



Terms of Reference for Working Groups

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ABSTRACT

An EFAEP Working Group (WG) has responsibility for developing and reviewing specific issues/standpoints, relevant and beneficial to EFAEP or at least two of its Member Organisations (MOs). This document describes the guidelines and procedures for formation and operation of a WG. It also describes the formal relationship between a WG and the EFAEP Executive Committee (ExCo), as well as the role and responsibilities of the participating MOs.

DEFINITIONS

1. Working Group (WG): A team representing at least two Member Organisations (MOs), founded with the approval of the ExCo and on the basis of a specific and pre-defined result or subject, with the purpose to have a productive exchange of knowledge and experience. The WG needs to have a tangible objective including a time frame or action plan and an effective communication line with the ExCo.
2. Position Paper (PP): A detailed report, prepared by a WG, representing the view of EFAEP, on a specific topic, with the purpose to communicate this standpoint to the European environmental community and if possible influence environmental policy.

FORMATION OF A NEW WORKING GROUP

Objective: A WG can only be established at the initiative of at least two MOs. Any individual interested in creating a WG must obtain the advice and consent of its own Organisation, which is a MO of EFAEP. WGs are typically created to address a specific theme/problem or to produce one or more specific deliverables. Each WG needs to define clearly its goals and objectives. WGs can be subject-driven or result-driven. WGs are generally expected to be short-lived in nature. Upon completion of its goals and achievement of its objectives, the WG is terminated. A WG may also be terminated for other reasons (see below).

Applying for the formation of a Working Group:

Objective: To define a specific result or subject on the basis of which a MO can apply to the ExCo for the founding of a new WG.

- Procedure:**
- A. A MO can apply for the formation of a new WG by filling out the standard application form.

An example of a WG Application Form is included as Appendix A.
 - B. The MO has to define the goals and objectives of the WG in clear terms. The WG can be (1) result-driven, or (2) subject-driven.
 - C. The applying MO has to appoint a representative of its organisation by name, who will represent the MO within the WG.
 - D. A WG will be established if at least two MOs are involved. The applying MO can appoint at least one other WG member under the condition that it can prove by signature that the other MO agrees to be involved within the WG. If the applying MO is not able to convince a second MO to join the WG, the MO is still able to apply for the formation of a WG.

Criteria of acceptance: When determining whether it is appropriate to create a WG, the ExCo will evaluate and base its conclusion on the following criteria:

- Are the issues that the WG plans to address clear and relevant to EFAEP, at least two MOs and the European environmental community in general?
- Are the goals and objectives of the WG specific and reasonably achievable, and achievable within a reasonable time frame?
- Is there any level of urgency? Is the objective of the WG relevant to the moment of its application?
- Is the level of effort required to achieve the objective well accounted for?
- Does the WG's activities overlap with those of another WG?
- Can the applying and participating MO appoint an individual that holds sufficient knowledge and expertise on the subject of the WG, in order to produce a high quality result?
- Does the WG's goals overlap with other known work of another environmental organisation, and if so is adequate liaison in place?

Considering the above criteria, the ExCo, using its best judgement, will decide whether to support the formation of the WG.

Time of acceptance: The application form will be evaluated by the ExCo within 30 days of receipt.

If the decision of the ExCo is negative, the applying MO will receive a reasoned answer that explains the decision.

If the ExCo accepts the formation of a WG, a Charter needs to be drawn up by the ExCo Secretariat and approved by the prospective WG Chair, on the basis of which final approval is made by the ExCo.

Charter: A Charter is a contract between a WG and the GA (represented by the ExCo), committing the WG to performing a set of tasks in order to meet explicit milestones and delivering some specific "products".

A Charter (1) lists relevant administrative information for the WG; (2) specifies the direction or objectives of the WG and describes the approach that will be taken to achieve the goals; and (3) enumerates a set of milestones together with time frames for their completion.

When the prospective Chair(s) is satisfied with the Charter form and content, it becomes the basis for forming a WG.

Charters may be renegotiated periodically to reflect the current status, organisation or goals of the WG.

Specifically, each charter consists of the following sections:

1) WG name

2) Chair(s)

The working group can have one Chair and one Vice Chair to represent the WG and to perform the administrative functions of the group. Generally, a WG is limited to two Chairs.

3) Nominated ExCo Member

The ExCo needs to appoint a representative, with whom the WG in general and specifically its Chair(s) will establish a direct communication line in order to periodically report work progress and status, as well as reflect on the level of compliance with the Charter.

4) Description of WG

The focus and intent of the WG shall be set forth briefly. By reading this section alone, an individual should be able to decide whether this WG is of interest.

5) Goals and milestones

The WG Charter must establish a timetable for specific work items. While this may be renegotiated over time, the list of milestones and dates facilitates the Nominated ExCo Member tracking of WG progress and status, and it is indispensable to potential participants identifying the critical moments for input.

Milestones shall consist of deliverables that can be qualified as showing specific achievement. This milestone list is expected to be updated periodically.

An example of a WG charter is included as Appendix B.

Charter review and approval:

Once the WG Chair(s) and the Nominated ExCo Member have approved the WG charter, the charter is submitted for review and approval by the ExCo. After a review period of 15 working days the proposed Charter is posted on the EFAEP website and to the EFAEP General Assembly mailing list as a public notice that the formation of the WG is being considered. After another review period of maximum 15 working days, the ExCo may approve the Charter as-is, it may request that changes be made in the Charter, or may decline to approve chartering of the WG.

If the ExCo approves the formation of the WG it remands the approved Charter to the Secretariat who records and enters the information into the EFAEP database. The WG is announced as formed and founded to all MOs by the Secretariat.

