person and 22 engaging virtually, to deliberate on the future initiatives and strategic direction of the EPEC community.

The primary objectives of the EPEC Annual Week were to facilitate networking among young scientists, provide a platform for skill development, and foster discussions that would contribute to

the advancement of the network's activities, particularly within its working groups. The programme was diverse and comprehensive, featuring sessions on career development, communication and proposal writing, mental health, and a variety of interactive group activities.

A significant portion of the week was allocated to breakout sessions and collaborative workshops, which were instrumental in refining the roadmap for EPEC's progression. These discussions yielded several key initiatives and objectives that are summarised as follows:

- **Structural Reorganisation of Working Groups:** The need to reevaluate and revamp the structure of working groups was acknowledged. The proposed approach includes a shift towards project-oriented thematic groups to increase engagement and productivity, and create clearly defined 'payoffs' for projects. This is something now being addressed by the new co-chairs of EPEC.
- **Networking and Career Development:** There was a unified call for increased efforts in facilitating connections with relevant industry partners. This includes the creation of a career opportunities portal and the documentation of success stories from previous working group members. The adoption of Discord by the Europlanet Society, with a private area for EPEC, is a step towards creating this environment.
- **Educational Enhancement:** A directive was established to expand EPEC's repository of educational resources. This includes a series of targeted webinars and development workshops, something which will leverage the already successful series of Europlanet webinars.
- **Onboarding and Leadership Transition:** The group recognised the need for a stronger onboarding process and a more streamlined transition mechanism for working group or topical team leadership roles.
- **Local Hub Integration:** The integration of local Europlanet Hubs into the wider EPEC activities was identified as essential for providing context-specific support and promoting regional events. This was already in place in some form, but a dedicated workshop was used to define the role of EPEC contact people within each hub.
- **Inclusivity and Accessibility:** The Annual Week conclusions also emphasised the importance of inclusivity, aiming to lower entry barriers and improve the accessibility of EPEC activities to a broader demographic, including those at the Masters/Bachelors level.

The simultaneous hosting of the EPEC Annual Week with ERIM 2023 was a strategic decision that facilitated the cross-pollination of ideas between the early career network and other sectors of the

Europlanet Society. It proved to be an effective format for highlighting the wide-ranging aspects of the Europlanet Society to early career researchers.

6.2.3.3. EPEC @ DPS-EPSC



*EPEC at the DPS-EPSC Joint Meeting 2023.
Credit: I Belgacem*

The EPEC@EPSC Working Group represents early career researchers at the Europlanet Science Congress (EPSC), ensures that the conference programme is attractive to them, and helps them find their way through the meeting with ease. This year, the EPEC@EPSC working group teamed up with the DPS Professional Development Subcommittee to offer several activities for early career researchers at the DPS-EPSC Joint Meeting from 1-6 October 2023 (see 6.2.4.2). The activities ranged from a networking reception (~80 participants) and social event (~60 participants) to a short course on mental health (~45 participants) and a mentoring programme (43 participants). Early careers also

had the chance to connect with EPEC during the EPEC general assembly (~25 participants) and throughout the week at the EPEC booth. Options for having representation of EPEC at future, non-joint meetings were also discussed so that European early careers attending DPS can connect with EPEC.

6.2.4. Meetings

6.2.4.1. ERIM 2023

The first Europlanet Research Infrastructure Meeting (ERIM) 2023 took place from 19-23 June 2023 at the Hotel Sorea in Bratislava, Slovakia. ERIM aimed to be a new kind of meeting to support European planetary science and associated communities, with a particular emphasis on revitalising the networks and structures of the Europlanet Society, developing synergies between different groups, increasing opportunities for collaboration and laying the groundwork for sustainability of Europlanet activities.

ERIM 2023 included a series of 59 interactive workshops related to the activities of the Europlanet 2024 RI project, research infrastructures in general, and the Europlanet Society. The meeting was co-hosted with [EPEC Annual Week 2023](#), the training school for the Europlanet Early Career Network.

Leaders of Europlanet 2024 RI activities and Europlanet Society Committees and Working Groups were encouraged to propose workshops, discussions and training sessions.

