

ESC Working Groups – Internal Governance Procedures

Approved by ESC Board (11 December 2019)

Revision approved by ESC Management Group (28 January 2022)

This document is an ESC Board approved document that will be reviewed periodically as deemed necessary by the ESC Board to ensure alignment with the ESC Statutes and policies.

Table of contents

Article 1 – Form & rationale

Article 2 – Purpose and means

Article 3 – Structure, roles & responsibilities

Article 3.1 Overall structure

Article 3.2 Roles & responsibilities

Article 4 – Nominating Committee (NC)

Article 4.1 Composition of the NC

Article 4.2 Role of the NC

Article 5 – Elections

Article 5.1 – Turnover rules

Article 5.2 – Chairperson-Elect elections

Article 5.2a Chairperson-Elect eligibility criteria

Article 5.2b Chairperson-Elect election process

Article 5.3 – Ordinary nucleus member elections

Article 5.3a Ordinary nucleus member eligibility criteria

Article 5.3b Ordinary nucleus member election process

Article 5.4 – Exclusion process

Article 5.5 – Replacements of nucleus members

Article 6 – Working Group membership

Article 6.1 – Working Group ordinary members

Article 6.2 – Working Group ordinary members with voting rights

Article 7 – Working Groups Operating Business

Article 1 – Form & rationale

The ESC creates Working Groups for the study and advancement of particular subjects related to the heart and the vascular system. Working Groups may be created or dissolved by the Ordinary General Assembly upon proposal of the Board. The internal organisation of Working Groups is regulated in the Board approved procedures.

Working Group **internal governance** must comply with the ESC Statutes & rules of governance.

Article 2 – Purpose and means

The Working Groups of the ESC are expected to contribute to the purpose and means of the ESC as detailed in the ESC Statutes.

To support this mission, the ESC Board provides the ESC Working Groups with the financial and support resources deemed appropriate to the successful delivery of the activities the Working Groups engage in, consistent with the purpose and means of the ESC as well as the ESC Strategic Plan.

The ESC has been formed to advance the prevention, diagnosis and management of diseases of the heart and the blood vessels, and to improve the scientific understanding of the heart and the vascular system.

The ESC takes responsibility for education and training of cardiologists and other professionals involved with prevention, diagnosis and management of diseases of the heart and the blood vessels in its member countries, and for the development of standards for their training, continuous education and professional conduct. In addition, the ESC promotes education, training and development of standards throughout the world.

The ESC wishes to improve the scientific understanding of the heart and the vascular system through promotion of research in this field.

The ESC offers advice to the public, health authorities and administration on prevention, diagnosis and management of diseases of the heart and the blood vessels, and on research programmes regarding these topics to improve our scientific understanding of the heart and the vascular system.

Accordingly, the Mission of the ESC may be stated as “to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease”.

To these ends, the ESC brings together: i) the members of the National Societies of Cardiology, which have joined the ESC, as well as other professionals including, but not limited to, physicians, scientists, nurses and allied health professionals in the field of diseases of the heart and the blood vessels, and ii) other members of ESC Associations, Councils and Working Groups.

The ESC may create or take interest in any trading companies, non-trading companies, for-profit structure or non-for-profit organisation (like a foundation, a “fonds de dotation” or an association), which enables it to build up the necessary assets.

The ESC may undertake the scientific and material organisation of any congress, symposium or similar event, bringing together any and all professionals, including physicians, scientists, biomedical technicians, nurses and allied health professionals and industrialists, interested in cardiovascular medicine as well as offering all associated services usual at such international meetings, including but not limited to renting space, organising scientific sessions, satellite events, publishing information and similar.

The ESC may organise the collection, analysis, processing and communication of medical or scientific information obtained from a wide range of physicians, scientists or institutions of cardiovascular medicine.

The ESC may collect, edit and publish journals, articles or information whether in printed or electronic form on any medical or scientific nature related to cardiovascular medicine.

The ESC may award scholarships, awards or grants for education, training or research in its area of interest.

Article 3 – Structure, roles & responsibilities

Each Working Group is governed by a nucleus, whose structure, roles & responsibilities is identical for all Working Groups and is detailed hereafter.

