Framework for Standing Groups and Research Networks

Introduction

Standing Groups and Research Networks are an important and integral element of the ECPR and play a key role in delivering the mission of the organisation to its membership and wider community. The ECPR's Groups and Networks provide a basis for the nurturing and development of all sub-fields of political science, whether broad or specialised, reflecting and helping to grow the diversity and inclusivity of the ECPR.

Standing Groups and Research Networks operate as distinct groups with their own memberships but under the auspices of the ECPR. As such, they can organise and participate in a wide range of activities that enable them to develop and grow their field of research and offering to the scholarly community, and by association enable the ECPR to extend its reach beyond both its membership and traditional boundaries.

As integral parts of the ECPR, groups and networks are formally embedded in the academic programmes of the Joint Sessions and General Conference and the editorial structure of the *PRX* (*Political Research Exchange*) journal. These formal structures allow Standing Groups and Research Networks not only to help shape the academic content of these important ECPR activities, but also to provide an outlet for research stimulated by the group and produced by its members.

Groups and networks have access to an extensive range of services and benefits to help them to develop and deliver their own activities and events. This includes: financial support; provision of banking services and advice; a full suite of event management services including use of the ECPR's bespoke online conference registration and payment systems; publishing advice; and publicity and marketing support.

Those elected to the Steering Committees of Standing Groups and Research Networks are key personnel in the strategic delivery of the ECPR and as such are invited to attend annual meetings with the Executive Committee and ECPR staff and to use the organisation's headquarters, Harbour House, for their own meetings or group business when in the UK.

This Framework regulates the governance and operation of Standing Groups and Research Networks. It replaces all previous versions and guidelines, including the first iteration enacted in April 2014.

1. **Definition of terms**

   1.1. **Standing Group**: Standing Groups organise significant sub disciplinary areas or broad research themes over an indefinite time period. Standing Groups have a sizeable membership base and offer a range of activities.

   1.2. **Research Network**: Research Networks organise relatively small sub disciplinary areas or specialised research themes and can operate over a temporary lifespan, possibly testing the viability of a group before applying for Standing Group status.

   1.3. **ECPR Members**: The ECPR's member institutions are concerned with the teaching and research of political science and international relations. Membership of the ECPR is annual and runs from 1 October to 30 September. Institutional membership entitles staff and students at an institution to a range of benefits and services provided by the ECPR. The ECPR has two categories of membership as per Art 10 of the Constitution. For the purposes of participation in and membership of Standing Groups and Research Networks, the ECPR makes no distinction between Full and Associate membership.

   1.4. **Executive Committee:** The ECPR's elected board of trustees has overall responsibility for the strategy and operations of the ECPR. The Executive Committee may delegate some of these responsibilities to Subcommittees, including the day-to-day oversight and administration of Standing Groups and Research Networks, to the ECPR Director and staff as per the Scheme of Delegation.

   1.5. **Affiliate**: Any individual affiliated to an ECPR member institution as determined by the member's Official Representative.

   1.6. **Steering Committee:** Standing Groups and Research Networks are governed by a Steering Committee elected from the membership of the group or network.

   1.7. **Chair**: each Steering Committees elects a **Chairperson** from the members of the committee to act as the main point of contact with the Executive Committee and ECPR staff.

2. **Constitutional status of Standing Groups and Research Networks**

   2.1. As per Art 24 of the ECPR Constitution, Standing Groups and Research Networks are Committees established by the ECPR Executive Committee. Standing Groups and Research Networks are integral parts of the ECPR and have no independent legal status.

   2.2. The operation and governance of Standing Groups and Research Networks must conform to the rules laid out in this Framework and to the ECPR Constitution.

   2.3. The operation and governance of Standing Groups and Research Networks is subject to the same legislation that governs the ECPR as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in the United Kingdom. This includes (but is not limited to):

   2.3.1. UK Charity Commission

   2.3.2. Financial, audit and HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs)

   2.3.3. VAT liabilities and reporting

   2.3.4. Health and Safety

   2.3.5. Public liability and other insurance requirements

   2.3.6. Data protection

   2.3.7. ECPR Code of Conduct

   2.3.8. ECPR Privacy Policy

   2.4. Standing Groups and Research Networks operate under powers delegated by the Executive Committee. These powers are set out within this Framework.