Programme tracks included:

- Europlanet Telescope Network
- Regional Hubs
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Outreach
- Industry and Policy
- Europlanet VA services
- Research Infrastructure

During the week, participants were tasked with addressing 10 challenges that face Europlanet’s long term plans for sustainability. At the end of the week, preliminary findings on each of the challenges were presented in a roadmapping session.

A Europlanet General Assembly was held 20 June 2023 as part of ERIM 2023, which included updates on the activities of the Europlanet Society, the current financial situation and sustainability.

A full programme can be found on the [ERIM website](#). All sessions were recorded and can be found on YouTube.



Participants in ERIM 2023. Credit: Europlanet/J-D Bodenan.

The meeting was hybrid, with 300 registered participants, 137 in-person attendees, a further 94 following the meeting online and 249 active users of the Whova application. A total of 46 countries were represented at the meeting.

ERIM 2023 was hosted in Slovakia, with the aim of fostering networking and collaboration with the planetary science community from European Under-Represented States (URS), in particular central

and eastern Europe. Of the 300 registered participants, 29% came from European URS, which is significantly higher than the average participation at EPSC (<10% for EPSCs from 2011-2022).

The meeting was supported with funding from the Europlanet 2024 Research Infrastructure (RI), with accommodation and travel grants of 250 Euros offered to all in-person attendees.

A social dinner for ERIM participants was held at the “Parlament” Restaurant, with sponsorship provided by the Dill Faulkes Educational Trust Ltd in order to keep costs for attendees at 30 Euros. Further social events were organised for EPEC Annual Week and Europlanet 2024 RI Council meeting attendees. The Local Organising Committee arranged excursions to Comenius University’s Astronomical Observatory and Electron Induced Fluorescence Laboratory.

Feedback from the meeting on format, content and opportunity for discussion was largely positive and has led to increased membership of the Europlanet Society, as well as new volunteers for roles in committees and working groups. The roadmapping process initiated during ERIM will continue throughout the next 12 months, with a final version to be presented at EPSC 2024 in Berlin (see Section 8: Future Planning).

6.2.4.2. DPS-EPSC Joint Meeting 2023

The 2023 EPSC meeting was organised jointly with the American Astronomical Society’s Division for Planetary Sciences (DPS) in San Antonio, Texas, from 1-6 October 2023, in a hybrid format. From a total of 918 participants, one fourth attended from Europe. The DPS-EPSC 2023 programme was organised jointly with EPSC members throughout the various committees (Scientific Organising Committee (SOC), Virtual Organising Committee (VOC), Professional Development, etc) and included keynote lectures, an Agency Townhall, and many other events covering both US and European speakers.

At DPS-EPSC, oral sessions were organised in sub-blocks per oral session with 3-4 talks (online or in-person) scheduled back-to-back, and a panel discussion for questions addressed to all speakers of the subblock. Poster sessions were organised in a large poster hall, where the in-person posters were displayed in the usual poster format, whereas virtual posters were printed in a smaller format and displayed on dedicated poster walls, and were also uploaded to Gathertown. The poster hall included a Gathertown terminal for interactions with virtual participants. In addition, one time block on Thursday was fully dedicated to the virtual posters, with no parallel events, to highlight the online contributions. Presenters of posters (in-person and online) were also invited to give a short lightning talk at a dedicated lightning stage within the poster halls. While the interaction with virtual participants (especially for the poster presentations) was still not ideal, the DPS-EPSC experience

with a hybrid meeting as well as the lessons learned will be fruitful for the organisation of future, hybrid EPSC meetings, starting with EPSC 2024 in Berlin, Germany, and the EPSC-DPS 2025 Joint Meeting in Helsinki, Finland. For the future of EPSC-DPS joint meetings and collaborations, a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed by Europlanet and DPS.

Calls for hosting future EPSC meetings (2026 and 2027) will be released beginning of next year. Interested parties should contact the EPSC Executive Committee Chair, [Lena Noack](#).

6.2.5. Grants

The Europlanet Society issues grants and bursaries to support the planetary science community in Europe and around the world.

