



**Local Organizing Committee (LOC) Guidelines for  
hosting the European Planetary Science Congress  
(EPSC)**

16 February 2024

## 1. General Guidelines for Local Organizing Committees of the European Planetary Science Congress (EPSC)

### 1.1 What are the responsibilities of an EPSC Local Organizing Committee?

**The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) is responsible for ensuring that the EPSC organizers (Copernicus and the EPSC Executive Committee) have the information and contacts they need to prepare for the meeting.**

The LOC will be asked for:

- Local information to provide to delegates (lists of hotels, restaurants, tourist information, low-cost options for accommodation etc)
- Suggestions for a social event venue
- Logistical information, where there are questions about the venue that need clarification by people 'in-situ' (e.g. how best to situate posters, exhibits, events). This is particularly important when EPSC is held in a university or other non-purpose-built conference venue.
- Contacts with local/regional/national media
- Contacts with industry, national agencies, potential local sponsors/exhibitors
- Invitation letters for authors who need to apply for a visa, financial support at their institute, etc.
- Support in ensuring that EPSC meets commitments to diversity and access (see Section 2).

**In addition, the LOC is responsible for making the EPSC that it hosts 'unique'. There is no fixed way that this should happen – it is up to the LOC to draw on its own location, expertise, experience and local community to decide what activities it wants to organize.**

For example, the LOC could organize:

- Public events (e.g. exhibitions, public lectures, star parties, art exhibitions, film nights, variety shows)
- Schools events (e.g. hands-on activities, talks, planetarium shows, teacher training sessions)
- Engagement with policy makers (e.g. talks by policy makers at EPSC, EPSC events within parliament/local government, embassy receptions)
- Information or exhibits on planetary-related activities in the host country/region (e.g. booklets, briefing sheets, exhibitions)

See Case Studies in Section 3 on how past LOCs have managed this.

**The LOC is NOT responsible for:**

- The scientific programme for the meeting (this is the remit of the Scientific Organizing Committee)
- Abstract management (Copernicus will take care of this)
- Booking the venue (Copernicus will take care of this)
- Registration (Copernicus will take care of this)
- Setting conference fees (the EPSC Executive Committee and Copernicus will do this)
- Covering the cost of the scientific meeting itself, including venue hire, catering for the ice-breaker reception, poster sessions, splinter meetings (the EPSC Executive Committee and Copernicus will manage this)
- International media relations (the EPSC Press Office will do this, coordinating with local media efforts by the LOC)

**The LOC may choose to be responsible for:**

- Raising sponsorship money to fund its own activities

## **1.2 What are the time and personnel requirements for a LOC?**

It is up to the LOC how it wishes to structure itself. However, the average LOC contributes staff-effort approximately equivalent to 1 Full Time Employee for one year (225-250 days). This effort is usually spread between a core team of 3 or 4 key personnel and builds as the meeting approaches.

The LOC may start work 18 months or even two years before the meeting, with LOC team members spending a few hours per month to hold meetings, scope out their plans and build support from members of their national/regional/local communities. In the months and weeks leading up to the meeting, the core team may need to work nearly full time on the project. In the 4-6 weeks after EPSC takes place, the core team may also need to spend a few hours per week following up outcomes of the meeting and writing reports.

The core team may choose to set up additional groups to support them e.g.:

- Logistics groups that work on practical issues with the venue
- A national/regional advisory panel (e.g. other research institutions, funding agencies, outreach partners) to help build support from communities in the host country/city.
- A team of helpers that can assist with practical tasks around the time of the meeting (e.g. setting up/taking down displays, running activities etc).

## **1.3 What support will EPSC give the LOC?**

EPSC will cover all the costs of the scientific meeting but has no budget to support the activities of the LOC and the staff-time of its members. If the LOC wishes to organize activities that need additional funding, it will need to be prepared to seek support or sponsorship.

**EPSC will provide the LOC with the following non-financial support for its activities:**

- Organization of logistic meetings to discuss practical issues with organizing the meeting (e.g. layouts, signage, catering, technical requirements, media etc)
- Invitations or letters of support, where needed (e.g. to VIPS and dignitaries)
- Advice and lessons learned from past meetings/LOCs
- Advice from the Europlanet Diversity Working Group on diversity and accessibility-related issues.

## 2. EPSC commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion

The Local Organizing Committee, together with the EPSC Executive Committee and the Scientific Organizing Committee, are responsible for ensuring that EPSC is inclusive to a diversity of participants, and is representative of the whole research community. This includes ensuring that conference activities, facilities, organizers and participants actively support the inclusion of, and do not discriminate against, any individual on the basis of their gender, disability, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital status, age, nationality or socioeconomic background.

To facilitate this, the LOC will be asked to:

- Ensure the LOC represents a diverse group, where it is possible to do so
- Nominate one member of the LOC to take responsibility for equality, diversity and inclusion
- Ensure that all essential conference venues, including those used for presentations, poster sessions, registration and social events, are accessible to all attendees, including those with disabilities
- Ensure that all public/schools/policy event venues are accessible to those with disabilities, where it is possible to do so
- Ensure that participants in any public/schools/policy events represent a diverse group, where it is possible to do so
- Provide family resources such as rooms for nursing mothers, baby changing facilities and childcare facilities, where it is possible to do so
- Ensure that all formal and informal activities and venues are socially inclusive (e.g. holding “dry” events, ensuring those with specific diets are not excluded, and being aware of cultural sensitivities)

The LOC could adopt good practice, where facilities and resources (e.g., through raising sponsorship) allow, by also:

- Choosing delivery modes that are accessible to those with disabilities, e.g., hearing loop facilities or real-time captioning for presentations
- Providing mentoring for first time attendees
- Providing bursaries for attendees from key groups
- Providing a reflection, or multi-faith prayer room.

