

## **ESRS Study Groups Terms of Reference February 2016**

### **European Society for Rural Sociology Research and Study Groups**

#### **Rationale:**

Some professional academic organizations have Research and Study Groups (RSGs). These groups meet between the Society's conferences. Groups would be thematic or regional in focus (gender, migration, Central and Eastern Europe, ...).

As ESRS conferences are biennial, the Executive Committee believe there is particular benefit in trying to foster RSGs which will continue disciplinary scholarship on rural issues between conferences. We anticipate that some of the conference working streams could be RSGs.

The Society's Research and Study Groups would bring together active researchers, students and where relevant, other stakeholder groups. Each RSG is responsible for organizing their own seminars, conferences, workshops and other activities.

Each RSG should have a convenor. The convenor is responsible for organising the group, and liaising with the Executive Committee about the group's activities.

#### **The Role of the Executive Committee:**

1. Approve the formation of new study groups
2. Provide some financial assistance to study groups depending on budgetary constraints
3. Assist with the recruitment of study group convenors and members by promoting groups to ESRS members and on the ESRS website
4. Assist in the promotion of study group events through the ESRS website
5. Providing each group with a presence on the ESRS website (to be maintained by the group convenor)
6. Facilitating policy discussion and the sharing of knowledge and experience between study groups by organising a meeting for convenors at the biennial conference

### **The Role of the Convenor:**

1. The convenor must be a member of ESRS
2. Convenors will have final authority on decisions about the academic activity of the study groups; It is good practice for convenors to consult their study group members on all relevant matters
3. The convenor will ensure that an accurate record of the membership of the group is maintained and recorded on the ESRS website
4. The convenor will be responsible for co-ordinating the group's programme of activities
5. The convenor will provide financial information to the Executive Committee about how ESRS funds were used.
6. The convenor will actively participate in the Study Group Convenors' meeting at the ESRS biennial meeting, or send a representative. This will allow discussion on how ESRS meets the needs of its study groups and vice versa.
7. The convenor will ensure that relevant information about the study group and its activities is communicated regularly to the Executive Committee so that it can be posted on the website, emailed to ESRS members and included in the ESRS members' newsletter, as appropriate
8. The term of a convenor is two years, with a possible extension of two years.

### **Formation of a new study group:**

1. Proposals for new study groups must be submitted to the responsible person on the Executive Committee who will circulate to the committee for approval
2. Proposals for new study groups must include the following:
  - a. an outline of the field to be covered, briefly explaining why a new group is needed;
  - b. a statement of the proposed aims of the group;
  - c. the support of at least five current members of the Association (either hard copy signatures or e-mails), the name of the convenor, who must be a paid-up member of the ESRS at the time of proposal, and any other participants who will support the group;
  - d. how ESRS funds will be used to assist the group's activities;
3. Proponents of a new study group should ensure that the proposed field is not already covered by an existing study group

### **Membership**

Membership of the ESRS includes free membership to any study group.

Study group membership is not restricted to ESRS members, in the interests of research networking and the promotion of rural sociology; however at least one third of the membership of a study group should be made up of ESRS members;

Study Groups events which are partially supported by money 'given' by the ESRS e.g. an event held at an academic institution using funds from the group's

designated fund, must carry appropriate acknowledgment on all promotional materials as follows:

*“This event has been made possible with the financial support of the European Society for Rural Sociology and the voluntary assistance of its members”.*

**Closure of a study group:**

Where a study group has little activity and few volunteers, the Executive Committee will assist with trying to raise its profile to attract new members; Over time, though, the array of study groups is bound to alter, so when it is clear that a group is no longer viable and active, the convenor(s) should notify the Executive Committee so that ESRS publicity and records can be properly amended;

**Tips for running a study group:**

1. Have an extensive, up-to-date mailing list which includes ESRS members and, also, non-ESRS group members.
2. Get a group of volunteers, particularly postgraduate students, from within the study group to help divide the workload.
3. When holding an event, ensure you cover your costs and try to make a small surplus to put in your designated funds so you can plan for future activities.
4. Use venues/catering facilities with minimal cost: some Universities may offer free space;
5. Treat your speakers like VIPs but do not pay them a fee; it is flattering to be acknowledged as a revered authority on a subject and speakers should welcome the opportunity to promote their work and engage with a specialist audience.
6. Think carefully about the focus of the events and make them of interest/accessible to a wide audience of academics and practitioners as this will help to ensure a bigger audience.
7. When organizing an activity/event, watch out for hidden costs – make sure you are clear about rates that will be charged (including VAT) at the outset and plan to cover these accordingly.
8. Sometimes universities will provide some financial assistance to convene meetings.