6.2.5.1. Bursaries

The Europlanet Society provided in-person and virtual bursaries for its members to attend the DPS-EPSC 2023 Joint Meeting. To qualify, the applicants needed to have submitted an abstract for presentation at the conference (oral or poster) and have an active membership of the Europlanet Society. Applicants for in-person bursaries received a grant of up to €1,500, supported by the presentation of invoices/receipts for registration, travel and accommodation up to that amount. Successful applicants for virtual bursaries received reimbursement of their registration fee.

31 applications for bursaries were received, of which 23 were awarded in the following categories:

- Students or Doctoral candidates (10 bursaries awarded)
- Early Career Professionals (6 bursaries awarded)
- Amateur astronomers (1 bursary awarded)
- Researchers from Under-Represented States (5 bursaries awarded)

The total value of the bursaries offered in 2023 for the attendance at the DPS-EPSC Joint Meeting was €30,605.

6.2.5.2. Committee Funding Scheme

The Europlanet Society's [Committee Funding Scheme](#) issues an annual call to support funding proposals of €1000 to €5000 from its Regional Hubs, Committees and Working Groups and the Society Membership. Sixteen applications were received and seven projects were supported in the 2023 round at a total value of €22,940.

- **French Hub proposal: Careers workshop at French Planetary Science Congress (€4,900)**

The French Planetary Science Congress will be held in Nantes in July 2024 conjointly with the French Astrobiology Society (SFE) and National Programme for Planetary Science (PNP)

meetings, where two days will be devoted to astrobiology topics and two others to planetary science more generally. Funding was requested from the Europlanet Society Committee Funding Scheme to support a one-day workshop for early career researchers, including talks on career paths in industry and academia, workshops on writing CVs and proposals, as well as a poster session. The whole event will be in French to maximise interaction between the masters and PhD students and the presenters.

- **Spain Portugal Hub proposal: Pro-Am occultations campaigns with a portable telescope (€3,300)**

Occultations of stars by small Solar System bodies provide important information about their atmosphere, rings, satellites and morphology. The most interesting results are usually obtained when several different observations of the same occultation event are gathered. Therefore, it is usually necessary to deploy different instruments across the predicted shadow path to maximise the probability of capturing relevant data.

The Sociedad Astronómica Granadina (an amateur astronomy group from the south of Spain) has collaborated in dozens of different ProAm occultation campaigns promoted by the IAA and other organisations, especially those involving trans-neptunian objects, Jupiter trojans and NEOs. The campaigns usually involve travelling (sometimes thousands of kilometres) in order to correctly position the telescopes and auxiliary gear. To continue and improve collaborations, funding was requested from the Europlanet Society Committee Funding Scheme to acquire a more powerful (but still portable) telescope to obtain occultation data of fainter stars.

- **Central Europe Hub proposal: Orionids 2023 (€1,400)**

Funding was requested from the Europlanet Society Committee Funding Scheme to support “Orionids 2023”, a meteor astro-camp. During a weekend workshop that will take place in Banská Štiavnica, in central Slovakia, different astrophysicists and amateur astronomers will give lectures about how to observe meteor showers and secondary meteor showers. Twelve participants and four lecturers are expected to take part in the camp. Local and international participants are welcome. Seminars will teach the participants how to prepare theoretically for observations, what methodology (IMO) to use, how to practically observe a meteor shower in general, and how to submit the results in the IMO database. Another aim of the project is to train a new lecturing team. The plan for the future is to organise the observation of meteor showers at least three times a year in Slovak dark sky parks or another convenient location.

- **Central Europe Hub: Variable stars and exoplanet research meeting – support for international audience (€3,060)**

The Czech Variable stars meeting is traditionally organised by the Czech Astronomical Society's Variable Stars and Exoplanet section. The meeting attracts professional and amateur astronomers, predominantly from the Czech Republic, but also from other European countries. The 54th meeting in 2022 was held in hybrid form. The average audience is between 50 and 100 participants, including online audiences. Various topics with focus on pro-am research of variable stars and exoplanets are discussed. With the increasing number of international collaborations, there has been a rise of international audience of the meeting. Since 2021, a student competition has been organised. Funding has been awarded by the Europlanet Society to broaden focus of the meeting to the Central European international audience by formally dividing the meeting into consecutive international and Czech/Slovak sections, advertising the meeting internationally and providing support for in-person participants, including amateur astronomers and students. The support will cover travel bursaries and translation of presentations and other material into English.

