

Terms of Reference (ToR) for the European Regional Focal Point (ERFP) for Animal Genetic Resources

Period 2023-2027

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1. Strategy and objectives of ERFP

a. Mission

The European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources (ERFP) is the regional network of National Coordinators (NC) and the regional platform to support the *in situ* and *ex situ* documentation, information, conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources (AnGR), to facilitate the implementation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Global Plan of Action (GPA) for AnGR, and to facilitate the coordination of activities and exchange of information and experiences.

The ERFP mission is driven by the need to safeguard farm animal genetic diversity for future generations, in particular in the global context of food and nutrition security and climate change. A broad genetic base is crucial in order to be able to anticipate changes in production systems, markets and consumer preferences. At the same time farm animal genetic diversity is part of our cultural heritage and diversity in nature and landscapes.

b. Policy Framework

World food security and poverty alleviation are global challenges for present and future generations. At the same time, the conservation and sustainable utilization of genetic resources, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources are key challenges of the global community. In Europe, many countries have signed and ratified the agreements and policies to ensure and support the conservation and sustainable use of AnGR.

i) United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals

The UN Sustainable Development Goals such as SDG2 “*zero hunger*”, SDG12 “*Responsible Consumption and Production*” or SDG13 “*Climate action*” highlight these challenges. As an important part of the agricultural biodiversity, AnGR are an essential basis for livestock production and offer opportunities to adapt animal breeds to changing environments, especially in the light of climate change.

ii) Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)

The CBD has three objectives: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits (ABS) arising out of the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. The Nagoya Protocol on ABS was adopted in October 2010 in order to implement the third objective of the Convention.

iii) FAO Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources

The international community has, in September 2007, adopted the first ever *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, comprising twenty-three Strategic Priorities which are aimed at combating the erosion of farm animal genetic diversity and at using animal genetic resources in a sustainable way. The Strategic Priorities for Action, contained within the GPA, propose specific measures to reverse the ongoing trends of erosion and underutilization of AnGR.

The GPA contains the following four Strategic Priority Areas:

- Characterization, Inventory and Monitoring of Trends and Associated Risks

The actions provide a consistent, efficient and effective approach to the classification of animal genetic resources, and to assess trends in, and risks to, animal genetic resources.

- Sustainable Use and Development

The actions are to ensure sustainability in animal production systems, with a focus on food security and rural development.

- Conservation

The actions focus on steps needed to preserve genetic diversity and integrity, for the benefit of current and future generations.

- Policies, Institutions and Capacity-building

The actions directly address the key questions of practical implementation, through coherent and synergistic development of the necessary institutions and capacities.

The main responsibility for implementing the Global Plan of Action rests with national governments who appoint National Coordinators (NCs) to take charge of their national programmes. The implementation of the GPA by individual countries is facilitated by, and benefits from, the existence of international networks of NCs.

Regional Focal Points and regional networking have a vital and important role in building collaborative partnerships, in coordinating regional management efforts in animal genetic resources, in further developing information sharing and enhancing technical cooperation, training and research. In Europe, this collaboration is co-ordinated by ERFP.

The ERFP was initiated in 1998 and became formally operational in 2001 as the European part of FAO's global coordination structure for animal genetic resources.

iv) EU policy framework

1. General context

In several areas of relevance for the conservation and sustainable use of AnGR, the EU has developed legal acts and policies including i) the Animal breeding legislation, ii) the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Rural Development programmes, iii) ABS legislation, iv) State aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas, v) Agricultural research and innovation (H2020, European Innovation Partnership (EIP)), vi) Legislation on reproduction, semen, ova, embryos, vii) Animal Health legislation, viii) EU agricultural product quality policies, and ix) the EU Biodiversity Strategy and other policies.

2. EU Reference Center for Endangered Animal Breeds (EURC-EAB)

In March 2022, the European commission sent the terms of reference to the call for selection and designation of a European Union reference centre responsible for the scientific and technical contribution to the establishment and harmonisation of the methods for the preservation of

endangered breeds, and the preservation of the genetic diversity existing within those breeds ('the European Union reference centre for the endangered animal breeds'). The consortium of Stichting Wageningen Research, Wageningen Livestock Research (WLR), the Netherlands, Institut de l'Élevage (IDELE), France and the Federal Office of Agriculture and Food (BLE), Germany, has been selected in October to be European Union reference centre for the endangered animal breeds, starting January 1st 2023. The consortium was built to ensure close connections with ERFP work and representation.

