

**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 recommendations<sup>1</sup> 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 meetings or other activities of the EPBRS that are not connected with the bi-annual presidency meetings;
- 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;
- review, recommend and maintain links with external organisations, and in particular maintain a dialogue with the SBSTTA secretariat, 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;

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

- 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, either on behalf of the EPBRS, or on behalf of other stakeholders.

## ***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 members<sup>2</sup>.

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 individuals.

## ***2.5. Ex-officio members of the Steering Committee***

The Commission shall be represented on the Steering Committee.

The coordinator of BioPlatform shall also be represented at the Steering Committee.

# **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. Absences***

A member who is absent for 3 consecutive meetings of the Steering Committee must resign or stand for re-election.

## ***3.2. Methods of work***

3.2.1. The chair is responsible for convening meetings.

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 where it is the consensus opinion of the Steering Committee that it is necessary to do so.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

- 3.2.2. The secretary is responsible for ensuring that the agenda of the meeting is made available to the members in good time before the meeting.
- 3.2.3. Meetings shall normally be open to all participants of the EPBRS, but may be held *in camera* where it is the consensus opinion of the Steering Committee that it is necessary to do so.
- 3.2.4. In open meetings, 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.
- 3.2.5. 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.
- 3.2.6. 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).
- 3.2.7. 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.
- 3.2.8. 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.

### **3.3. 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.

### **3.4. Consultation process**

Meetings are normally 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.

### **3.5. 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.

### **3.6. Remuneration for Expenses and Time**

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

### **3.7. 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**

At least 7 days before the election, the Steering Committee secretary shall announce to the members of the EPBRS that nominations are open for individuals to serve on the Steering Committee. 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 either in writing before the meeting (e.g. by email or on a website) or in writing (e.g. on a notice board) or 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.

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### **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. Special provisions apply to the first election.

#### **4.2.1. 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.

#### **4.2.2. 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.

#### **4.2.3. 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

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of Steering Committee members provided for under 2.4, all the candidates standing for election are considered elected.

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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.

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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.

Every candidate who receives 10 votes or more is considered elected. If so few candidates are elected in a first round of voting that the Steering Committee would have fewer members than the minimum provided for under 2.4, unelected candidates may decide to stand down, after which a second vote will take place among the remaining candidates, who will again require 10 or more votes to be elected. If the minimum provided for under 2.4 is still not achieved after a second ballot, a third (and if needed, subsequent) round(s) shall take place in which the threshold for election will be lowered to 7 votes.

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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.

### **4.4. Special provisions for first election**

Half of the members of the new Steering Committee (rounded down) will serve for one half term before standing down. Those affected will be identified at the subsequent EPBRS meeting either of their own accord, or by drawing lots, or by any other means acceptable to the members of the Steering Committee. The names of these members will be announced to the EPBRS either orally or in writing before the close of that meeting.

## **5. Inaugural Meeting**

The inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee shall take place during or immediately after the close of the Greek meeting of the EPBRS. At this meeting the Steering Committee shall elect a chair, deputy chair and secretary.

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