

# WORKING GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

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**ERRIN** European Regions  
Research and  
Innovation Network



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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 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 network's 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.

Being a leader also puts you at the forefront of ERRIN project work, especially when it comes to mapping of strategic calls and project facilitation activities. Being a leader allows you to create valuable contacts and help developing ERRIN's project facilitation activities to be in line with member needs.

## 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 core 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 programme’s structure and clustering. Each Working Group should coordinate its activities with other relevant WGs within the thematic cluster as well as beyond when relevant. This will also allow ERRIN to go beyond a traditional sector approach, create connections with various thematic areas and break silos.

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. These leaders meet 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.

The role of a co-leader is not restricted to a specific timeframe. As the leaders drive the activity of the network, it is important that they are in the position to allocate sufficient time and effort to the task. If a change occurs in the work portfolio or responsibility of the person within their organisation that prevents them to be active in the working group, they should inform the Secretariat – and step-down from the role, if needed. In that case, the remaining co-leaders, in agreement with the Secretariat, can decide to reopen a co-leader position.

If a leader stops being active and does not take part in the WG activities, the Secretariat together with the co-leaders can decide to organise a meeting with the co-leader in question to discuss if he/she can continue to fulfil the role of a leader.

### 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.

The ERRIN Secretariat provides assistance for the smooth running of the WGs and have a facilitating role in the Working Groups. ERRIN staff will not be able to take over the tasks of WG leaders.

### **3.4. REPRESENTING ERRIN**

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

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.

ERRIN is currently represented by the WG leaders in the following European Commission expert groups: Interregional Innovation Investment (I3), Cultural Heritage.

## 4. POLICY AND ADVOCACY

As each of the WGs follows policy developments in their thematic area, providing input to EU programmes and initiatives should be an integral part of the WG's activities. However, when preparing input papers and 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.
- When developing policy papers, the whole iteration process should be defined in the annual plan including possible drafting meetings.
- The policy papers should focus on research and innovation dimension and be based on practical experiences and examples from the regional actors / ecosystems.
- 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, and the respective leaders, to raise and discuss policy-related issues. The Policy Working Group follows the key R&I policy and programme related developments and is an important platform to share knowledge and information related to Horizon Europe and overall R&I policy developments such as the European Research Area and the New European Innovation Agenda. All WG leaders are therefore encouraged to attend the Policy WG meetings.

## 5. WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

While taking on a role of a WG leader allows you to directly guide WG activities. However, as ERRIN is a network of around 120 different regions and their stakeholders, wider membership priorities need to be taken into account whenever planning any WG activities. In this context, it is also essential that ERRIN staff is involved in any decisions regarding organisation of the meeting (confirmation of topic, speakers, meeting type etc.).

Every year in autumn, ERRIN organises an Annual Member Survey to map all its members' priorities and interests for the upcoming calendar year. The results of the survey will provide a basis for the discussions in the annual strategy workshops that take place in the autumn. This ensures that the wider membership perspective is always taken into account, reflecting the diversity of the network. This discussion takes place initially during the annual strategy workshops, to be later kept in mind in the annual plan planning process of each WG.

## 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 among the co-leaders and the Secretariat 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 EU level strategies, external processes, 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.

Ahead of the annual strategy workshops, the ERRIN secretariat organises a general Annual Member Survey that scopes members' R&I priorities, key themes and expectations on project development activities. The outcomes of the survey support the planning process as well as aim to offer a broad picture of the members' expectations.

The WG leaders should take into account the wider membership's input on priorities, topics, specific activities to be organised, suggestions for project development and partnership building etc. The WG leaders are also encouraged to co-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.

When a leader or a group of leaders calls a WG meeting, they should take responsibility for its positive outcome and take an active role whenever needed. The main roles, such as moderator/facilitator or presenters should be defined in the initial stage, and if they are not done by the leaders a substitute should be identified externally. If fit, leaders can also involve members who have the necessary skills or knowledge on the topic to take on these roles. These functions should be defined ahead of time to avoid last-minute requests and rushed preparation.

The leaders' responsibility when it comes to planning WG meetings also applies to drafting the agenda (objectives, type of session, structure), as well as identifying and contacting speakers. When identifying the date and time of the meeting, it should always be consulted beforehand with other WG leaders and ERRIN staff, to make sure the proposed date doesn't overlap with any other planned events that may not yet be published on the ERRIN website. The WG leaders should reflect on the goal of the meeting together with ERRIN staff and take a proactive role in identifying the right speakers/moderators/presenters, from ERRIN contacts or their own professional network. They should also take an active role in representing ERRIN in communications with potential speakers, sending invitations, enquiries, and all information needed for the success of the event.

WG meetings should be announced on the ERRIN website well ahead of the foreseen meeting date. Online information sessions should be announced at least two weeks in advance. More complex meetings, such as policy dialogues or interactive sessions that require more planning should be announced at least 1 month in advance to allow for the mobilisation of the membership.

When organising WG meetings featuring presentations of regional examples, WG leaders should always aim to open a call for regional examples on ERRIN Noticeboard prior to the meeting to ensure transparency and offer opportunities for the wider membership to take an active role. Showcasing regional practice allow members to take an active role and share their expertise with the others. Following the ERRIN policy related to diversity and deepening engagement across Europe, geographical balance should be taken into account when selecting regional examples to be showcased i.e. not only prioritising best practice/excellence in the selection process.

## 5.4. RESOURCES

Every year, all ERRIN working groups can use up to 1,000€, allocated from the ERRIN budget, to cover small costs related to working group activities, such as lunches, networking drinks, etc. The annual budget cannot be exceeded and should be used in line with ERRIN’s usual procedures for purchases and event organisation. If a meeting is hosted by a member or WG leader, they should also offer, as a minimum, a welcome coffee or water, which should not come out of ERRIN’s budget.

## 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.

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 and consulted in advance by the WG leaders before setting any public meeting dates, approving final versions of documents (e.g. agendas) and sharing them externally.

### Overview table - Secretariat responsibilities

CLUSTER	Working Group	Responsible Pair		Cluster responsible
Strategic and programme driven WGs	Policy	Ewa	Pirita	Pirita
	Smart Specialisation	Ewa	Rodolphe/Pirita	
	Innovation & Investment	Rodolphe	Pirita	
	Science and Education for Society	Astrid	Pirita	
Bioeconomy, food, natural resources	Bioeconomy	Heidi	Astrid & Gianpiero	Astrid
	Blue Economy	Julie	Heidi	
Low carbon	Energy & Climate	Rodolphe	Julie	Heidi
	Transport	Gaia	xx	
	Smart Cities	Heidi	Ryan/Pirita	
Health	Health	Gaia	Lucy	Gaia
Culture & creativity	Design & Creativity	Agnieszka	Francesca	Agnieszka
	Tourism & Cultural Heritage	Teresa	Francesca	
Cross cutting	ICT	Ewa	Rodolphe	Ewa

## 7. RECRUITING A NEW CO-LEADER

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 3, 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.