c. Vision

The objectives of the ERFP are to:

- Be the leading European network in the domain of conservation and sustainable use of AnGR, collaborating and creating synergies with other civil society, policy and industry networks.
- Coordinate a regional portal and information hub, to share and disseminate information, experiences, knowledge and data on animal genetic resources and related topics.
- Promote and enhance the roles, goods, values, and services provided by AnGR for the society now and in a long term.

d. General objectives

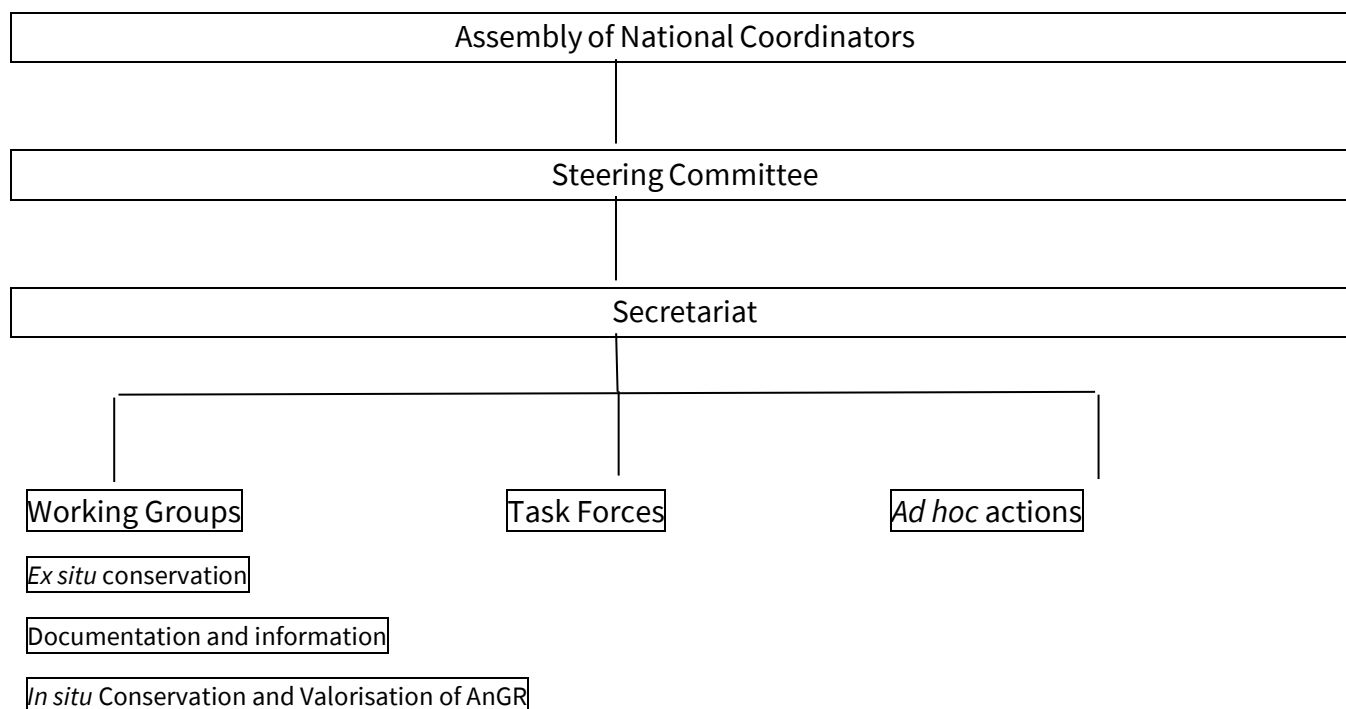
- To assist and enhance the role and activities of National Coordinators for AnGR at the national and European level, developing and implementing strategies, and supporting evidence-based development of relevant policies and regulations.
- To support the *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, the improvement and sustainable use of AnGR in European countries and to enhance collaboration at pan-European level.
- To facilitate the implementation of the FAO GPA for AnGR in Europe, and to maintain regular contact and to exchange relevant information with the Global Focal Point of FAO in Rome.
- To stimulate the initiation, funding, and organisation of regional projects and to facilitate capacity building and networking within the European Region.
- To maintain an appropriate liaison with relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations and other European and international networks in the same field.
- To stimulate and coordinate the maintenance, updating and further development and accessibility of national and regional AnGR related databases.
- To facilitate and to encourage European information networking and communication on conservation, use and valorisation of AnGR by implementing the ERFP communication strategy.
- To work with existing operational structures in countries; to seek partnerships and collaboration with existing organisations or networks in the domain of biodiversity for food and agriculture.

