

# Executive Summary of the 40th PRACE aisbl Council Meeting Minutes

---

The 40th meeting of the PRACE aisbl Council took place as a videoconference via Zoom on 16 June 2021.

Discussions regarding PRACE in the EuroHPC era continued, with Florian Berberich providing an update on the development of the Benchmark and Development access as well as the new Regular Access with an adapted peer review process involving domain panels.

A dedicated working group on PRACE has been established by EuroHPC, and the first two meetings have taken place, in which PRACE presented itself in the second meeting well as a bottom-up initiative with a good connection with its communities. Thomas Lippert states a lot of progress has been made, and discusses the complex structure which deliver all the services through the project and the PRACE partners. If these services are considered in the future, a project funding will be needed, most probably an FPA with a European consortium. He wonders if HPC centres could respond to a tender based on commercial services. Janne Ignatius clarifies that a tender could be a solution for the peer review process, but knowledge services must be funded with projects and ideally a dedicated FPA.

EuroHPC JU is targeting a procurement of the peer review service of the moment. Alternatives, e.g. FPA are not seen as viable by EuroHPC. PRACE needs to be ready to bid once the call for tender is published. PRACE will become taxable due to the service provision. It will be important to keep the trust that was built with scientific communities and to ensure that the service provision approach does not challenge this.

Serge Bogaerts gave a presentation explaining the idea of PRACE becoming the user platform in Europe. The user platform will cover academic and industrial users and especially target new communities. It will provide the PRACE knowledge services. The user platform fits in the European HPC ecosystem, especially with EuroHPC, CASTIEL, EuroCC, CoEs and FocusCoE.

A final draft of a paper on the PRACE Software Strategy for European Exascale Systems was presented for approval. A discussion yielded several comments that need to be addressed but, despite these, the Council approved the version 0.9 and will trust the Working Group to integrate the comments in a version 1.0 that needs to be circulated before summer 2021.

Serge Bogaerts gave a presentation regarding the PRACE 2 extension. Sebastian Von Alfthan was surprised that no significant resources will be available by April 2022 because LUMI is on schedule. Serge Bogaerts said that delays will still be possible and EuroHPC decided to start allocation with Benchmark access with a very tight time schedule. The exact contribution for the PRACE 2 extension still needs to be calculated and will include the 20% safety margin. As an emergency decision, the extension of the PRACE 2 Programme is approved with Denmark abstaining.

Lee Margetts gave an update from the Industrial Advisory Committee. The SHAPE 13th Call is now closed. It received 5 applicants. He mentions that there were no industrially led applications on PRACE 23rd Call for Project Access. Lee Margetts term as Chair is coming to an end, so he presented potential candidates and says that he is open to contributing to the community/ecosystem in another role. Janne Ignatius thanked Lee Margetts for the significant contribution IAC made during his chair time.

Laura Grigori gave an update from the Scientific Steering Committee, first talking the discrepancy between submitted and awarded projects lead by a female PI. The situation with 10% to 20% submissions compared to 8% to 22% awarded projects is not so bad but could still be improved. She suggested to create awareness in the different PRACE committees with an instructive video which is used by ERC as well, and suggested that two reference persons (male and female) should be nominated in order to observe and flag biased statements or arguments. On a separate note, she also proposed a new HPC simulation prize for outstanding achievements on simulation science and HPC.

The PRACE-6IP Management Board has approved an extension of the project by 6 months.

The EuroHPC Summit Week 2021 (EHPCSW) / PRACEdays21 was held digitally from 22 March to 26 March 2021 with 165 speakers in 62 sessions and 1 140 active users on the event platform. SoHPC 2021 will be organised as an online event. As an outcome of the CERN-SKA-GÉANT-PRACE collaboration, CERN will participate for the first time in the programme.

The 11th Infrastructure Workshop 2021 took place on 18-19 May as an online event bringing together specialists in HPC centre design and operation to discuss the latest trends and technologies for the infrastructure of supercomputing centres.

Support for the EuroHPC Petascale systems is progressing. After several discussions between PRACE, EuroHPC JU and representatives of the EuroHPC Petascale Hosting Entities, specialised working groups were identified to define and implement aspects of the EuroHPC Petascale systems operations with support from PRACE.

The EXDCI-2 project ended on 31 December 2020. The Final Review Consolidated Report was provided by the European Commission on 30 April 2021, and the recommendations made by the reviewers have been duly considered. A White Paper on EXDCI-2 Recommendations is being prepared. The idea is to summarize the project's recommendations with a view to implementing adequate follow-up activities in the form of future projects or initiatives.

Florian Berberich presented the HPC-GIG report. To adapt to changes brought about by the fast establishment of the HPC Governance bodies of EuroHPC JU, to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis in the project and to use the available budget, the Project Management Office has been in contact with the European Commission and with the Project Consortium to agree and prepare the 2nd Amendment to the Grant Agreement. In the last two months, Technical Board meetings have been held regularly to discuss and agree on the technical aspects of the new activities.

Florian Berberich also reported on the CASTIEL project. PRACE actively contributes to the activity of the 'Industrial Interaction and Business Development' work package'. Task 4.3, titled 'Transnational access to sectorial services', designed a uniformed checklist and distributed it to each member of the WP in order for them to extract the necessary information and to identify the National Competence Centres (NCCs) industrial sectorial expertise and services. Some NCCs have expressed the desire to have more comprehensive information on how to apply for PRACE support in the new context of EuroHPC and asked for a workshop like the PRACE User Forum.

In 2017, PRACE entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with RIST and XSEDE to exchange information on management of the provisioning of HPC resources and the identification of collaboration opportunities. Information exchange took place during meetings at events like Super Computing Conference. These connections enabled exchange of information about initiatives taken to fight COVID-19, in particular the International COVID-19 HPC Knowledge Exchange. A first extension of the original MoU has been approved, and all three parties are willing to extend their collaboration for another two years.

Starting from 1st April, Serge Bogaerts has increased his part-time working schedule to 4 days per week. Therefore, the extension of the first phase of the Transition Plan has been discussed and agreed with the current BoD members who will remain on duty while the Managing Director is not working full time.

The process of recruiting a Peer Review Officer to staff the open position proceeded but did not lead to a successful conclusion. The search will continue advertising the open position as widely and adequately as possible.

The development of the Peer Review Tool is progressing well. Beside improving the user experience both for applicants and peer review officers, the work on the implementation of EuroHPC calls started. A first version for the new Benchmark access is available and will be improved in the coming weeks and complemented by the new Development access which will be used by EuroHPC and PRACE, replacing the Preparatory access calls still running on the CINES peer review tool.