

WORKING GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Working Groups are at the heart of ERRIN's activities and play a key role in delivering ERRIN's missions. ERRIN currently has 13 Working Groups, all led by ERRIN members. The Working Groups secure the bottom up nature of the network and also put members leading the Working Groups in the driving seat when it comes to the network's priorities. The Working Group leaders play an important role in ERRIN, by defining the networks thematic priorities, in collaboration with the wider membership, as well as by steering its activities.

Being a Working Group leader also serves as an excellent opportunity to network, to establish close contacts with peers from other regional Brussels Offices and to develop strategic partnerships with local and regional research and innovation actors across Europe. The role also provides visibility, for example, in terms of representing ERRIN in events and meetings vis-à-vis European Institutions and partner organisations.

2. THE WORKING GROUPS

ERRIN currently has 13 Working Groups (WGs). The WGs are based on members’ priorities and on current funding opportunities. The WG activities are at the heart of ERRIN’s activities, as this is where our members meet regularly to exchange information, present regional good practices, build new partnerships, develop joint projects, network and much more.

In line with the Horizon Europe programme, ERRIN has aligned its activities to mirror the structure and clustering of the new research and innovation programme. Each Working Group will coordinate its activities with other relevant WGs within the thematic cluster as well as beyond when necessary.

The WGs are open to the participation of all interested ERRIN members. Only the Policy WG is reserved for WG leaders and members who follow closely and have an interest in shaping European R&I policy. Participation in this group is only possible through a personal request to the ERRIN Director.



3. ROLE OF THE WORKING GROUP LEADERS

Each WG is led by a group of three to six leaders. This group meets regularly to coordinate the activities of the WG, to plan upcoming meetings or develop contribution documents, and to discuss current issues. Accordingly, the WG leaders are expected to stay in contact with each other on matters related to topic of their WG.

Being a WG leader provides an excellent opportunity to bring in regional priorities and set the agenda both for the WG and the wider network in close collaboration with the ERRIN members participating in their WG. It is also a way to showcase your organisation and region towards other members, partners and the EU institutions. WG leaders are also a key partner in ERRIN's project process.

3.1. PRINCIPLES

WG leaders are appointed in their personal capacity – the role is non-transferrable and cannot be shared with another person.

If a leader takes a leave from work for a longer period of time, this should be communicated to the Secretariat and the co-leaders. As the role is non-transferrable, there is no automatic replacement. If a member chooses another person from their organisation as a temporary replacement, this needs to be approved by all other leaders of the WG.

If a leader stops being active and does not take part in the WG activities for a longer period of time, the Secretariat together with the co-leaders can decide to organise a discussion with the co-leader in question and if necessary decide not to continue the collaboration.

3.2. CRITERIA TO BECOME A CO-LEADER

Any member taking on the role as a WG leader should meet the following criteria:

- The person should be based in Brussels;
- The main topic of the WG should be part of the person's work portfolio; and
- The person should have enough time to allocate to the work as a WG leader and be available to attend most meetings (WG leaders' meetings, WG meetings, annual strategy workshops, Annual General Meetings).

3.3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- Leading the preparation of the WG annual plan and taking responsibility for its implementation while engaging the wider membership;
- Liaising with the other WG leaders, Management Board and reporting on activities at the Annual General Meetings;

- Staying up to date on EU policy developments and priorities regarding the WG's topics and keep members informed about important deadlines, opportunities, etc.;
- Staying up to date on project opportunities regarding the WG's topics and keeping members informed about important deadlines, opportunities, etc.;
- Taking an active role in the planning and organisation of WG meetings in collaboration with the ERRIN secretariat;
- Setting up meetings with EU institutions and, whenever relevant, drafting policy statements to be approved by the Management Board; and
- Representing ERRIN at external meetings.

3.4. REPRESENTING ERRIN

WG leaders have the opportunity to represent ERRIN at external events as the network is regularly invited to join expert groups and panels.

Any representation should be discussed with the WG leaders and the ERRIN secretariat, with the aim to agree on a common message and receive updated information.

When a WG leader represents ERRIN in an expert group, they have a responsibility to discuss with the Secretariat, the WG leaders and whenever possible with the wider membership on the topic and the messages to be brought forward.

4. POLICY AND ADVOCACY

As each of the WGs follows policy developments in their thematic area, providing input to various EU initiatives and policies should be an integral part of the WG's activities. When preparing policy recommendations, the following points should be kept in mind:

- Planned policy work should be included in the annual plan. The key topics and priorities for the WG should clearly reflect the identified EU initiatives or policy processes that will be worked on.
- The ERRIN Management Board should be informed about all policy-related developments as early as possible. The Management Board's endorsement is required for all policy papers before they can be published.

The Policy WG has an important coordination role when it comes to influencing policy. It provides a place for all Working Groups to raise and discuss policy-related issues. All WG leaders are therefore encouraged to attend the Policy WG meetings.

5. WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

5.1. ANNUAL PLAN

The annual plan sets out the priorities for the WG and is drafted at the end of each calendar year. It includes the WG's objectives, policy context, and foreseen activities and should consider the available resources of both the WG leaders and the Secretariat.

The WG leaders are responsible for developing the annual plan but it should be co-designed with the members of the WG. The annual strategy workshops are a key moment in this planning process.

Although the annual plan provides an overview of what the WG plan to do during the year, there is certain flexibility for spontaneous ideas as new EU initiatives come up. It is, however, important to make sure that:

- There are enough resources amongst the co-leaders to focus on an additional topic;
- The activity is in line with the overall priorities defined at the beginning of the year; and
- That the topic it is not already being addressed by any other WG.

5.2. ANNUAL STRATEGY WORKSHOPS

To develop the annual plan, the WG leaders meet according to the clusters with the objective to:

- Discuss strategic topics and activities, including project development and potential collaboration between WGs and clusters;
- Gain an overview of external processes, strategies, thematic platforms, events etc. relevant to the WG;
- Discuss links between ERRIN's projects and the activities in the Working Groups; and
- Discuss how to involve the wider membership.

The planning process is organised in a collaborative approach with the different WGs, to cover all crosscutting thematic areas and to plan joint activities.

The WG leaders should involve the wider membership in this planning process so that they can provide input on priorities, topics, specific activities to be organised, suggestions for project development and partnership building etc. The WG leaders are encouraged to develop and co-organise activities with the member/s who have proposed an activity that is included in the annual plan.

5.3. WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

WG meetings are organised according to the annual plan. Each meeting should have a defined concept and aim. For example, WG meetings can be organised in the form of:

- An information session;
- An interactive discussion;
- A policy dialogue;
- A project development session, workshop or brokerage event; or
- A session or a side event related to a European level initiative such as the European Green Week or European Week of Regions and Cities.

The structure of each WG meeting is being defined by the WG leaders with the support of the ERRIN secretariat. To keep the balance between theoretical and practical aspects, the agenda often includes institutional representatives and regional examples.

6. SUPPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Working Groups are facilitated by the ERRIN secretariat. There are two employees assigned to each WG who provide support throughout the year – from the planning process, through organisation of events, to the follow up activities.

Overview table - Secretariat responsibilities

CLUSTER	Working Group	Responsible Pair		Cluster responsible
Strategic and programme driven groups	Policy	Pirita	Etienne	Pirita
	Smart Specialisation	Etienne	TBD	
	Innovation & Investment	TBD	Agnieszka	
	Science and Education for Society	Hilary	Ewa	
Bioeconomy, food, natural resources	Bioeconomy	Heidi	Hilary	Heidi
	Blue Growth	Hilary	Heidi	
Low carbon	Energy & Climate	Agnieszka	Etienne	Agnieszka
	Transport	Gaia	Agnieszka	
	Smart Cities	Heidi	Ryan/Pirita	
Health	Health	Hilary	Gaia	Hilary
Culture & creativity	Design & Creativity	Agnieszka	Gaia	Gaia
	Tourism & Cultural Heritage	Teresa	Gaia	
Cross cutting	ICT	Ewa	Ryan	Ewa

The Secretariat serves as a link between the WGs, WG leaders and the wider ERRIN membership. The Secretariat encourages good collaboration between the WG leaders and the WGs, and ensures the smooth running of the WG activities. The Secretariat also makes sure that the WG activities are well planned and promoted and participates in the development of activities in collaboration with the WG leaders. In addition, the Secretariat actively creates links between the WGs and projects in which ERRIN is a partner for example through updates, practical examples and potential joint activities.

The Secretariat should always be kept in copy of all WG related communication.

7. RECRUITING A NEW CO-LEAD

All WGs should follow the steps outlined below when recruiting a new co-lead, the only exception being the Policy WG that works in a different way from the other WGs.

7.1. COMMUNICATING THE VACANCY

The notice that a WG is looking for a new leader will be communicated by the Secretariat via a broadcast message as well as a noticeboard post.

The notice will clearly state the role of a WG leader, the selection criteria, how to apply, and the deadline.

7.2. SELECTION CRITERIA

The new co-leader is selected by the existing co-leader group based on a set of criteria. Apart from adhering to the principles and overall criteria outlined in section 2, the selection of the new co-lead will be based on the following selection criteria:

- Knowledge of and previous involvement in the WG's activities of both the member organisation and the candidate
- Variety of topics in the thematic area in the Working Group i.e., the fit of the candidate's profile with the other co-leads'
- Capacity of the candidate and the member organisation: Does the candidate/office lead other WGs or other hold any other positions in ERRIN?
- Commitment and personal suitability
- Geographical balance
- Gender balance

Being a voluntary position that is carried out free of charge, great emphasis is put on the personal suitability and dynamics of the group when a new co-leader is selected.

Following the ERRIN policy related to diversity and deepening engagement across Europe, the role of members who are not yet leading other Working Groups or are not part of the ERRIN Management Board can be prioritised in the selection process.

The decision is communicated to the candidates by the Secretariat.