
EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON THE FANTASTIC

Background

- It is likely only a question of time before air travel to conferences becomes significantly more expensive or otherwise restricted. Even today, many scholars choose not to travel by air. There is a clear need to establish a conference which is accessible without air travel for European scholars of the fantastic.
 - This does not imply that attendance should be limited to Europeans, nor that flying should be prohibited, only that it should be possible to attend even for those who, for some reason, do not travel by air.
- Unlike a virtual conference, physical conferences allow for social meetings before, between, and after sessions. A physical conference should be designed to encourage such meetings rather than prevent them.
- Stronger coordination and collaboration would ease the organisational burden and allow for greater predictability in terms of scheduling.

Conference Organisation

1. The Conference organisation has local organisations of researchers as **members** (not individual researchers). Such local organisations could be (but are not restricted to) for example (trans-)national research networks, a research environment at a single university, an international group of scholars sharing an interest in a particular research area of the fantastic, etc.
2. The main and essential **requirement for a member organisation** is that they are capable of organising an international conference that conforms to the specifications of the Conference Charter.
3. The **language** of the Conference organisation and communication between members is English. All bylaws, templates, and internal documents should be in English, and information before, communication at, and minutes after meetings will be in English.
4. The Conference organisation has two **main bodies**. The Council represents the groups organising the succession of conferences and determines the conference's overall strategic

direction. The Committee facilitates the administration of conferences on behalf of the Council, transmitting expertise and providing advice and support.

5. The **Council** governs the overall organisation of the conference as a going concern and co-ordinates agreements between members and changes to practices. The Council convenes in person every two years, during or alongside the Conference. In alternate years, meetings are held virtually. Every member organisation can send up to two representatives to the Council. This body can vote on the following issues:
 - a. Acceptance or rejection of new member organisations or special interest groups, after proposal from the Committee.
 - b. Exclusion of members.
 - c. Changes to the Conference organisation bylaws.
 - d. Changes to the Conference Charter.
 - e. Appointment of new Committee members, by majority vote. Candidates are nominated by member organisations to the Council.
 - f. Assigning tasks to the Committee or Special Interest Groups.
 - g. Dissolution of the Conference organisation.

In voting, every member organisation has one vote, regardless of the number of representatives they have sent to the Council meeting.

6. Information about an upcoming Council meeting should be included in the Call for Papers, with links to online information. Proposals to the Council may be submitted by member organisations and groups that might constitute a future member organisation. The deadline for proposals to the Council coincides with the deadline for paper proposals, and proposals and material for the Council will be disseminated at the same time as letters of paper acceptance. This includes any proposals for changes to the organisation bylaws or the Conference Charter. Other business may be raised at a Council meeting, but no votes may be taken on issues raised at the meeting.
7. The role of the **Committee** is to maintain the Conference organisation and deal with issues that arise between Council meetings. The Committee consists of five members, who each serve for a term of four years. A person cannot be re-elected right after finishing their term, but might serve again in the future. Half of the members are replaced every two years, with the longest-serving Committee members replaced at each in-person Council meeting (either three Committee members or two Committee members and the Editor, see point 12 below). Committee members who have to step down before their term is up are replaced at the next in-person or virtual Council meeting, for the remainder of the original term. Committee membership is individual and personal; Committee members do not have to represent a member organisation. The Council elects a Chair and a Vice Chair from among the Committee members, to serve in these positions for two years. The duties of the Committee include:

- a. Maintaining the repository of the Conference organisation. This includes common resources, such as mailing lists and templates for letters, Calls for Papers, programmes, and name badges. It also includes the updated versions of the Charter and the schedule for planning the conference (“The Annual Wheel”).
- b. Maintaining the list of current members and the membership information.
- c. Maintaining an open online repository, with agendas and minutes from Council meetings and Committee meetings, the Charter and bylaws, and previous Calls for Paper and PDFs of previous conference programs.
- d. Dealing with any issues that come up between Council meetings.
- e. Vetting prospective members and supporting them in their membership applications; propose suitable applicants to the Council (this also applies for special interest group applications).
- f. Acceptance or rejection of upcoming conference locations and themes, after proposal by the organising member organisation.
- g. Exercising oversight to ensure that the Conference arrangements adhere to the annual plan, organisation bylaws, and Conference Charter.
- h. Preparing matters for the Council, including proposals for new Special Interest Groups.

The Committee can call an extra Council meeting if they deem it necessary, for instance (but not only) to replace a Committee member or Editor who has stepped down before their time is up. Extra Council meetings are expected to be called at least six weeks in advance.