- **Ireland-UK Hub: Europlanet Early-Career Networking at the British Planetary Science Conference 2024 (€4,380)**

The British Planetary Science Conference (BPSC) 2024, awarded by the UK Planetary Forum, will be held in June 2024 at Space Park Leicester (SPL) and the adjacent National Space Centre. Europlanet Society funding will support a 1-day workshop at the beginning of the conference for those new to the space and planetary science community, where experienced SPL engineers and project managers will lead examples of how space instruments and missions are developed. This will help facilitate wider access to new space exploration initiatives in the planetary and space science community, and is particularly focussed on connecting early-career researchers to new opportunities. The main 3-day part of the conference will consist of oral and poster sessions reflecting the range of topical planetary and space science activities in the UK, including results from sample return missions, Mars exploration, the Gas and Ice Giants, meteorites, Mercury. The main conference will also have an emphasis on careers and Education, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), with input on careers in the space industry. The final day will include a community consultation day with UKSA, STFC, and other interested stakeholders like Europlanet.

- **South East Europe Hub: Terrestrial Analogues for Solar System Studies Conference (€5,000)**

Co-funding was requested from the Europlanet Society Committee Funding Scheme for a planetary-themed conference on the island of Milos, Greece, during the summer of 2024. The conference has both scientific and policy aspects, and aims to bring together planetary scientists from all over the world, with an emphasis on students and early career participants from South

Eastern Europe. The island of Milos is of great relevance and interest for planetary geologic topics, as it has experienced young volcanism and tectonism (Mars, Pluto), has undergone atmospheric shaping of volcanic deposits, and carving into yardangs (Mars, Titan, Venus, Pluto), and has current hydrothermal and fumarolic activity (Venus, Io, exoplanets). The conference will offer a combination of lectures, science discussions and field trips, as well as policy and industry related discussions in a dedicated session. Planetary scientists with experience in field geology will interact with those who typically do modelling or laboratory studies, furthering the cross communication of topics and improving the research approach for all participants to lead to a better understanding.

- **EPEC: Early Career Activities at DPS-EPSC 2023 (€900)**

EPEC requested support for a programme of events for early career researchers at the joint DPS-EPSC meeting in October 2023 in San Antonio, Texas. The activities included a short course on mental health, a social event, mentoring for first-time attendees and the EPEC general assembly. In addition, EPEC shared a booth with the Europlanet Society to help early careers find their way around and inform them about its work.

Updates have been received on projects funded in previous rounds, including:

- The EPEC Podcast, Stairway to Space (funded 2021, proposed by EPEC)
- The Coriotron simulator (funded 2022, proposed by the French Hub), which was demonstrated at ERIM 2023
- MeteoMars, a tool to explore meteorological events on Mars (funded 2022, proposed by the Spain-Portugal Hub)
- Astrotour Ivoire (funded 2022, proposed by the French Hub).

6.2.5.3. Public Engagement Funding Scheme

The Europlanet Society awards grants for projects to engage the public with planetary science. Through the funding scheme, Europlanet aims to encourage new ways of sharing planetary science with different kinds of audiences across Europe (and beyond) to create socially impactful initiatives that combine research, learning, innovation and social development.

In 2023, the Outreach Jury awarded €4,700 to 'A Blink of a Star: An Occultation Citizen Science Project' led by the Sociedad Astronómica Granadina. On 12th December 2023, Asteroid (319) Leona will occult Betelgeuse (Alpha Orionis), a very bright star in Orion. This will provide an opportunity to study the star Betelgeuse with an unprecedented spatial resolution given that the angular diameter

of Betelgeuse is very similar to that of Leona. This occultation will be easily visible with the naked eye on various places on Earth, a phenomenon that is not common and offers a great opportunity for outreach about these phenomena and the science involving their study. SAG requested support from Europlanet for a citizen science project to obtain numerous observations, using regular cameras and lenses, from northern Andalusia, which is within the shadow path of the occultation. These observations will complement the professional observations of the event, and be part of an outreach campaign in order to engage the public with the science behind those phenomena. The Europlanet Public Engagement Scheme 2023 was sponsored by the Dill Faulkes Educational Trust Ltd.