Article 3.1 – Overall structure

The nucleus of an ESC Working Group is composed of up to 17 members:

- **Up to 12 voting nucleus members** elected by the Working Group members with voting rights (as defined in Article 6.2)
- **Up to 5 non-voting nucleus members** appointed by the Chairperson

Mandates of all Working Group nucleus members are aligned on a two-year basis and start in September of the election years, right after the ESC Congress.

Article 3.2 – Roles & responsibilities

The Working Group nucleus members' roles & responsibilities are detailed hereafter. Volunteers are expected to commit to and fulfil these duties; non-compliance with these duties may lead to being asked to stand down or exclusion (see Article 5.4).

➤ **Voting nucleus members**

Voting nucleus members must engage actively in the activities of the Working Group and attend the appropriate meetings for the duration of their mandates. They vote on any items brought to the attention of the nucleus.

Chairperson position

The Chairperson is responsible for:

- defining the strategy and objectives of the Working Group in accordance with the ESC Strategic plan and in collaboration with the other Nucleus members
- assuring that the Working Group activities comply with the ESC statutes and policies
- the decision-making of the Working Group
- regular reporting to the Working Group nucleus
- regular reporting to the ESC Vice President for Working Groups or another suitable nominee representing the ESC Management Group
- the representation of the Working Group and of the ESC at official functions of the European Society of Cardiology and outside events
- ensuring compliance with ESC processes in all the activities of the Working Group
- the appointment of the Treasurer, Secretary and Communication Coordinator, amongst the elected nucleus members
- the appointment of voting nucleus members invited to represent the Working Group in other scientific organisations, groups, or societies (inside or outside the ESC)
- the appointment of non-voting members and their tasks & responsibilities (at the start of the mandate)
- reviewing new Working Group member applications
- drafting of the agenda and validation of the minutes of nucleus meetings

Chairperson-Elect position

The Chairperson-Elect is responsible for assisting the Chairperson in his/her tasks and must assume the responsibilities of the Chairperson in case of absence of the latter.

Past-Chairperson position

The Past-Chairperson is responsible for assisting the Chairperson in his/her tasks and maintaining continuity with the Working Group activities at the end of his/her mandate as Chairperson.

Ordinary nucleus positions

Ordinary nucleus members are responsible for all tasks and activities delegated to them by the Chairperson.

Amongst the voting nucleus members, the positions of Secretary, Treasurer, and Communication Coordinator must be assigned by the Chairperson no later than one month after the start of her/his mandate. These three positions may be cumulative with one another or with the position of Chairperson-Elect or Past Chairperson, but not with the position of Chairperson itself. Candidates to these positions should make themselves known at the start of a mandate.

Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for the planning of nucleus and scientific meetings, and consolidation of the meeting minutes according to the [Working Group Operational Guidelines](#).

Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for the building of the budget requests and the coordination of the Quarterly Reviews according to the [Working Group Operational Guidelines](#).

Communication Coordinator

The Communication Coordinator is responsible for the collection of the content for the website, the member newsletter and any communication media of the Working Group according to the [Working Group Operational Guidelines](#).

Representation of the Working Group

Voting nucleus members can be assigned by the Chairperson to represent the Working Group in other scientific organisations, groups, or societies (inside or outside the ESC); in which case they are required to act on behalf of the Working Group and regularly report on their activities to the Working Group Chairperson and nucleus. These appointments are decided upon invitation by the other body to the Working Group Chairperson and must respect the turnover rules presented in Article 5.1.

➤ **Non-voting nucleus members**

Non-voting nucleus members are responsible for managing and reporting back on specific tasks or activities assigned to them by the Chairperson, and they cannot vote on any items brought to the attention of the nucleus. Non-voting nucleus members are not elected: they are appointed by the WG Chairperson for a period of two years, renewable once, and they must comply with the turnover rules in article 5.1.

Nomination process

The Chairperson is responsible for proposing assignment of new non-voting members to the nucleus and their respective task(s), which may be:

- Coordination of a specific task on behalf of the Working Group (scientific publication / organisation of a meeting / ...)
- Representation of another scientific organisation, group or society (inside or outside the ESC) with which the Working Group wishes to liaise on issues of shared interest. In this case, an invitation must be sent to the other governing body, who will make a proposal of candidate to be assigned to the nucleus. The ESC Staff will verify that the candidate meets the turnover rules & eligibility criteria and send a formal invitation. The candidate will be considered as an official member of the nucleus once a reply has been received by the ESC Staff in writing.

