



## Unpaid Dues Delay Spanish Participation in European Science

by Lucas Laursen on 12 March 2013, 4:40 PM | [0 Comments](#)

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The European Science Foundation (ESF) has temporarily shut off support for Spanish researchers because Spain's member organizations failed to pay their membership fees for the foundation. The move—which an ESF spokesperson says should be temporary—may hobble conferences and workshops seeking ESF funding.

Systems biologist Saúl Ares of the National Center for Biotechnology in Madrid reported the suspension last week on his [blog](#). Together with Javier Buceta of the Barcelona Science Park, Ares applied to ESF for funds to organize an international workshop. But last week, ESF told the duo that it has suspended all support for Spanish activities from July 2013 onward—with the exception of one unnamed "high-profile" event in July—until Spain's two ESF member organizations pay their unpaid dues.

The laggards are the National Research Council (CSIC) and the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. The ministry did not respond to multiple requests for comment from *ScienceInsider*. Eusebio Jiménez Arroyo, CSIC's adjunct vice-president for scientific programming and the council's liaison with ESF, tells *ScienceInsider* that CSIC was prepared to pay its share of the delayed dues—about €700,000—as soon as it receives the funds from the ministry. He says he hopes to resolve the issue by the end of the month.

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ESF, which has a €52 million annual budget and member organizations in 29 countries, would not disclose the total amount owed by the two agencies or how many Spanish scientists are affected by the suspension. But Ares and Buceta are not the only ones; two other Spanish scientists tell *Science Insider* that they are missing out on ESF funding but, like Ares and Buceta, declined to comment in hopes that the problem will be ironed out. In a statement sent to *ScienceInsider*, ESF said it was in "constructive and on-going" negotiations with Spanish officials, and that it expects the suspension to end by mid-April.

Carlos Andradas, president of the [Confederation of Spanish Scientific Societies](#) and a mathematician at the Complutense University in Madrid, says the late payments threaten Spanish scientists' ability to collaborate. "We're losing opportunities," Andradas says.

As Ares [notes on his blog](#), the delays seem at odds with Spain's national science strategy, announced last month, which called for increased participation in E.U. funding schemes. It plans for a 90% rise in prestigious European Research Council starting grants and aligns Spain's research priorities with Horizon 2020, the European Commission's funding plan for 2014 to 2020. It also calls for foreign funding to grow [from 5.7% of science spending in 2010 to 15% in 2020](#).

The two agencies' behavior fits a pattern, however: Last year, Spain reduced its contribution to the European Space Agency, and it paid its [2011 contribution to CERN in December of 2012, more than a year late](#), putting its voting rights in danger. Spain is 2 two years behind on payments to the International Mathematical Union, Andradas says. "Our colleagues can stand a year or two of late payments, but we can't expect them to [wait] forever," he adds.

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