Updates have also been received on projects funded in previous rounds, including [‘Bimbim’s Team – A Journey to the Planets’](#) puppet videos for pre-school children (funded in 2022), the ‘ExoWorld Walk’ walking trail in Cluj-Napoca Botanical Gardens (funded 2021), “Light fingerprints” display of the solar spectrum, which has been installed in the main entrance of Porto planetarium (funded 2020), and the [‘ET – A Solar System Adventure’](#) board game (funded 2019).

6.2.6. Prizes

6.2.6.1. The Farinella Prize 2023

Dr Federica Spoto, of the Minor Planet Centre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, and Dr Diego Turrini, of the National Institute for Astrophysics - Turin Astrophysical Observatory (INAF-OATo) in Italy, were awarded jointly the 2023 Paolo Farinella Prize for their outstanding contributions to the field ‘From superbolides to meteorites: physics and dynamics of small planetary impactors’. The award ceremony took place during the 55th Annual Division for Planetary Sciences (DPS) meeting joint with the Europlanet Science Congress (EPSC) in San Antonio, Texas, and online and was followed by prize lectures by each of the winners. The prize of €1,500, supported through the Europlanet Society, was split between the two participants, who each also received a plaque.

6.2.6.2. The Europlanet Prize for Public Engagement 2023

The 2023 Europlanet Prize for Public Engagement has been awarded jointly to Daniela de Paulis for her art projects that have brought space and planetary science to international audiences, and the science communicator, El Mehdi Essaidi for his community-centric work in southern Morocco to share the wonders of our Solar System and the Universe. The results were announced in October 2023. The prize of 1,500€, supported through the Dill Faulkes Educational Trust, was split between the two participants.

6.2.7. Webinars

The Europlanet Society runs a series of webinars for members. Over the past year, it has provided webinars on the following topics:

- 11 October 2022 - [Take the Challenge – How Machine Learning Data Challenges Can Help Tackle Planetary Problems](#) (Ingo Waldmann (UCL), Nick Cox (ACRI-ST), Giacomo Nodjumi (Constructor University) and Dan Le Corre (University of Kent))
- 29 November 2023 - [Expert Exchanges - Past Cases and New Opportunities](#) (Maria Genzer, FMI)
- 20 December 2022 - [Europlanet Mentorship Platform for Early Career Researchers](#)
- 25 April 2023 – [GMAP Planetary Geological Mapping](#) (Angelo Pio Rossi, Constructor University)

6.2.8. Diversity

The Diversity Committee is a strategic task force to advise, coordinate and champion activities across the Europlanet Society that further the Society's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity.

The Diversity Committee's activities has largely focused on support for ERIM 2023 in the last 12 months, including advice on code of conduct, reporting procedures, support facilities (requests for silent room, childcare, gender neutral toilets etc). The programme for ERIM included a [Diversity and Inclusion Round Table](#), which provided an opportunity to discuss issues around diversity and inclusion within the planetary science community and in other research infrastructures. The Diversity Committee provided feedback on ERIM and suggestions for future meetings, which has been included in the meeting report.

6.2.9. Outreach and Education

The Outreach Working Group of the Europlanet Society has led the following outreach activities over the past 12 months:

- ERIM Goes to Schools: School visits were arranged in Bratislava associated with ERIM 2023, reaching over 100 school children;
- Fantasy Basel: the Europlanet Society had a stand at Fantasy Basel. With 72,000 visitors, Fantasy Basel is one of Europe's largest science fiction, fantasy and pop-culture conventions. The team estimates that over 10,000 people directly interacted with the Europlanet stand during the event;
- #Inspiredbyotherworlds: the third edition of the arts contest was held in 2022, with the results announced in January 2023. [Prizes were awarded](#) in adult, youth and schools categories;

- Coordination of live astronomical events;
- Several outreach sessions were organised at ERIM 2023, including a session on making outreach activities into a business;
- Quarterly outreach newsletters have been issued;
- The Outreach Working Group has supported the Europlanet 2024 RI education team by disseminating a survey for teachers and providing support in translating resources.