Article 4 – Nominating Committee (NC)

Article 4.1 – Composition of the NC

The Nominating Committee is composed of three members: the Chairperson-Elect and Past-Chairperson of the Working Group nucleus, and a third voting member of the nucleus (excluding the Chairperson) assigned by the ESC Vice-President for Working Groups.

The Nominating Committee is chaired by the Past-Chairperson and reports to the ESC Vice-President for Working Groups or another suitable nominee representing the ESC Management Group.

To avoid any conflict of interest, members of the Nominating Committee cannot apply or be nominated as a candidate in any of the elections supervised by this Nominating Committee.

Article 4.2 – Role of the NC

The role of the Nominating Committee is to identify and propose candidates for the leadership of the Working Group, to oversee the good running of the election process and to address any issues brought to their attention during the elections of Chairperson-Elect and ordinary nucleus members according to the procedures detailed in this document.

The Nominating Committee must ensure full transparency of decision-making in these processes. In no case can the Nominating Committee influence or change the results of the voting.

In all election processes, the Nominating Committee must strive to encourage and implement gender and geographical diversity in the nucleus:

- There must not be more than one nucleus member from the same institution
- There should not be more than two nucleus members from the same country of work

Article 5 – Elections

Elections are organised every two years by electronic voting which is put in place with the support of the ESC staff

- The Chairperson-Elect is elected by the voting nucleus members after a nomination process
- The ordinary nucleus members are subsequently elected by the Working Group members with voting rights (as defined in Article 6.2)

The elections are supervised by the Nominating Committee, who must ensure that the procedures detailed in this document are respected.

Article 5.1 – Turnover rules

In all Working Groups, the following rules must be respected:

1. Limitations of cumulative positions within the ESC: in order to ensure a renewal within the ESC and a good internal functioning, an officer may not hold more than three leadership positions¹ at the same time. Being a nucleus member of a Working Group is counted as one leadership position. A candidate who already holds three offices may therefore not stand for election or be proposed as a candidate, except if one of its term of office expires before the new function starts.

¹ Definition proposed, to be approved by the ESC Board: *as defined, for instance, by a Chairmanship of an ESC Committee, any voting Board/Nucleus positions within the ESC; Editor in Chief of an ESC journal etc*

2. Limitation of representation within ESC Working Groups: any individual cannot be elected to more than one ESC Working Group nucleus
1. Limitation of representation within ESC Constituent Bodies: for the duration of their mandates, voting nucleus members cannot simultaneously hold another position as an elected nucleus / board member in another ESC Working Group, Association, or Council, unless if co-opted in a non-voting position
2. Limitations of years of service within a nucleus: Working Group nucleus members (whether voting or non-voting) may remain on one same nucleus for a maximum of 12 years (consecutive or not). If the Working Group leads its own ESC Journal, this limitation does not apply to the Editor-in-Chief of its official ESC journal(s), who are contracted on an individual basis for a specified term.

Candidates to the positions of Chairperson-Elect or ordinary nucleus members must respect the eligibility criteria defined above, as well as in the respective sections 5.2a and 5.3a. If the candidate does not comply with the eligibility criteria, the Nominating Committee should not include her/his candidacy on the slate for voting. If the candidate's situation towards above rules changes after voting has taken place, the candidate must inform the Nominating Committee which will decide on further actions, including the possible annulment of the election.

Article 5.2 – Chairperson-Elect elections

The Chairperson-Elect is elected for a period of 2 years after which they automatically become Chairperson for 2 years and then Past-Chairperson for 2 years.

Article 5.2a – Chairperson-Elect eligibility criteria

The position of Chairperson-Elect is open to the current and immediate-past voting nucleus members only; they will receive the call for candidates prepared by the Nominating Committee.

Candidates to the position of Chairperson-Elect must comply with all rules detailed in section 5.1. In addition, the following eligibility criteria apply:

1. Candidates must have spent no more than 6 years on the nucleus they are applying to (consecutive or not, whether with voting position or non-voting position)
2. Candidates must not have been already elected to the chairperson position in the same Working Group
3. Candidates are expected to be ESC Professional Members or FESC, both in good standing

Article 5.2b Chairperson-Elect election process

The Chairperson-Elect is elected by the voting nucleus members, in the year of the end of a mandate.