3. **Establishment of Standing Groups and Research Networks**

   3.1. Standing Groups

3.1.1. Any Affiliate is entitled to propose the establishment of a Standing Group.

3.1.2. The process to propose a Standing Group is managed through the ECPR website. The information required includes a description of the subdiscipline/thematic field to be covered, with an explanation as to why a new Standing Group is needed in addition to already existing groups; a description of the activities planned; an indication of the Standing Group's governing structure; and confirmation of intent to join the group from at least 100 Affiliates in at least five countries.

3.1.3. Before submission of the proposal, the proposers and any prospective members of the Steering Committee must confirm that they have read and agree to conform to this Framework.

3.1.4. The proposal is forwarded to the Steering Committees of all existing Standing Groups and Research Networks, who are asked to give their comments within a month.

3.1.5. On the basis of the proposal and any comments received from existing Steering Committees, the Executive Committee decides whether to establish a new Standing Group.

3.2. Research Networks

3.2.1. Any Affiliate is entitled to propose the establishment of a Research Network.

3.2.2. The process to propose a Research Network is managed through the ECPR website. The information required includes a description of the subject area covered, with an explanation as to why a new Research Network is needed in addition to already existing networks and groups; a description of the types of activities planned, the time period for which the Research Network is intended; an indication of the Research Network's governing structure; and confirmation of intent to join the network from at least 20 Affiliates.

3.2.3. Before submission of the proposal, the proposers and any prospective members of the Steering Committee must confirm they have read and agree to conform to this Framework.

3.2.4. The proposal is forwarded to the Steering Committees of all existing Standing Groups and Research Networks, who are asked to give their comments within a month.

3.2.5. On the basis of the proposal and any comments received from existing Steering Committees the Executive Committee decides whether to establish a new Research Network.

4. Termination or merger

4.1. Only the Executive Committee can take the decision to terminate or merge Standing Groups or Research Networks.

4.2. Steering Committees of Standing Groups or Research Networks wishing to merge apply in writing to the Executive Committee.

4.3. Should a Steering Committee of a Standing Group or Research Network feel that the group is no longer necessary, relevant or tenable, they must refer to the Executive Committee for consideration at the earliest stage, allowing for an opportunity for the Group to be dissolved, re-shaped or revitalised under a new Steering Committee, as appropriate.

4.4. Steering Committees of Standing Groups or Research Networks wishing to change the name or alter the thematic scope of the group apply in writing to the Executive Committee.

4.5.   The Executive Committee may decide to review and ultimately close a Standing Group or Research Network if it is deemed to be insufficiently active, and/or in the case of Standing Groups has fewer than 100 members and Research Networks 20 members in at least five countries for two consecutive years. In this instance the Executive Committee will contact the Standing Group's Steering Committee to discuss the prospects for the Group.

4.6.   Failure to comply with the rules laid out in this Framework, other ECPR policies and procedures or relevant laws and regulations may lead the Executive Committee to suspend and/or remove some or all members of a Steering Committee from their post and to conduct elections to replace them.

4.7.   Failure to comply with the Framework may lead the Executive Committee to close a Research Network or Standing Group.

5.   Membership

5.1.   Affiliates have the right to join any Standing Group or Research Network that they feel is relevant to their research or teaching interests. They can join a Standing Group or Research Network through their MyECPR account on the ECPR website.

5.2.   Scholars who are not affiliated to an ECPR member institution may apply for membership of a Standing Group or Research Network if they are actively interested in the field covered. They can apply through their MyECPR account and a decision to accept their membership is made by the relevant Steering Committee. Scholars who have their application to join a group or network turned down have a right of appeal to the Executive Committee.

5.3.   Steering Committee members can view the membership of their group or network via the ECPR website and may contact them with information related to the group or network using the in-built messaging system.

5.4.   Steering Committees who consider a member of the group or network to be in breach of the ECPR's Code of Conduct or this Framework may refer the matter to the Executive Committee that has the authority to rescind that scholar's membership.

5.5.   The Standing Group and Research Network membership year runs concurrently with the ECPR membership year 1 October – 30 September. Members of Standing Groups and Research Networks will be asked to renew their memberships biennially via their MyECPR accounts.

5.6.   Standing Groups and Research Networks may ask members for a discretionary donation towards the running costs of the group or network. If so, these donations must be collected via the system put in place by the ECPR, with all funds deposited into the nominal account of the group or network, net of any costs incurred in receiving the donation.