Outreach activities by the Regional Hubs include:

- Soapbox Science Brussels (Benelux Hub)
- 'Il cielo in salotto' live streaming events (Italy Hub)

6.2.10. Policy and Industry

- The Policy Team co-organised a dinner debate at the European Parliament on 24 January 2023, with the theme "Promoting the importance of space policies and a European Space Strategy", which was hosted by MEP Niklass Nienaß. This high-level event brought together decision-makers, academics, researchers and several Europlanet officials, to discuss the importance of a European Space Strategy, status quo, and common visions to go forward. The event was attended by MEPs, high level officials from ESA, EUSPA, DLR, ASD-Eurospace, IISL, and DG DEFIS who gave short keynote speeches, followed by an open debate among all participants.
- The Policy and Industry Team co-organised with the Industry Team a Policy/Industry Hubs meeting in January 2023.
- ERIM 2023 included a day of industry sessions, as well as discussion and roadmapping sessions and a training session on talking to policy makers.
- Regular policy reports have been posted on the Europlanet Society website.
- The Europlanet Society has a stand at Space Tech Expo Europe from 14-16 November 2023 in Bremen, which will be staffed by members of the Society and the Europlanet 2024 RI project.

6.3. Europlanet Research Infrastructure

Access to the Europlanet Research Infrastructure (RI) is currently supported through the Europlanet 2024 RI project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 871149.

Europlanet 2024 RI provides the infrastructure needed to address the major scientific and technological challenges facing modern planetary science and strengthen Europe's position at the

forefront of space exploration. The project is led by the University of Kent and has over 50 active beneficiaries, from both industrial and academic sectors, and provides Transnational Access (TA) to over 40 world-leading field and laboratory facilities.

The second periodic report for Europlanet 2024 RI was submitted in May 2023 and approved by the European Commission. In November 2023, over half of the 208 TA research visits awarded through the project's peer-review process are now complete. The Europlanet ground-based Telescope Network has awarded 206 observing nights to professional and amateur astronomers. Networking Activities (NA), which aim to provide training and widen the user base and draw in new partners from Under-Represented States (URS), non-EU countries, industry and interdisciplinary fields, have largely focused on ERIM during 2023. Workshops to support global collaboration in planetary science have also been held in Morocco and Argentina.

Other project highlights in 2023 include the publication of two Nature Communications papers on BepiColombo flyby results supported by Europlanet's [SPIDER](#) space weather service, the third GMAP planetary geological mapping online [Winter School](#) (with over 400 subscribers) and a [Europlanet Summer School](#) at the Moletai Astronomical Observatory in Lithuania (for 20 early career and amateur in person participants), and a VESPA implementation workshop, which has supported the integration of five new services into the VESPA virtual observatory for planetary data. Europlanet 2024 RI's Joint Research Activities, which include upgrades to TA facilities and the development of Machine Learning tools for planetary data, have been completed and made available to the community in 2023. Evaluation the project shows that, in particular TA visits enable scientific impacts that simply would not be possible without the support of the RI, due to the access to facilities, both equipment and expertise, that it provides. The participation of early career researchers in the programme amplifies and ensures that impacts will continue into the future.



Participants in the Europlanet Summer School 2023. Credit: D. Dudulis.

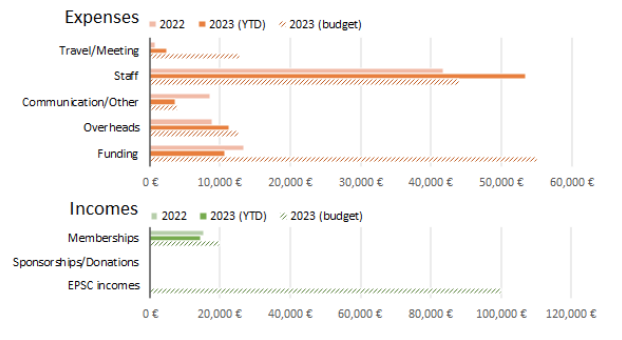
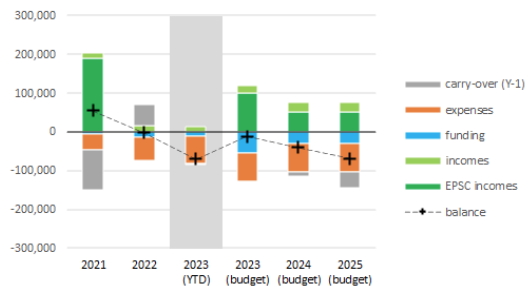
6.4. Proposals