2. Operational Structure of ERFP

The organisational core of ERFP consists of the Assembly of NCs, the *Steering Committee (SC)* and

the *Secretariat*. *Working Groups* consisting of NCs or other experts from the member states are the most important executive bodies in the activities coordinated by the ERFP. Some short-term work may be carried out through work of *Task Forces* or *Ad hoc* actions (cf. Figure 1) which are defined in the following paragraphs. Complementary, lists of experts on different policy areas and disciplines can be created to support the ERFP work.

Figure 1: Organisational Structure of ERFP



a. Assembly of National Coordinators

The Member States of ERFP are represented in the Assembly by National Coordinators¹. The main decision-making body of ERFP is the Assembly of NCs or their alternate as indicated by the respective National Coordinator. In addition, observers' organisations and experts are invited either by NCs' suggestion or on their request, after evaluation of the Steering Committee (see after).

The Assembly brings together all NCs in the European region at the Annual Meeting, usually in connection to the annual conference of the European Federation of Animal Science (EAAP). The Assembly approves the ERFP budget² and provides overall technical and policy guidance to the operation of ERFP. It holds the overall responsibility for implementing the Multi Year Program of Work (MYPOW). The Assembly may establish or terminate Working Groups, Task Forces and *Ad hoc* actions. The Assembly mandates and oversees the work of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat.

The Agenda of the Annual Meeting of the General Assembly of National Coordinators would cover:

- presentation and approval of results produced by the Working Groups, Task Forces and *Ad hoc* actions.
- approval of the plans and budget for the Working Groups and Task Forces, and approval of the total budget available for *Ad hoc* actions (to be decided by the Steering Committee).

¹ The role of the National Coordinator is defined as follows: "the government nominated person who coordinates national implementation of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources and leads the development and operation of a national network on animal genetic resources."

² Formal decision concerning payment of annual contributions of the Member States is taken by the competent authorities within each country.

- exchange of information on relevant national and sub-regional activities.
- decisions on organisational and general matters.
- adoption of the MYPOW with prioritised areas and activities.
- presentation and approval of the annual report of Secretariat and the budget for the previous year.
- approval of annual programme and budget for the coming year (the annual year equals the calendar year).
- election of the members and chair of the Steering Committee (who are all members of the Assembly).
- every four years, election of the Secretariat for a 4-years period.

The Assembly is chaired by the Chair of the Steering Committee. Voting at the Assembly is by majority vote of the NCs except voting on financial matters where consensus is required. Voting can also take place by means of email when it is deemed necessary to do so.

The Assembly budget may include travel costs for the Annual Meetings of the NCs upon their request and further meeting costs for the Annual Meeting. Detailed rules for reimbursement are laid down in the ERFP- Rules for Reimbursements of Costs.

b. Steering Committee

The ERFP Steering Committee:

- Consists of 5 members of the Assembly representing the European sub-regions – South, Central, East, West and North when possible. The members are elected by the Assembly *ad personam* for a 4-year term of office. Each candidate sends a resume to the Secretariat which is made available to all NCs prior to the GA. Not all SC members can be replaced in one year. A re-election is possible only after a break-period. The SC is headed by a chair being outside the regional consideration. The chair is elected by the Assembly for a 3-year term of office with the possibility of re- election for another 3 years.
- Plans or executes the activities of the ERFP as decided upon by the Assembly of NCs. It evaluates *Ad hoc* actions proposals and makes funding decisions on them as indicated in Annex 4.
- Mandates the Secretariat in carrying out its decisions and monitors the financial position of the ERFP in conjunction with the Secretariat.
- Proposes medium-term (one to five years) Task Forces to the Assembly, as required.
- Represents the ERFP in communications with other institutions and networks within the mandate of the Assembly.

Decisions of the Steering Committee are made by consensus and can also be taken by means of email when it is deemed necessary to do so.

The Steering Committee budget may include travel costs for the Steering Committee Meetings upon request of the Steering Committee member and further meeting costs for the ERFP Steering Committee Meeting. Detailed rules for reimbursement are laid down in the ERFP-Rules for Reimbursements of Costs.

c. Secretariat

The election of the Secretariat is carried out by the Assembly of NCs for a 4-year period. A re-election for a period up to 4 years is possible. NC proposals for hosting the Secretariat are invited by the Assembly one year before the end of the hosting period. NCs may propose offers made by any institution within their country they consider competent to host the Secretariat. Such offers should be made in a standardized format. The rules of procedure for the election of the ERFP Secretariat are laid down in Annex 3 of this document.