5.7.   The donation belongs exclusively to the Standing Group or Research Network and therefore remains the property of the ECPR, for use only by the Standing Group or Research Network. It may not therefore be transferred to another bank account, or used to promote or support any activities of a third party.

6.   Governance

6.1.   Standing Groups and Research Networks are run day-to-day by an elected Steering Committee. Steering Committees must comprise at least three people, at least half of whom must be Affiliates. Steering Committees can organise individual roles and responsibilities of their members as they see fit but are required to elect a Chairperson who must be an Affiliate.

6.2. The Chair of the Steering Committee acts as the main point of contact between the Group/Network and the Executive Committee. Steering Committee Chairs are responsible for the administration of the Group/Network via the ECPR website and for ensuring the Executive Committee is fully updated on all activities and business.

6.3. Steering Committee members are defined as 'Volunteers' of the ECPR under UK Charity law and, as such, are issued with a Volunteer Agreement setting out in more detail their role and responsibilities in relation to their work carried out on behalf of the ECPR. Because of the nature of their work and the powers delegated to them by the Executive Committee under this Framework and through the Volunteer Agreement, members of Steering Committees receive induction training.

6.4. Steering Committee members considering creating, or joining the leadership team of, a potentially competing group external to the ECPR, with potentially similar membership and activities, must consult with the Executive Committee first.

6.5. Steering Committee members are elected by the membership of the group or network and serve a three-year term. There is no cap on the number of times a Steering Committee member can be re-elected.

6.6. Steering Committee elections take place electronically via the ECPR website using the established online election platform, the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system, and according to the following rules:

6.6.1. At least six months before the Steering Committee's term of office expires it informs the Executive Committee of its intention to hold an election, indicating the number of vacant seats.

6.6.2. The Steering Committee notifies the members using the ECPR's email messaging system and invites candidates to nominate themselves within one month; any member of the group or network is eligible to stand for election.

6.6.2.1 If after that deadline fewer candidates than vacancies and/or too few Affiliate candidates have nominated themselves, the nomination period is extended for another month.

6.6.2.2 If only a number of candidates equal to the number of vacancies have nominated themselves, including at least half of them Affiliates, they are declared elected.

6.6.2.3 If more candidates than the number of vacancies have nominated themselves, but only just enough Affiliates, the latter candidates are declared elected; elections will be held only to assign the remaining seat on the Steering Committee to some of candidates not yet declared elected.

6.6.2.4 If sufficient candidates have nominated themselves the Steering Committee notifies the Executive Committee of the names of the candidates to produce the online ballot.

6.6.3. Members of the group or network will be notified of the election using the ECPR email system and how they can cast their vote via MyECPR.

6.6.4. If all vacant seats on the Steering Committee are to be filled, and the candidates who meet the electoral quota do not include sufficient Affiliates, the non-Affiliate candidate meeting the electoral quota with the lowest number of votes is removed. This procedure is repeated until at least half of those elected are Affiliates.

6.6.5. Should members of a Steering Committees stand down before the end of their term, a byelection should take place following the above rules, for the vacant seat/s.

6.7. Steering Committees may establish a set of byelaws or standing orders to support the governance of the group or network; any such documents should be approved by the Executive Committee and should not contradict this Framework or the ECPR Constitution.

7. Financial management and oversight

7.1. Standing Groups and Research Networks can receive financial assistance to support the activities of the group as per this Framework. Financial assistance can come in the form of Sponsorship Grants or Funding Allocation, depending on the type of activity.

7.2. Unless stated otherwise, services and support provided to Standing Groups and Research Networks will be free of charge, except for services which incur a third-party cost (such as printing, catering, travel and accommodation to support an event).

7.3. Standing Groups and Research Networks may generate funds in order to support their activities but should seek advice from the Executive Committee before approaching third parties with funding requests. All financial transactions of Standing Groups and Research Networks take place through the ECPR's bank accounts as they are received, expended, or invested and must be directly between the Steering Committee and Executive Committee unless otherwise agreed.

7.3.1. Each group or network is treated as a separate branch of the ECPR within its financial systems and is as such allocated a unique 'Nominal Code' within the ECPR's accounting system, through which all transactions take place. No costs for this service will be passed on to the Standing Groups or Research Networks by the ECPR.

7.3.2. Funds held within the Nominal Code are ring-fenced for the sole use of that Standing Group or Research Network and any surpluses accumulated will be carried over between financial years.