- Members of the Europlanet community were involved in submitting a 15M€ proposal under the ‘Astronomy and Astroparticle Physics’ theme of the call: ‘HORIZON-INFRA-2023-SERV-01-02: Research infrastructure services advancing frontier knowledge’. The proposal was not successful, but the process of putting the SpaceSci RI proposal together has, in itself, led to better channels of communication between the astronomy and space-related RI groups and networks. Discussions are in progress to form a ‘Network of Networks’ (NeoN) that will help the wider space community have a stronger voice with the Commission and provide a better foundation to coordinate, discuss and prepare for future proposals.
- A proposal for a Europlanet Doctoral Network will be submitted in November 2023 to support a network of 15 PhD candidates in projects related to planetary science.

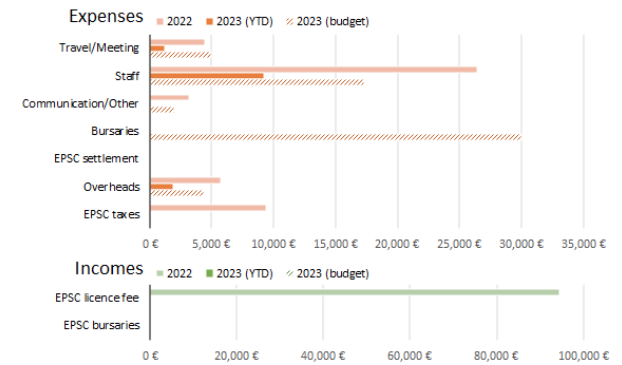
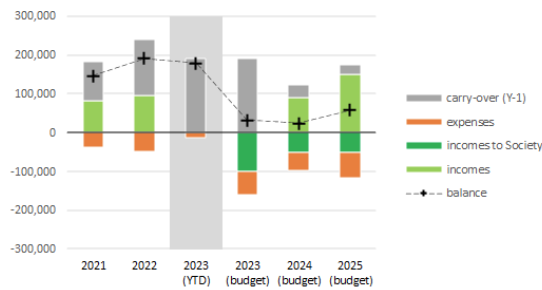
7. Financial Report

Financial situation as for 30 September 2023 (third trimester) for the Europlanet Society and EPSC:

Europlanet Society



EPSC



Europlanet bank accounts as for 30 September 2023:



8. Future Planning

ERIM kickstarted a roadmapping exercise that will culminate in the presentation of a sustainability plan at the Europlanet General Assembly at EPSC2024 in Berlin. A draft of the plan will be circulated by July 2024. The plan will cover the following strategic challenges identified for Europlanet:

- #1: Individual Membership
- #2: Early Career
- #3: Capacity Building
- #4: Industry & Policy

- #5: Society Structures
- #6: Sustainable TAs
- #7: Sustainability for VAs
- #8: Sustainability for Telescopes and Pro-Am
- #9: Sustainability for community services
- #10: EPSC and Science-led activities

For each of the 10 challenges, priorities are being defined, costed and sources of funding identified. Follow-ups have included a series of calls during September 2023 and a hybrid meeting that took place on 10 October. The community and 'Challenge Groups' will be consulted on a regular basis via online meetings.

To lead the roadmapping exercise, a Europlanet Sustainability Working Group has established. External advisors will provide expert input on development of the business case and impact.

Europlanet AISBL (Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif - 0800.634.634) is hosted by the Department of Planetary Atmospheres of the Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy (BIRA-IASB), Avenue Circulaire 3, B-1180 Brussels, Belgium.



Europlanet 2024 RI has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 871149.