## Section 3 - Case Studies

### Public Engagement Case Studies

#### **Solar System Gastro-Tour, EPSC 2022, Granada, Spain**

As part of the traditional culture of the city of Granada, bars offer a *tapa* when you order a beer or a glass of wine. [This brochure](#) lists the bars that agreed to include a planetary-themed *tapa* in their menu during the week of EPSC2022 and a few days around it. The *tapas* and drinks offered in the 'Solar System Gastro-Tour' were designed to resemble a body in the Solar System.

#### **Solar System for Kids / Public lecture, EPSC 2017, Riga, Latvia**

The LOC for EPSC 2017 in Riga secured a grant from the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science for Zinoo (a Latvian chain of science centres) to build 10 interactive exhibits on a planetary science theme. Zinoo's 'Solar System for Kids' Exhibition, located on the floor below the main EPSC venue at the Radisson Blu Latvija, was visited by about 600 kids during the week of the meeting. The Zinoo exhibits were supplemented by a meteorite display provided by Meteoriti.lv and a spherical projector of planetary imagery 'Planets in a Room' provided by Speak Science. The exhibits were designed as a touring exhibition and were displayed at all five Zinoo science centres around Latvia, reaching 10,000+ children.

#### **“Voyages Planétaires / Voyages Planétaires sur la trajectoire d’une comète”, EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2011 / EPSC 2015, Nantes, France**

Nantes hosted both the 2011 Joint Meeting of EPSC and the Division of Planetary Sciences of the AAS and the stand-alone EPSC in 2015. For both events, the LOC organized a very large-scale exhibition occupying the whole ground floor of La Cité des Congrès, close to Nantes city centre. Exhibits were provided by the University of Nantes, the Planétarium de Nantes, amateur astronomy societies, Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Nantes, CEA, CNES and ESA, and included models of spacecraft, interactive displays, virtual reality experiences, graphic displays, an inflatable planetarium and a mobile laboratory.

Planning for the exhibitions started 2 years before each EPSC event. The LOC raised sponsorship to fund the hire of the venue during the weekends before and after the meeting and for the set-up/breakdown period for exhibitors. About a third of the financial support came from the University of Nantes, a third from the "Region Pays de la Loire" and a third from other sources.

16,000 members of the public and school children attended the “Voyages Planétaires” exhibition and 24 public lectures in 2011. 23,000 members of the public and school students attended the “Voyages Planétaires - sur la trajectoire d’une comète” exhibition in 2015. The EPSC 2015 LOC was awarded the [“Coup de Coeur” Prize](#) at the [4th Annual Ceremony of Ambassadors of Nantes, Congress Destination](#) in recognition of their public outreach efforts.

#### **Festival of the Planets, EPSC 2013, London, UK**

EPSC 2013 was hosted by UCL (University College London). As the university does not have a large exhibition space and is not ideally suited to be visited by large numbers of members of the public,

the EPSC 2013 LOC decided to encourage institutions around London, including the Natural History Museum, the Royal Observatory Greenwich, the Royal Astronomical Society, the Royal Society, the British Interplanetary Society, the Bloomsbury Theatre and the Baker Street Irregular amateur astronomy group, to host their own planetary-themed events.

Planning for the 'Festival of the Planets' started more than 18 months prior to EPSC. In total, 17 events were organized for the 'Festival of the Planets' across London, including seven lectures, a trail of planetary-inspired artworks, a science fiction film night, a variety event, observing nights, an exhibition of lunar-related material at Royal Society, events at Royal Museums Greenwich linked to their blockbuster "Visions of the Universe" exhibition. The events were attended by at least 2000 people in total.

### **Policy Engagement Case Studies**

#### **EPSC 2017 – Political representation at EPSC 2017, Riga**

The Chair of the EPSC 2017 LOC invited five leading politicians to speak during the meeting in Riga. Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga is the former President of Latvia (serving two terms) and is currently an international spokesperson for democracy and Latvian culture and current president of the Madrid Club. During the Opening Ceremony, Dr. Vīķe-Freiberga spoke about the Sun in Latvian culture. She was followed by Dr. Ene Ergma, the former leader of the Estonian Parliament (serving two terms), who spoke about how space was supported in the Estonian government in during the 2000s.

Dr. Mathias Link, Deputy Director of Space Affairs at the Luxembourg Ministry of the Economy, spoke on the Luxembourg Space Resources Initiative during a scientific session on In-Space Resource Utilization, and Dr. Dana Reizniece-Ozola Minister of Finance of the Republic of Latvia spoke on the value of Space in Latvia during a session on Interplanetary nanosatellites, CubeSats/SmallSats. Finally, Dr. Kārlis Šadurskis, the Latvian Minister for Education and Science spoke during the EPSC 2017 public event.

All the above talks were [streamed live by LMT](#), and the presentations by Dr. Vīķe-Freiberga, Dr. Reizniece-Ozola and Dr. Kārlis Šadurskis were covered by the Latvian media.

#### **EPSC 2013 – Session in House of Commons, Westminster**

The EPSC 2013 LOC coordinated with the Parliamentary & Scientific Committee and the Parliamentary Space Committee to hold a policy session within the House of Commons in Westminster, the first time that EPSC held a session within a working legislative assembly. The meeting was chaired by Andrew Miller MP and David Morris MP and attended by around 100 delegates, Members of the House of Commons, Members of the House of Lords, and civil servants. Planning for the session started eighteen months prior to EPSC 2013, with the support of the secretary of the Parliamentary Space Committee. The session featured four presentations and an open discussion.