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# ERFP Task Force Strategies

## Positioning of ERFP Secretariat

Proposal to move towards Permanent Secretariat

S.J. Hiemstra - General Assembly, Firenze, August 2024

ERFP Secretariat

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## Task of current ERFP TF “Strategies”

- Prepare a proposal for the 2024 General Assembly about positioning of future ERFP Secretariat
- Focus the current discussion and proposal on moving forward a more permanent/stable Secretariat (not on potential legal status of the ERFP network itself)
- After GA-2024 discussions and decision on the proposal for Secretariat, finalize the ToR and procedure for election of Secretariat after 2026

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## Composition of ERFP Task Force Strategies

- Members of ERFP Steering Committee
- Chairs of ERFP Working Groups
- ERFP Secretariat
- Chair: S.J. Hiemstra

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## Background – considering Permanent Secretariat

- AnGR Strategy for Europe (AnGRSE), incl. Action Plan  
→ approved by ERFP General Assembly in 2023
- ERFP MYPOW 2024-2027  
→ approved by ERFP General Assembly in 2023
- In the recent past: TF permanent Secretariat and SWOT Analysis

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# MYPOW (2024-2027)



MYPOW 2024/2027


## 1 Improving the effectiveness of the ERFP

### 1.1 Further development of the ERFP Secretariat

The Secretariat plays a central role in the functioning of the regional platform and network. Since its establishment ERFP has worked with a rotating Secretariat, the Assembly electing a new Secretariat every 4 years. Based on the outcome of a SWOT analysis in 2018 and the TF about the Permanent Secretariat, the ERFP assessed the pros and cons of setting up a permanent ERFP Secretariat in the future, to further improve the functioning and effectiveness of ERFP with the possible budget implications and suggested longer hosting period.

France through IDELE Institute was re-elected for a second term as Secretariat for the period 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2023 until 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2026. IDELE is also part of the consortium of the EURC-EAB.

The AnGRSE highlights the importance of the designation of an EURC-EAB and the close link between ERFP and the EURC-EAB. Synergies and collaboration between ERFP and EURC-EAB should be further developed, and in this context the hosting and positioning of the ERFP Secretariat should also be considered.



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# Current ToR – Role of ERFP Secretariat



ToR 2023/2027


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.

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# Benchmark – role of EUFORGEN Secretariat

The role of the EUFORGEN Secretariat is to:

1. Ensure that the implementation of the Programme and its activities are in accordance with the mandate given by the Forest Europe process and the work plan and budget developed by the Steering Committee;
2. Prepare annual technical and financial reports;
3. Provide relevant information to the Steering Committee members;
4. Act as a liaison between the Steering Committee and the working groups and Discussion Platforms;
5. Coordinate the working groups and provide them with scientific and technical inputs;
6. Organise meetings and workshops in collaboration with local hosts;
7. Prepare reports and other publications;
8. Develop and maintain communication channels with relevant stakeholders;
9. Maintain the EUFORGEN website;
10. Maintain the EUFGIS Information System, its intranet and portal;
11. Represent EUFORGEN and advocate for conservation and appropriate use of forest genetic resources in relevant European and global processes;
12. Facilitate collaboration with relevant stakeholders and the expansion of the Programme to encourage new countries to become members.

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Staff and budget – current situation  
(ERFP versus ECPGR and EUFORGEN)

	ERFP	ECPGR	EUFORGEN
Annual budget	130.000 € (2025 figure)	620.000 €	340.000 €
Staff costs (incl. communication)	44.000 € - Secretary/Coordinator - Administrative assistant - Scientific assistant - Communication specialist	320.000 € - Secretary/Coordinator - Administrative assistant - Scientific assistant - Communication specialist	240.000 € Secretary/Coordinator Administrative assistant Scientific assistant Communication specialist
Overhead and IT	23.000 €	75.000 €	45.000 €
Travel and other running costs	63.000 €	225.000 €	55.000 €
In kind contributions	Hosting country/institute(  Chairs and experts in Working Groups, Task Forces and Ad Hoc Actions	Chairs and experts in Working Groups and Platform discussions	Chairs and experts in Working Groups and Platform discussions

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Legal framework (ERFP versus ECPGR and EUFORGEN)

	ERFP	ECPGR	EUFORGEN
Staff	IDELE staff	Bioversity staff	EFI staff
Hosting agreement	Agreement between chair of SC and IDELE Director	Formal agreement under development between Chair of Exec Committee and Bioversity	Draft hosting agreement
Management structure	Secretariat Steering Committee General Assembly (NC)	Secretariat Executive Committee Steering Committee (NC)	Secretariat Executive Committee Steering Committee (NC)
Legal framework	IDELE and INRAE staff working for ERFP under legal personality of IDELE and INRAE, respectively Support by EAAP for finances/accounting audit	Under umbrella of Bioversity legal personality	EUFORGEN operates as multilateral trust fund
Participation of countries	No formal LoA	LoA (5year) signed by member country representative (different situations depending on national responsibilities)	LoA (5year) between EFI and EUFORGEN member country representative (Forest Europe)
Country financial contributions	Voluntary contributions based on UN scales	Mandatory contributions for member countries (UN scales based)	Mandatory contributions for member countries (UN scale)
Who can receive funding/reimbursements	All European countries - appointed WG/TF/AHA members (GA – only UN country A/B/C/D)	Member countries only	Member countries only