The responsibilities of the Secretariat are:

- to distribute relevant information on AnGR and to facilitate communication among the NCs and national experts within the ERFP network,
- to communicate with the Global Focal Point at FAO and other regional focal points,
- to give secretarial support to the Assembly of the NCs and to organise its Annual Meeting,
- to give secretarial support to the SC,
- to execute decisions made by the Assembly and the SC,
- to support the Working Groups, Task Forces and *Ad hoc* actions as appropriate,
- to be responsible for the financial management of the ERFP budget,
- to provide technical and financial reports on a regular basis,
- to maintain and update the ERFP website,
- to publish the ERFP newsletter and to implement other communication tools.

d. Working Groups

Working Groups (WG) are established by the Assembly on a permanent basis to work on long-term tasks. Members of a Working Group should be experts in the respective task and should be nominated by their National Coordinator. NCs are invited to nominate one member for each Working Group.

Each WG is coordinated by a WG chair. Each chair is proposed by the WG to the SC and approved by the SC for a 3-years term of office. The proposed chair should be supported by their respective NC. A re-election for one term is possible. When needed a vice chair can be elected by the WG on the same term as a chair.

The WG chair has the responsibility to present a draft annual work plan to the Annual Meeting of the Assembly of NCs for adoption. The WG chair should also oversee the implementation of the work plan, in liaison with the Secretariat and the SC, where appropriate, and to encourage involvement of all the WG members.

The WG budget available for implementing the work plan need to be approved by the Assembly annually. Working groups are allowed to spend a fixed, maximum budget annually. The budget may include travel costs for the WG meetings, the publication of reports and/or other actions, consumables and other costs. Durables will not be considered an eligible expense nor will be salaries.

The WGs should be used to provide guidance on issues of a technical and advisory nature and should publish technical and advisory information for the benefit of all NC's and ERFP member countries. The technical and advisory material from the WG's should reflect the requirements needed for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. The Assembly of NCs will discuss and adopt the proposed activities of the Working Groups in accordance with the priority areas as mentioned in the MYPOW. The WGs should facilitate the collaboration and networking of relevant stakeholders in the European region.

The membership of the working group on Documentation and information will include a representative of the organization responsible for the maintenance and development of EFABIS (node manager) and will also include a representative from the FAO (Domestic Animal Diversity-Information System - DAD-IS) who both will attend in the capacity of observer.

In addition to the nominated experts by country, the WG Chair can invite and propose reimbursement of costs of up to two additional experts for a WG meeting, as appropriate and depending on the agenda.

e. Task Forces

Task Forces (TF) are established by the Assembly, based on a proposal of the Steering Committee, on a temporary basis to solve specific tasks and should, as a rule, not be research projects and not last for more than five years.

The mandate, budget, leader, and members of the TF are decided by the Assembly, and proposed by the SC, also based upon suggestions received from NCs. TF should consist of 3-8 experts, of which the proposed chair should preferably be a member of the Assembly. In any case, the proposed chair should be supported by its respective NC. The budget would cover only the travel and meeting costs. TFs may be established whenever common views of the European region are needed or where a common action would be necessary to respond to an urgent issue in the AnGR sector.

TFs would deliver a report on the outcomes of their work to the Assembly.

f. Ad hoc actions

Ad hoc actions can be proposed by National Coordinators, by the chairs of the ERFP Working Groups/Task Forces or by the ERFP Secretariat. The Steering Committee decides about *Ad hoc* actions.

Ad hoc actions could be in the form of projects, workshops, meetings, or consultancies, to solve or highlight specific short-term problems or issues. *Ad hoc* actions should, as a rule, not be research projects and not last for more than one year. The rules of procedure for *Ad hoc* actions are laid down in Annex 4 of this document.

3. Information and communication

ERFP currently supports four information and communication tools: the ERFP website, the ERFP newsletter, the *European Farm Animal Biodiversity Information System (EFABIS)* database, and the European Genebank Network for AnGR (EUGENA) portal for AnGR in the European region.

The ERFP website plays an important role in enhancing the activities of ERFP and the dissemination of information as well as the social media pages handled by the secretariat with the help of other organizations such as a communication agency if needed.