7.3.3. Standing Group or Research Network Nominal Codes may be permitted to be in temporary deficit (pending future surpluses), the costs of which will be covered by the ECPR's general finances. The Executive Committee reserves the right to suspend the activities of a Standing Group or Research Network pending an investigation should it conclude that a deficit is excessive, unreasonable, unexplained or potentially irretrievable.

7.3.4. All transactions will be managed on behalf of the Standing Group or Research Network at the request of the Steering Committee Chair following the ECPR's financial processes, procedures and regulatory commitments. The Steering Committee Chair is accountable to both the Standing Group or Research Network membership and to the Executive Committee for the account and transactions made through it.

7.3.5. The Chair of the Steering Committee submits a budget to the Executive Committee each year setting out projected income and expenditure; assistance in preparing the budget will be provided upon request.

7.4. The prior approval of the Executive Committee is required for any single expenditure of more than €3,000 and for any contract involving long-term financial obligations and/or obligations in excess of €3,000.

7.5. In addition to the Steering Committee Chair, the ECPR's Management Group holds signature authority over the Standing Group account.

7.6. Members of Steering Committees must not benefit in any way financially from the activities of their group.

7.7. All Standing Groups and Research Networks transacting through the ECPR's bank account will have their funds audited annually by the ECPR's appointed accountants and reported upon to ECPR Council and the UK Charity Commission.

7.8. Steering Committees can receive financial statements for their Group or Network upon request.

8. Data Protection

8.1. Through their work in running their Standing Group or Research Network, members of Steering Committees have access to the personal information of the group's members, participants in its events, and other parties. All collection and processing of personal data is subject to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the ECPR's Privacy Policy.

8.1.1. All members of Steering Committees must read and agree to comply with the ECPR's Privacy Policy, and any other processes and procedures put in place for the handling of personal data.

8.1.2. Members of Steering Committees must not collect, process or store any personal information relating to the group outside of the MyECPR system without the explicit prior approval of the Executive Committee.

8.1.3. Members of Steering Committees must use only the messaging system within MyECPR to send email communications to its members and should follow the guidelines in the Handbook.

8.1.4. Members of Steering Committees must alert the ECPR to any possible data breach as soon as they are aware of it and in any case within 36 hours in order to allow the ECPR to meet the required 72-hour reporting window of the UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

9. Intellectual Property

9.1. Standing Groups and Research Networks can develop a range of activities and events to help further the goals of the group and development of their sub-field.

9.2. Any and all activities and material products created by a Standing Group or Research Network are considered activities and material products of the ECPR and may not be transferred to any other organisation.

10. Standing Group and Research Network events

10.1. Standing Groups and Research Networks can develop and organise their own events and/or support or sponsor third party events with the aim of furthering the goals of the group and their sub-field. These events can be supported both financially and practically in a number of ways, depending on the identity of the primary organiser.

10.2. Events organised solely by Standing Groups or Research Networks without the involvement of any third parties (except for e.g., the event host) are considered ECPR '**Internal Events**', and as such are subject to the same regulation as all other ECPR events, such as the Joint Sessions and General Conference.

10.3. Events that are organised in conjunction with one or more third parties and simply sponsored or endorsed by the Standing Group or Research Network are considered '**External Events**'.

10.4. All events connected to a Standing Group or Research Network are defined as either Internal or External so that the appropriate advice and support can be provided to the group. Members of Steering Committees must therefore inform the Executive Committee at the earliest point at which they consider holding or sponsoring any event, regardless of its size, so an assessment can be made.

10.4.1. In the case of **Internal Events** where the Standing Group or Research Network is fully responsible for the delivery of the event and the collection of all income, the following services are offered to Steering Committees, free of charge:

10.4.1.1 Financial support to subsidise the costs of holding the event.

10.4.1.2 Advice and guidance in tendering for and choosing a host institution, and support in negotiations.

10.4.1.3 Provision of an event contract template (as approved by the ECPR's lawyers) and support in negotiations and final agreement of services and costs.

10.4.1.4 Advice and guidance in drafting the budget and calculating event fees.

10.4.1.5 Provision of a VAT report commissioned from the ECPR's tax advisers and subsequent financial advice and support depending on outcomes and any liabilities.

10.4.1.6 Use of the ECPR's online system to build the academic programme (through call for papers, etc) and process registration and payments, including a set of bespoke and dedicated web pages on the ecpr.eu site for the event.