8. **Membership requirements.** In order to be accepted as a member of the Conference organization, a group must fulfil the following criteria, which are intended to ensure that conferences are conducted professionally and in accordance with the Charter. These criteria should be considered as a whole by the Committee and the Council when evaluating new members:
 - a. Size: the member group must be sufficiently large to be able to organise and run a major international conference.
 - b. Scholarly focus: the Conference is dedicated to research on the fantastic and its members should reflect that. Groups need to have a focus on scholarship in areas somehow related to some aspect(s) of the fantastic.
 - c. Sufficient resources: the group needs to have access to the resources necessary to organise a Conference, for instance through a university.
 - d. Continuity: organising a conference is a long-term commitment. An ad hoc or one-off group would not contribute to the organisation over time and is more vulnerable to shocks. A group needs a certain track record that demonstrates their ability and dedication to cooperating toward common goals.

- e. Integration: the group should be part of the larger national research context if there is one. If they are not, they should have a good reason for not being involved.
 - f. Recommendation: the group should be recommended for membership by at least one current member of the organisation.
9. The members of the Conference organisation commit to **organising international conferences** in rotation, in accordance with the Charter but with an openness to flexible solutions. Organising a conference involves managing it for one year and advising and supporting the group that organises the subsequent conference by arranging for a proper hand-over and offering advice as requested. Conference theme and organiser should be determined/assigned at least two conferences in advance.
 10. The Conference organisation has **no financial assets** and does not collect membership dues; thus, no funding for the Conference is available from the organisation. Each member determines how they will finance their conference and sets the conference fees accordingly. The member organisation is responsible for any surplus or deficit that they run.
 11. The **Conference Charter** specifies the minimum requirements for a Conference. These should as far as possible be expressed as results, not specific solutions, which must be allowed to vary with shifting local situations, rules, and possibilities. Deliberately departing significantly from the Charter may be grounds for exclusion from the Conference organisation. All aspects not regulated by the Charter – such as what languages (if any) papers can be presented in except for English, or whether digital participation is possible – are left to the particular organisers to decide.
 12. Conference participants will be offered the possibility to publish an article version of papers presented at the conference in a special conference issue of an open access journal. The **Editor** is responsible for coordinating the conference issues with the Conference organisers and the journal's regular editor(s), and is responsible for building and maintaining relationships with reviewers over time, on behalf of the Conference. They also provide support to any alternative (optional) forms of conference proceedings. They are elected for four years, with the possibility for re-election once. They have observer-status on the Committee, and are expected to advise on issues related to the conference issue. (Dates for submission, reviews, editing, publication, etc. will be included in the Annual Wheel.)
 13. The Council can establish **Special Interest Groups** connected to the organisation, after proposal from the Committee. Such groups have no particular powers within the organisation or the Conference, but will be listed as groups affiliated with the Conference. They will be provided with time and place for meetings at the Conferences, provided such meetings are open for all interested Conference participants.

Conference Charter

1. The conference will generally be held in the second quarter of the year (April-June), but the Committee will consider proposals in the third quarter (July-September) if there is a good reason for such a timing.
2. The Conference venue should be possible to reach for most continental Europeans without air travel.
3. The Conference should be planned for *at least* 100 participants. This means that the minimum capacity of the venue (rooms for presentations and panels, halls for key notes), food functions, and available accommodation should be *at least* 100 people. It does not mean that if fewer than 100 people register, the conference would cancel, nor that it cannot be planned for a larger number of attendees than that.
4. The group organising a conference shall prepare and submit a conference budget to the Committee for review and input. The budget must be constructed on a break-even basis, ensuring that projected income and expenditure are balanced without the intention to generate a surplus.
5. Delegate registration fees shall be tiered to include a standard rate for regular delegates and a concessionary rate for postgraduate researchers, unwaged delegates, and those in precarious employment. The concessionary rate shall be set as low as reasonably possible, while maintaining adherence to the overall break-even requirement of the conference budget.
6. The Conference's main academic program should extend over at least 3 days. This time can include workshops, paper sessions, keynote presentations, social activities, and other program items. (Other program items are encouraged but not required; these might include doctoral forums, author readings, roundtable discussions.)
7. The Conference should have spaces available for social interaction, both throughout the day (as an alternative to going to sessions) and in evenings. **Note:** we meet in person partly in order to talk to each other. There need to be places where conversations can happen regardless of what the venue and accommodation looks like, and new attendees who do not yet know anyone must be able to find the conference group without making special arrangements. This does not have to be organised activities; it could e.g. just be a dedicated conference pub, coffee shop, or hotel bar where there will always be at least a couple of people happy to chat.
8. The main language of the Conference is English. That means that all information (Call for Papers, acceptance letters, conference programs and other information material, keynotes and other guest presentations, etc.) have to be available in English, and it should be possible to present papers in English. Whether the organisers also want to facilitate one or more other languages to be used at the Conference (for instance, by including a session track in their national language) is left for them to decide.