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Link between ERFP Secretariat and EURC-EAB

- Close collaboration, similar objectives, win-win opportunities
  - ERFP network can benefit from EURC-EAB activities
  - EURC-EAB can benefit from ERFP collaboration
  - Several examples of joint activities of EURC-EAB and ERFP AdHoc Actions/Working Groups
- But mandates of ERFP and EURC-EAB are different:
  - EURC-EAB has legal basis of EU breeding legislation (EU 2016/1012)
    - EURC-EAB can only work with/for EU countries
    - Focus on endangered breeds (not covering all AnGR)
    - It requires renewal periods from EC, for bi/tri- annual Work Programmes
  - ERFP is a permanent network of National Coordinators (implementation of FAO Global Plan of Action) – covering whole Europe and all types of AnGR
- Keep EURC-EAB and ERFP Secretariat administratively separate
  - Non-EU countries can not benefit financially from EURC-EAB
  - EURC-EAB funding can not be used to fund the ERFP Secretariat
- It is possible that host institution of ERFP Secretariat is also involved in the EURC-EAB (consortium)

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## Conclusions: Why aim for permanent ERFP Secretariat?

- Continuity and funding
  - ERFP Secretariat is currently under-funded, and dependent of *in kind*/host country contribution
  - Opportunity to create a more stable and sustainable funding situation
  - Reduce risk of not finding a successor institution to host ERFP Secretariat
- Better ability to serve the ERFP network
  - Stability – less risks and inefficiency of transitional period
  - Continuity – benefit from built up experience
  - Commitment of institution to hire dedicated staff
- Opportunities to apply for additional project funding
- Building longer term external relationships
  - Better visibility and awareness about ERFP at international level
  - Relationship with international organisations (e.g. FAO, EU, EAAP, etc)
- Easier to get letters of commitment signed by countries
  - Permanent Secretariat situation might create more trust
- ERFP-network is not a legal entity
  - Role of Secretariat and legal basis of hosting institute are important

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## Options

1. Permanent Secretariat, that can adequately support and facilitate the growing ambitions and needs of ERFP, and that is sustainable from a budget point of view
  - A. ERFP Secretariat host institution is independent from EURC-EAB consortium
  - B. ERFP Secretariat host institution is part of EURC-EAB consortium
  - Starting point is current (2025) budget and MYPOW
  - Additional activities in the future will result in higher country fees/budget
  - Several opportunities (see previous slides)
2. Maintain rotational system (max 2x4 years) of hosting ERFP Secretariat
  - Risk of not finding next institution to apply for hosting the Secretariat
  - For other pro's and con's see previous slides

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## Preferred option 1

- It would require some changes in current ToR and fair rules for the election process
- Automatic renewal of host institute every new MYPOW period, unless..
  - Hosting institution decides [8 months] before end of period not to continue
  - ERFP GA decides [16 months] before end of period to change the hosting institution of the Secretariat (based on external or internal factors)
- Stronger mandate for the host-institution to – legally and financially - act on behalf of the ERFP network
- To be reflected in MoU/LoA between Chair of ERFP and host institution.

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## Selection criteria for appointing ERFP Secretariat host institution, in particular:

### Competences of staff

- Staff available for ERFP has
  - evident competence in the field of conservation and sustainable use of AnGR,
  - affiliation with the ERFP network,
  - experience in the field of international collaboration, coordination and networking
- Qualified and experienced staff should
  - work independently for ERFP (no conflict of interest)
  - preferably be international staff, that originate from different European countries/cultures

### Legal framework

- Host institute should
  - Provide stability and act legally on behalf of the ERFP network
  - Sign a LoA with chair of ERFP Steering Committee for a multi-annual period
  - Fully respect the independent governance of ERFP through ERFP structures
  - Allow host institute staff to participate in international projects in their capacity of ERFP Secretariat
  - Manage the ERFP budget and ERFP back account on behalf of the ERFP network

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## TF - Follow-up actions – 2024/2025

- Consensus of this GA to move towards Option 1 – Permanent Secretariat?
- IF YES, then next steps by TF/SC:
  - Update of ToR for permanent ERFP Secretariat
  - Procedure for election of next permanent Secretariat
  - Develop MoU/LoA between ERFP (SC-chair) and host institution of permanent Secretariat
  - Develop LoA/MoU between participating countries and ERFP Secretariat (institution) for new MYPOW period
    - Including funding commitments, participation, and reimbursement rights

→ Approval in GA 2025

→ Election of next permanent ERFP Secretariat in GA 2026
- At the same time/in parallel, working towards stronger commitment of national authorities to increase funding of ERFP:
  - Emphasize the importance of the ERFP network (similar to ECPGR and EUFORGEN)
  - Convince relevant government authorities that ERFP network is underfunded, and that current membership fees are not sustainable

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