ERFP helps the funding of the Genetic Resources journal (www.genres.org) based on a yearly contribution that is voted during the ERFP General Assembly.

The ERFP newsletter is published by the Secretariat, based on contributions of NCs, experts and Chairs and members of the ERFP bodies.

The EFABIS database has been created to serve as an information tool for the management and conservation of European Animal Genetic Resources. In 2018, EFABIS became the European interface of DAD-IS, that also has some European specificities.

The EUGENA Portal web page is the single-entry point to the register of EUGENA AnGR member Gene banks. It is the ERFP's responsibility to organize, update and maintain this portal. A close connection will be developed with the ERFP website.

Besides, some other technological tools can be developed to improve the internal and external communication strategy.

4. Funding and budget

The funding approach for estimation of country contribution is based on the Gross Domestic Product rating according to the FAO/UN scale, with categories from A to K (see [Annex 1](#) and [Annex 2](#)). Country contributions are listed according to this scale. Contributions are received on a voluntary basis. Any other contributions such as voluntary donations or in-kind contributions are appreciated.

The annual budget of ERFP is approved by the Assembly of NCs (see footnote 2) based on the country contributions and proposed activities.

To support activities of the ERFP, the annual budget is used to cover eligible costs of the following: the Assembly of NCs, Steering Committee meetings, Secretariat incl. the website and other communication activities, Working Groups and Task Forces activities, *Ad hoc* actions, EFABIS and EUGENA portal and the costs of the EAAP account management.

The minimum reserve for the annual budget, in case of unforeseen circumstances, should be two times the annual budget.

Annex 1: Minimum countries contribution – Provisional scale for 2024

Country	Category	Annual contribution (in €)	Country	Category	Annual contribution (in €)
Moldova	A	600	Hungary	E	2400
Montenegro	A	600	Czech Republic	E	2400
Armenia	A	600	Israel	E	2400
Georgia	A	600	Ireland	F	2600
Macedonia (FYR)	A	600	Portugal	F	2600
Albania	A	600	Finland	F	2600
Bosnia and Herzegovina	A	600	Turkey	F	2600
Azerbaijan	A	600	Greece	F	2600
Malta	A	600	Denmark	F	2600
Serbia	B	800	Poland	G	2700
Bulgaria	B	800	Austria	G	2700
Latvia	B	800	Norway	G	2700
Estonia	B	800	Sweden	H	4100
Iceland	B	800	Belgium	H	4100
Belarus	B	800	Switzerland	H	4100
Cyprus	B	800	Russian Federation	I	4300
Lithuania	C	1400	Netherlands	I	4300
Ukraine	C	1400	Spain	J	4800
Luxembourg	C	1400	Italy	K	11300
Croatia	C	1400	France	K	11300
Slovenia	C	1400	UK	K	11300
Slovakia	D	1600	Germany	K	11300
Romania	D	1600	Total		123000

Annex 2: Minimum countries contribution- starting year 2025.

Country	Category	Annual contribution (in €)	Country	Category	Annual contribution (in €)
Moldova	A	800	Hungary	E	3 200
Montenegro	A	800	Czech Republic	E	3 200
Armenia	A	800	Israel	E	3 200
Georgia	A	800	Ireland	F	3 400
Republic of North Macedonia	A	800	Portugal	F	3 400
Albania	A	800	Finland	F	3 400
Bosnia and Herzegovina	A	800	Turkey	F	3 400
Azerbaijan	A	800	Greece	F	3 400
Malta	A	800	Denmark	F	3 400
Serbia	B	1 050	Poland	G	3 600
Bulgaria	B	1 050	Austria	G	3 600
Latvia	B	1 050	Norway	G	3 600
Estonia	B	1 050	Sweden	H	5 400
Iceland	B	1 050	Belgium	H	5 400
Belarus	B	1 050	Switzerland	H	5 400
Cyprus	B	1 050	Russian Federation	I	5 700
Lithuania	C	1 900	Netherlands	I	5 700
Ukraine	C	1 900	Spain	J	6 400
Luxembourg	C	1 900	Italy	K	15 000
Croatia	C	1 900	France	K	15 000
Slovenia	C	1 900	UK	K	15 000
Slovakia	D	2 100	Germany	K	15 000
Romania	D	2 100	Total		163 050

Annex 3: Procedure for the election of the ERFP Secretariat

a) Terms and deadlines:

