



EECERA

European Early Childhood Education Research Association

Revised Requirements for EECERA Special Interest Groups May 2016

Background

In May 2016 the EECERA Board of Trustees met and discussed the role and function of EECERA SIG groups within the Association. To inform our discussion we had reviewed how SIGs operated organisationally in a range of similar educational professional networks and associations, and also reviewed the current EECERA organisational arrangements for SIGs. This discussion led to the Board of Trustees agreeing a revised set of organisational requirements for EECERA SIGs which are set out in this paper.

Definition of an EECERA SIG

A Special Interest Group (SIG) is seen as a community within the larger EECERA organisation with a shared interest in advancing a specific area of knowledge, learning or technology, where members meet, organise conferences and discussions, and conduct collaborative projects and publications. The groupings may be technical e.g. focused on a curriculum area like mathematics or on a particular method or technique, or they may be non-technical and more generally focused on a mutual interest or shared characteristic of a subset of members of the organisation e.g. early career researchers, multilingual education or outdoor learning. SIGs are therefore not always subject focused.

EECERA members are encouraged to engage in cross-national collaborations around a particular theme, and have the opportunity to form Special Interest Groups (SIGs) according to rules agreed by the Trustees and set out clearly in the EECERA website. These collaborations can be simply for dialogue and deliberation or have a particular focus such as a research bid or an intended publication. Currently EECERA SIGs are networks of a group of researchers from different institutions, disciplines and countries who wish to collaborate around a particular theme or issue in early childhood education and care.

The aims of EECERA SIGs

- to generate critical reflection on that theme or issue;
- to encourage the emergence of cross-national perspectives;

- to support innovative and reflexive research on current ECEC issues and themes through international collaboration.

To realise these aims SIG's are encouraged to:

- share their work at conference and through other networking contact and activities;
- develop collaborative projects;
- put forward self-organised symposium at the annual EECERA conference;
- write collaborative papers for the EECERJ;
- develop proposals for an EECERA Themed Special Issue or the EECERA Book Series.

EECERA Support for SIGs

The EECERA Board of Trustees support approved SIGs by:

- offering a 100 euro grant per year against invoices supporting the SIG's work or development;
- facilitating networking through support to set up an online group, as part of the EECERA website;
- offering an annual venue at conference for meetings which encourages joint presentations, establishes self-organising symposia and gives SIGs a high profile and a wider audience;
- funding the cost of a meeting room for each SIG for up to 2 hours at conference, which should allow adequate time for the formalities of a meeting. Informal discussion can then spin off from this meeting.
- offering a forum for the publishing of collaborative research through the EECER Journal, the Themed Special Issue series and the EECERA Book Series, with a dedicated Trustee to offer guidance and support;
- supporting access to EECERA's book publishers.

SIG Convenors contribution to EECERA is currently recognised through its democratic and participatory structures. The Board of Trustees has established an '*Electoral College*' which has powers to elect some of its members to the Board of Trustee as vacancies occur. The Trustees serve for three years and can seek re-election. In recognition of their commitment to EECERA, membership of the Electoral College includes SIG Convenors of a minimum of three years standing. If their SIG thrives, Convenors will be eligible to be members of the Electoral College and indeed will be able to offer themselves for election to the Board.

How to establish an EECERA SIG

EECERA encourages and welcomes the creation of additional SIGs. SIGs are initiated through a formal process of negotiation with the Trustee with responsibility for SIGs and the completion of a standardised application form. The SIG Trustee then submits the SIG application for formal approval by the Board of Trustees. SIGs are created by:

- linking up with other interested researchers at conference or through other contacts;
- contacting the EECERA SIG Trustee;
- making a written application for formal designation of a SIG to the Board of Trustees, which includes an annual action plan;
- convening a proposed SIG meeting at the designated time during conference and organising between conference networking and meetings.

Revised EECERA SIG protocols and requirements

Following the May 2016 Board of Trustees meeting it was unanimously agreed that EECERA SIGs should operate under a revised set of procedures and protocols, which include new requirements for SIG Convenors and members. These revised protocols and requirements are set out below and will come into force from **January 2017**.

1. It is required that the selected theme or issue for a SIG should be specific enough to be widely recognised as a relevant theme that complements EECERA's aims and also complex enough to be studied and researched from various standpoints. It should have the potential to generate knowledge that will benefit from being cross-nationally, collaboratively constructed and communicated in order to bring about new knowledge that has wide application and social utility.
2. SIGs should have at least two Convenors (of different nationalities, one of whom should be working in a European institution), who are responsible for facilitating the work of the SIG. The SIG convenors should be members of EECERA.
3. All SIGs should have a minimum membership of 15 before formal designation and this minimum membership number should be maintained throughout the life of a SIG.
4. All SIG members should be members of EECERA. There is no additional cost for EECERA members wishing to belong to a SIG.
5. Any EECERA conference delegate may attend SIG meetings at conference which effectively means that conference SIG meetings are open to any delegate wishing to attend. SIG meetings between conferences may be restricted to full SIG members only.
6. SIGs meet at programmed periods during Conference each year and are also expected to organise a minimum of one additional meeting per year (eg skype, webinars or face to face).
7. SIG Convenors should present a written report to the Trustees Board at least one month before the Board meeting in May each year. This report should have these elements:
 - the names and emails of convenors and current members of the SIG;
 - activities undertaken by the SIG in past year;
 - planned SIG activity for the coming year;
 - the links and networks established with other institutions and organisations;
 - how SIG's activities fit with aims and ethos of EECERA.
8. SIG Convenors will be expected to provide text for the regular updating of their section of EECERA website and the newsletter.
9. There is an expectation that the EECERA Journal, Themed Special Issue or EECERA Book Series should be the first port of call for SIG publications.