9. The construction of the review process for papers or paper proposals, panel sessions, workshops, etc., is at the discretion of the organisers; but the process shall maintain appropriate academic quality. (See Appendix A for suggestions.)
 10. **Paper length:** A standard paper length of 20 minutes ensures consistency across conferences, but organisers are also free to try alternative formats in addition to this.
 11. The participants and organisers of the Conference are required to follow the Conference Code of Conduct (Appendix B).
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Appendix A: Suggested Review Process

The following should be considered suggestions and advice regarding a possible conference review process. The organisers are free to use or disregard items as they see fit.

1. The review process is run by the **Program Committee**, which is run by a Program Chair and also consists of the Subject Reviewers. Membership of the Program Committee is submitted to the Conference Committee in accordance with the Annual Wheel.
2. The **Program Chair** belongs to the organising group and is responsible for making sure that submitted proposals are reviewed, acceptance letters sent out, and a program is assembled. The Program Chair is also the ultimate guarantor for a fair review process.
3. Each Subject (see Subject Divisions, in the Charter) has a **Subject Reviewer**, including any extra Subjects introduced by the organisers. Subject Reviewers do not have to belong to the organising group but can (and are encouraged to) be selected from outside it. The same person can be Reviewer for more than one Subject (but it is not encouraged).
4. Deadlines for proposals and letters of acceptance/rejection are given in the Annual Wheel and remain the same from Conference to Conference. [To provide some predictability.]
5. Proposals are reviewed according to their academic merit by Subject Reviewers, who are specialists in their respective fields. Reviewers can redistribute proposals between them, should they consider that one or more proposals would be a better fit for another subject.
6. Should a Reviewer be unsure about whether the quality of a particular proposal is sufficient for acceptance to the Conference, they can ask the Program Committee as a whole to evaluate the proposal.
7. Organisers are encouraged to ask the Subject Reviewers to arrange submissions into panels (sessions), but it is ultimately the Program Chair to make sure this is done appropriately.
8. For predictability, proposals should have more or less the same format each year: a 250 to 350 word abstract, 5-10 relevant references, a 100-word professional biographical note.

Appendix B: Code of Conduct

1. The organisers must aim to ensure that the Conference and all of its related activities provide an inclusive and safe space for diverse participants of different backgrounds to engage in discussions on the fantastic.

2. All of the organisers, participants, and staff involved with the Conference are expected to treat each other with respect, communicate in a polite and professional manner, and avoid:

- bullying and harassment, which are broadly understood as aggressive, malicious, and offensive behaviour, verbal or physical, whose aim is to intimidate, ridicule, undermine or exclude individual(s),
- sexual harassment, which includes verbal or physical sexual advances, unwelcome physical contact or sexually-oriented gestures and language,
- discrimination against individual(s) due to their nationality, ethnicity, gender and sexual identity, academic status, religion, disability, age, appearance, body size, or any other aspect,
- stalking, be it physical, via social media or unwelcome photographing and recording
- any other intimidating or threatening behaviour, verbal or physical, including disruptive behaviour caused by the abuse of alcohol or substances.

3. Upon any incident breaching the Code of Conduct, the person affected by or witnessing the incident can report it to the current organisers to seek assistance in dealing with the unacceptable behaviour. Depending on the gravity of the incident, the report can be formulated as an informal or formal complaint. The organisers are required to:

- provide a safe and private space for the person affected or the witness, in which they can report the incident, ask for support, and decide on further action,
- contact the alleged offending party in order to inform them about the report made against them and ask about their perception of the incident,
- consult any available witness(es) of the incident for further details,
- act as mediators and seek, if possible, an acceptable resolution of the incident.
- and, if necessary, contact other external parties, support groups, or authorities.

4. The organisers investigating an incident should proceed in a discreet manner so as not to:

- compromise the identity of the person reporting the incident, or other people involved in it (victims, alleged offenders, witnesses)
- divulge any information about the incident,
- disturb other participants of the Conference.

5. Depending on the gravity of the offense, the offending party can be:

- asked to correct their behaviour,
- denied access to the Conference and all related activities, both present (without a refund) and future,
- reported to their home University for misconduct,
- reported to local security staff or law enforcement.

6. The group responsible for organizing the Conference in a given year can prepare, if need be, a more extensive version of the Code of Conduct, which can expand upon, but not contradict, the stipulations provided in this document so that the final document reflects their local policies, practices, and environment.