10.4.1.7 Management of all finances related to the event, including collection of all fees and payment of any costs with surpluses placed in nominal code for future use by the group.

10.4.1.8 Full support from the ECPR's communications department, with digital, online and social media publicity before, during and after the event.

10.4.1.9 Full support of the ECPR's events staff throughout the organisation of the event, on the ground during the event if required and for post-event surveys etc.

10.4.2. In the case of **External Events** where the Standing Group or Research Network is sponsoring or endorsing the event, the following services are offered to Steering Committees free of charge:

10.4.2.1 Financial support to sponsor the event.

10.4.2.2 Support from the ECPR's communications department to publicise the event through digital, online and social media channels.

11. Participation in the Joint Sessions and General Conference

11.1. Standing Groups can endorse one Workshop proposal for the Joint Sessions of Workshops. These proposals are considered favourably during the evaluation process, and when of equal quality are given preference over other proposals.

11.2. Standing Groups can endorse Section proposals for the General Conference. A minimum of 50% of the academic programme of the General Conference will be made up by Standing Group endorsed Sections and Panels.

12. Publishing

12.1. Standing Groups and Research Networks may participate in and contribute to ECPR's publishing programme through its book series and journals; they are also able to develop their own publishing activities to further the goals of their group:

12.1.1. Standing Groups are formally integrated into the editorial structure of the ECPR's Open Access *Political Research Exchange* (PRX) journal. The team of Associate Editors is drawn from amongst the groups and networks in order to provide both subject representation and a channel for publishing research by the groups.

12.1.2. Standing Groups and Research Networks do not have the ability to enter into contracts with publishers, therefore those wishing to develop a standalone journal or book series on behalf of the group must consult the Executive Committee before embarking on any discussions with publishers.

13. Publicity

13.1. The ECPR will host and manage, free of charge, an ECPR branded website for all Standing Groups and Research Networks.

13.1.1. Standing Groups and Research Networks formed after the enactment of this Framework must have ECPR-hosted sites.

13.1.2. Standing Groups and Research Networks with current external sites are expected to migrate their site across to the ECPR server unless they submit a request to the Executive Committee to continue with their current site.

13.1.3. When Standing Groups and Research Networks maintain an external site, it must follow ECPR brand guidelines and link back to ecpr.eu.

13.2. Standing Groups and Research Networks are required to adhere to the ECPR's brand guidelines across all digital platforms and printed materials. Steering Committees will have access to a range of resources to support this.

13.3. Standing Groups and Research Networks setting up their own social media accounts must follow the guidelines set out in the Handbook.

14. Reporting to and liaison with the Executive Committee

14.1. The Steering Committee submits an annual report on the group or network's activities to the Executive Committee.

14.2. The Steering Committee submits an annual budget of projected income and expenditure for the group or network to the Executive Committee each year.

14.3. An annual meeting of Steering Committee members with representatives of the Executive Committee takes place each year.

14.4. An annual Groups' and Networks' Retreat takes place at ECPR headquarters to which Chairs of Steering Committees (or an alternate, delegated member of the Steering Committee) are invited to attend on a rotating basis. The cost of attending this event is covered by central ECPR funds.

14.5. Standing Groups and Research Networks can use the ECPR headquarters for meetings and/or small events free of charge, including support from ECPR staff if required.

14.6. A Handbook for Steering Committees is available to provide advice and support the work Standing Groups and Research Networks.

14.7. The first point of contact with the Executive Committee is through the Communications Officer (standinggroups@ecpr.eu).

15. Implementation and Review

    15.1. This Framework comes into effect upon its publication on the ECPR website. On publication, it replaces any prior rules regarding Standing Groups and Research Networks.

    15.2. Standing Groups and Research Networks are given a maximum of six months to comply with its provisions.

    15.3. Existing bespoke Constitutions established under the previous Framework may remain in place for six months after the enaction of this version, after which they must be removed or replaced with byelaws or standing orders as detailed in 6.7.

    15.4. The Framework will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Executive Committee. No changes to the Framework will be decided upon without prior consultation with Standing Group and Research Network Steering Committees.

(1 April 2019)

Appendices:

Handbook for Steering Committees

Privacy Policy

Code of Conduct

Steering Committee Volunteer Agreement

Publishing and events appendix

Brand Guidelines

Social media guidelines

Procurement Policy