ORGANISATION OF A WORKING GROUP

Chair(s):

The WG should have a Chair to represent the WG and to perform the administrative functions of the group. The group may also appoint a Vice Chair.

The Chair's responsibility encompasses at least the following:

1. Ensure WG process and content management
The Chair has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that a WG achieves progress and meets its milestones. The Chair is also responsible to ensure that the WG operates in an open and fair manner.
2. Plan WG sessions
3. Communicate results of sessions
4. Distribute the workload
It is the task of the Chair to motivate enough experts to allow for a fair distribution of the workload. The WG Chair can appoint a WG Secretary, if needed.
5. Development of Position Papers
WGs may produce Position Papers and such a document needs an Author and an Editor. The Chair must make sure that authors of WG Position Papers incorporate changes as agreed to by the WG.

Nominated ExCo Member:

The Nominated ExCo Member has the authority and the responsibility to support and assist the WG in making organisational decisions at the request of the Chair or when circumstances warrant an intervention. The Nominated ExCo Member is responsible for overseeing that WGs in their area produce coherent, coordinated and timely output as a contribution to the overall results of EFAEP.

The Nominated ExCo Member needs to be considered as a full WG Participant.

WG Participants:

All MOs can appoint maximum two representatives to become a WG Participant. The WG can call for Participants using the EFAEP mailing lists and website. Individuals who must be a member of a MO can apply to become a WG Participant by applying to the Chair of a WG. Such applications should include a CV and a note explaining how the individual could contribute to the work of the group.

WG Operation:

The Chair will attempt to reach consensus in the workings of the group but where this is not possible, a vote shall be taken of all those members of the group. The group shall determine how this is carried out but must include the views of all those concerned.

WORKING GROUP DOCUMENTS AND POSITION PAPER

Session agenda:

The final session agenda should be posted to the WG mailing list at least 10 days before the session and should be sent as well to the ExCo Secretariat for publication on the EFAEP website.

Session documents:

All relevant documents to be discussed at a WG session should be published and available to each WG Participant at least 5 days before the start of such a session in order to assure the level of quality of such a session.

Draft Position Paper:

A Draft Position Paper (DPP) is a detailed report, prepared by a WG, representing the view of EFAEP, on a specific topic, with the purpose to communicate this standpoint to the MOs of EFAEP with the clear objective to be approved as a EFAEP Position Paper.

Submission of the DPP:

Once this is done, the DPP exactly as agreed to by the WG must be sent electronically to the EFAEP Secretariat and the Nominated ExCo Member.

- The e-mail must contain the reference to the DPP's ID filename, and the action requested, including a timeline and/or deadline.
- Unless returned by the ExCo to the WG for further development, progressing the DPP for administrative approval (within the timeframe set by the WG) is then the responsibility of the ExCo.

- After the administrative approval by the ExCo (mainly checking the level of compliance), responsibility for distribution of the DPP to the MOs is the joint responsibility of the WG Chair and the EFAEP Secretariat.

Review of the DPP:

The MOs need to review the DPP and communicate comments and conclusion to both the WG Chair and the EFAEP Secretariat within the timeframe set out by the WG. If these comments and conclusions reach the WG Chair and the EFAEP Secretariat after the deadline, it is the sole decision of the WG to reject or take into consideration these comments and conclusions.

Usually minimal review is necessary in the case of a submission of a DPP from a WG. The review will lead to one of these possible conclusions:

- i. The DPP is accepted as is.
- ii. Changes regarding content are suggested to the WG. Suggestions from the MO must be clear and direct, so as to facilitate the WG correction of the DPP. If the WG can explain to the satisfaction of the MO why the changes are not necessary, the document will be accepted for publication. If the changes are made the revised DPP may be resubmitted for review.
- iii. The DPP is rejected. Any DPP rejection will be accompanied by specific and thorough arguments from the MO. Although the WG process is structured in a way that this alternative is not likely to arise for documents coming from a WG, each MO has the right to reject documents under the sole condition that it is able to clearly describe and motivate the reasons for such a rejection. The WG has to accept the rejection by a MO and is at least at the obligation to define a clear note to the Position Paper stating that the MO in particular has rejected the content and the reasons why.
- iv. If the DPP is rejected by more than one MO for the same reason, the WG may choose to include a minority view.

Final approval and publication of the Position Paper:

After reviewing the DPP, it is the sole decision of the WG to approve the final result of the Position Paper (PP).

If a PP is final, the WG together with the EFAEP Co-ordinator and the EFAEP Project Officer has to work out a Communication Plan, in which a list of actions has to be defined on how, who and within what timeframe the PP will be brought out into the open.

The EFAEP Co-ordinator takes the first action in the publication process of the PP by putting the final version of the PP on the EFAEP Website. From the moment of publication of the PP on the EFAEP website, the PP become a public document.

Be aware, each PP needs to state clearly that the EFAEP ExCo holds the *responsibility as a publisher* of this document. Therefore it is considered to be the role and responsibility of the ExCo to supervise the execution of the Communication Plan of the PP, and take action if something goes wrong.

WORKING GROUP TERMINATION

WGs are typically chartered to accomplish a specific task or tasks. After the tasks are complete, the WG will be disbanded.

If, at some point, it becomes evident that a WG is unable to complete the work outlined in the Charter, or if the assumptions on which that work was based have been modified in discussion or by experience, the Nominated ExCo Member, in consultation with all WG Participants can either:

1. Recharter to refocus its tasks,
2. Choose new Chair(s), or
3. Disband.

If the WG disagrees with the Nominated ExCo Member's choice, it may appeal to the ExCo. However it is the ExCo's strong belief that in order to achieve the goals of openness and fairness, all conflicts must be resolved by a process of open review and discussion.