



The mission of the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS) is to ensure that research contributes to halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

Mandate and Terms of Reference

of

the Steering Committee

of the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy

1. Title of the group

The group shall be called the “EPBRS Steering Committee”.

2. Terms of Reference and Mandate

2.1. Role of the group

The primary objective of the EPBRS Steering Committee is to discuss the political and strategic orientation and activities of the EPBRS, and make suggestions to the EPBRS to help to improve the relevance and impact of its work. To achieve this objective it will:

- discuss and make recommendations¹ on high level strategic and policy issues, including the objectives and priorities or matters of significant risk to the EPBRS;
- discuss and make recommendations on issues that the EPBRS considers to be of major strategic significance to its work, including but not limited to the list of possible topics for future presidency meetings of the EPBRS;
- discuss and make recommendations on other issues that its members consider to be of importance to the EPBRS;
- discuss and make recommendations on issues on which there has been a strong division of opinion within the EPBRS;
- regularly review, and where necessary recommend actions to increase, the effectiveness and impact of the EPBRS;
- initiate, produce, regularly review, update and where necessary recommend changes to the EPBRS work plan;
- review the need for specialised working groups on selected topics, and recommend the establishment or closure of such groups;
- act as the point of contact for organisations that wish to establish dialogue with the EPBRS;

¹ In each case the Steering Committee makes its recommendations to the full EPBRS membership, for discussion by email or in an EPBRS meeting.

- review, recommend and maintain links with external organisations, and in particular maintain a dialogue with the SBSTTA and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and report to it on the activities of the EPBRS;
- discuss and make recommendations on any matter involving an alteration in the mandate, terms of reference, membership, or structure of the EPBRS;
- review, discuss and make recommendations on the logistic requirements of the EPBRS, sources and means of political and financial support, and its capability to function correctly in the future.

The Steering Committee cannot make binding decisions on these issues, either on behalf of the EPBRS, or on behalf of other stakeholders.

The steering committee can decide on meetings or other activities of the EPBRS between the bi-annual presidency meetings.

2.2. Steering Committee Membership

Membership of the Steering Committee is open to EPBRS members and to staff of the European Institutions.

2.3. Roles required

The Steering Committee shall consist of a minimum of a chair, deputy chair, secretary and two ordinary members².

The chair sets the agenda, convenes meetings and ensures that they are properly conducted.

The deputy chair takes the role of the chair when the chair is not present.

The secretary plans, co-ordinates and monitors all Steering Committee-related activities including distributing the agenda, attending the meetings, preparing minutes and reporting recommendations to the EPBRS.

2.4. Size and composition the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee shall consist of no fewer than 5 and no more than 12 elected individuals and ex-officio members.

2.5. Ex-officio members of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee may propose ex-officio members³.

3. Rules of procedure

The Steering Committee shall elect its chair, deputy chair and secretary. If neither the chair nor deputy chair are present at a Steering Committee meeting the members present shall elect one of their number to act as chair at that meeting.

3.1. Methods of work

3.1.1. The chair is responsible for convening meetings.

² In the remainder of this document the word “members” includes all individuals participating in the Steering Committee unless there is an explicit distinction between the officials (chair, vice-chair and secretary) and the ordinary members.

³ Present ex-officio members include a representative of the Services of the Commission and the coordinator of BioPlatform.

Meetings will normally take place immediately before, immediately after, or both before and after, EPBRS meetings, in a place and at a time that is convenient for participants to the EPBRS meeting.

The chair may convene meetings at other times when he finds support of at least two third of the members of the Steering Committee that it is necessary to do so. The secretary is responsible for ensuring that the agenda of the meeting is made available to the members in good time before the meeting.

- 3.1.2. Meetings shall be open to all participants of the EPBRS.
- 3.1.3. The participants of the EPBRS who are not members of the Steering Committee have observer status and are entitled to speak but may not vote.
- 3.1.4. Business will be conducted by careful and considered deliberation leading to recommendations to the EPBRS. Recommendations shall be decided by consensus where possible.

Consensus means that after deliberation all members support a particular point of view.

Where consensus is not achieved recommendations shall be decided by simple majority vote of members voting on the question. In the case of a tied vote the person acting as chair shall be entitled to a second or casting vote.