- i. The current ERFP Secretariat starts a call for applications for hosting the Secretariat during the Assembly Meeting one year before the upcoming change with a deadline by the end of the respective year.
- ii. Only applications that have been submitted to the Secretariat within the deadline will be considered in the further selection process.
- iii. Only the European NCs can submit offers made by any institution within their country.
- iv. Not later than one month after the deadline the Secretariat forwards the complete application documents to the Steering Committee, including the date of receipt.
- v. The Steering Committee supported by the Secretariat evaluates the applications and prepares an overview within four month (till the end of April) after the deadline for the applications.
- vi. In May of the respective year the overview of the Steering Committee and all received applications will be forwarded to all NCs by the Secretariat.

b) Application documents:

- i. Only complete application documents in English can be considered.
- ii. The application documents should include explanation statements about:
 - the applicant institution, including their complete name and address,
 - their competence in the field of the AnGR, esp. concerning the goals of ERFP,
 - their experience in the field of international collaboration, co-ordination and networking,
 - the absence of possible conflicts of interests between hosting the ERFP Secretariat and applicants other business,
 - the capability (description of staff, infrastructure, workload) to host the Secretariat and the ERFP website,
 - presence of fluency in English of the proposed staff for this task,
 - the financial conditions of their offer (expenses for hosting the Secretariat and a comprehensible calculation thereof), especially the costs involved to ERFP and
 - a one-paged vision paper.
- iii. A supporting letter of the concerned NC for the application and the eligibility of the applicant institution and a formal commitment of the applicant institution is needed.

c) Evaluation criteria and overview of the applications:

- i. The overview consists of a complete enumeration of the applicant institutions and a statement for each evaluation criteria for each applicant institution.
- ii. The evaluation criteria are:
 - the formal eligibility (receipt within the deadline, complete application documents),
 - the competence of the applicant institution in the field of AnGR, esp. concerning the goals of ERFP,
 - the experience of the applicant institution in the field of international collaboration, co-ordination and networking,
 - the absence of possible conflicts of interests between hosting the ERFP Secretariat and applicants other business,
 - the capability (description of staff, infrastructure, workload) to host the Secretariat and the ERFP website,
 - the financial conditions of their offer, especially the costs involved to ERFP.

d) Election during the Assembly Meeting:

- i. At first, the Secretariat provides a short report on the election process including an overview about the time schedule of the election process and an enumeration of the applicants.
- ii. Afterwards the chair of the Steering Committee gives a presentation of the overview of all applications.
- iii. The decision is made by a simple majority vote of all NCs or their representatives present (including NC of applicant host country). The voting is made by verbal expression or in written form (by secret vote) as soon as at least one NC wishes to do so.

e) Transition procedure

- i. The newly elected Secretariat will be introduced by the outgoing Secretariat into the activities of the ERFP Secretariat until the end of the respective year.
- ii. The outgoing Secretariat will close the ERFP budget of the respective year and handover a final overview of all budget related matters to the new Secretariat for 1st January of the following year.

Annex 4: Procedure for *Ad hoc* actions

- a) National coordinators, the chairs of the ERFP Working Groups/Task Forces or the ERFP Secretariat can propose *Ad hoc* action.
- b) *Ad hoc* actions can be funded by the ERFP budget under the condition that the goals and activities of the proposed *Ad hoc* action contribute to the goals of ERFP.
- c) The budget of the requested *Ad hoc* action should be cost-efficient and will be considered within the annually approved budget line for *Ad hoc* actions. The budget should not exceed 10 000 € but in justified cases a higher budget can be approved.
- d) The proposal of an *Ad hoc* action must consist of:
- a description of the goal of the *Ad hoc* action, as well as the name and organisation of the *Ad hoc* action leader,
 - an explanatory statement, how the *Ad hoc* action contributes to the goals of ERFP,
 - a comprehensible description of the time frame and the planned activities to reach the goal of the *Ad hoc* action,
 - a justified budget of the requested funding for the *Ad hoc* action.
- e) The application for an *Ad hoc* action shall be directed to the ERFP Secretariat, which submits the application to the chair of the respective WG for assessment where applicable and the ERFP Steering Committee for its decision.
- f) For the approval and the payment rules of *Ad hoc* actions the ERFP Rules for Reimbursement of Costs apply.
- g) The results of an *Ad hoc* action should be reported to the Working Groups when applicable, the Assembly, and preferably published in the GENRES journal.