- 3.1.5. A quorum is constituted by half of the number of individuals composing the Steering Committee (rounded up when the number in the Steering Committee is uneven).
- 3.1.6. The Steering Committee may decide (by consensus or majority vote) to ask parties who are not members of the Steering Committee to participate in a meeting so that they can provide relevant information, material or knowledge to the Steering Committee.
- 3.1.7. The Steering Committee may establish committees consisting of 3 or more of its members and refer to them any matter in the Steering Committee's mandate. It may co-opt other EPBRS participants onto such committees.

3.2. Channels of communication

The Steering Committee secretary reports within four weeks of each Steering Committee meeting the Steering Committee recommendations to the EPBRS members.

The Steering Committee Chair makes a report to each EPBRS meeting.

The Steering Committee chair, deputy chair and secretary act as focal points of contact between the EPBRS and external organisations.

3.3. Consultation process

Meetings are open to all EPBRS participants, and this will normally allow sufficient consultation on most issues. The Steering Committee will determine whether to consult more formally on particular issues, and if it decides to consult, will determine the form and method of consultation. Consultation might involve but is not restricted to plenary or partial meetings of the EPBRS, focus groups, questionnaires and surveys, or workshops.

3.4. Review of terms of reference and mandate

The EPBRS shall review the terms of reference and mandate of the Steering Committee at least every 2 years, taking into account any recommendation from the Steering Committee for modifications.

The Steering Committee may at any time ask the EPBRS to consider a recommendation for changes to its terms of reference and mandate.

3.5. Remuneration for Expenses and Time

Participation in the Steering Committee is at the expense of its members.

3.6. Conflict of Interest

No member of the Steering Committee may participate in a discussion where such participation would give rise to a potential conflict of interest.

4. Selecting Members

4.1. Nomination

Nominations will close on the evening of the day before the election.

The Steering Committee secretary shall make nominations available to all members of the EPBRS orally during a plenary meeting of the EPBRS.

A person may be added to the list of candidates standing for election only after (a) one member of the EPBRS has nominated that person, (b) another member has seconded the nomination and (c) the individual concerned has accepted the nomination.

Those eligible to nominate or second nominations are those individuals who at the time of the call for nominations are currently designated as members of the EPBRS by their national representative on the Programme Committee.

No person may nominate or second his or her own candidacy.

Members of the Steering Committee who are standing down but who re-qualify under the provisions of 4.1 may stand for re-election.

4.2. Selection Process

The election process is intended to ensure that, for the sake of continuity, each Steering Committee member serves a full term, while, for the sake of the opportunity for renewal, approximately half of the Steering Committee stands down (for possible re-election) each year. Frequency and timing of elections

The members of the Steering Committee will be elected by the EPBRS plenary during the EPBRS meetings.

Elections shall take place annually at the first meeting of the EPBRS of the calendar year.

4.2.1. Eligibility to vote

Those eligible to vote are those EPBRS members present at the meeting who at the time of the election are currently designated by their national representative on the Programme Committee.

4.2.2. Election

At the time of the election, some members of the Steering Committee (the “serving members”) have served only half their terms. If the number of serving members plus the number of candidates standing for election is equal to or less than the maximum number of Steering Committee members provided for under 2.4, all the candidates standing for election are considered elected.

If the number of serving members plus the number of candidates standing for election is more than the maximum number of Steering Committee members provided for under 2.4, elections shall be by secret ballot.

Each national delegation will have 2 votes. If only one member of a national delegation is present at the meeting, he or she may use both votes.

Vacant seats in the steering committee will be filled with the candidates receiving the majority of votes. In case of equal votes in filling the last vacant seat selection is taking by throwing a coin.

The member representing the Commission is selected annually, or more frequently as circumstances require, by Commission participants.

4.3. Term of Service

Officers shall be elected for a single term, or until their successors are elected, or until their national representative on the Programme Committee implicitly or explicitly withdraws their membership of the EPBRS, whichever comes sooner.

Terms shall begin at the close of the meeting at which they are elected.

The term of a Steering Committee member lasts until the close of the EPBRS meeting that takes place approximately two years after the individual was elected. Thus under the normal rhythm of the meetings, each Steering Committee member will serve for 4 EU Presidency meetings.

5. Inaugural Meeting

The inaugural meeting of the new Steering Committee shall take place during or immediately after the close of a meeting of the EPBRS at which an election occurred. At this meeting the Steering Committee shall elect a chair, deputy chair and secretary.