The election of the Chairperson-Elect is supervised by the Nominating Committee, whose role is to:

- Prepare the call for candidates (requested profile and supporting documents)
- Review all applications received and make a pre-selection of minimum 2 and maximum 3 candidates to be included in the slate for voting, in accordance with the turnover rules (article 5.1), eligibility criteria (article 5.2a) and selection criteria (if applicable)
- Inform the candidates of their selection or not and answer queries without a justification being required
- Communicate the results of the voting to the nucleus

Once the pre-selection of candidates is final, ESC staff will inform all candidates on behalf of the Nominating Committee and set-up the online voting system and process.

The election is valid only if at least 2/3rds of the eligible nucleus voting members have voted. "Abstain" votes are included in the number of votes cast.

Voting must take place in any case:

- In case there is one single candidate, she/he must be elected by a majority constituting more than half of the votes cast, failing which the Nominating Committee must organise new elections

- In case there are several candidates, the one with most votes in favour will be elected. In the event of a tied vote, a second round of voting will take place amongst the highest ranked candidates. In the event of a second tied vote, the ESC Vice President for Working Groups or another suitable nominee representing the ESC Management Group shall have a deciding vote.

Article 5.3 – Ordinary nucleus member elections

Ordinary nucleus members are elected for a period of 2 years, renewable once, if the elected term will not make them surpass the 12-year limit.

Article 5.3a – Ordinary nucleus member eligibility criteria

The positions of ordinary nucleus members are open to Working Group ordinary members with voting rights; they will receive the call for candidates prepared by the Nominating Committee.

Candidates to the position of ordinary nucleus member must comply with all rules detailed in section 5.1. In addition, the following eligibility criteria apply:

1. Candidates must have spent no more than 8 years on the nucleus they are applying to (consecutive or not, whether in a voting position or non-voting position)
2. Candidates must demonstrate that they are professionally active
3. Candidates are strongly recommended to apply for ESC Professional Membership or FESC

Article 5.3b – Ordinary nucleus member election process

Working Group nucleus members are elected by members of that same Working Group with voting rights (as defined in Article 6.2).

The election of ordinary nucleus members is supervised by the Nominating Committee, whose role is to:

- Validate the election process and structure:
 - o Number of open positions (according to the terms of current nucleus members)
 - o Selection criteria (quantifiable) for all open positions
 - o List of supporting documents required (we recommend at minimum a CV and motivation letter)
 - o Not mandatory: voting by pool. If the WG wishes to attract candidates with a specific profile or background, the NC must define the number of positions open in each pool, the selection criteria of each position and submit this for the approval of the nucleus. Such selection criteria must be quantifiable. Consequently, the elections will be set-up in different pools. Candidates will be informed in the call for candidates on the specific selection criteria for each position and the number of positions open in each pool; and must position themselves in no more than one pool
- Resolve potential conflicts on the positioning of candidates into the different pools available, with consultation of the ESC Vice President for Working Groups (if applicable)
- Review the list of candidates and validate the list of candidacies to be included in the slate for voting, in accordance with the eligibility criteria and selection criteria (if applicable)
- Inform the candidates of their (non)pre-selection without a justification being required
- Communicate the results of the voting to the nucleus

The election is valid only if the quorum is reached: 20% of the Working Group members must have participated in the election. "Abstain" votes are included in the number of votes cast.

In each respective pool, candidates with the highest number of votes are automatically elected. If the number of candidates elected in a pool is lower than the number of open positions, the remaining open positions will remain vacant for the duration of the mandate.

In the event of a tied vote, a second round of voting will take place amongst the candidates who have not automatically been elected. In case of a second tied vote, the chairperson will have the casting vote.

Article 5.4 – Exclusion criteria & process

Nucleus members may be asked to stand down or excluded from their positions if they fail to comply with the following:

- Failure to submit their annual Declaration of Interest (in this case, exclusion is mandatory)
- Failure to attend three consecutive official meetings of the Working Group
- Failure to participate actively in the tasks he/she has been assigned

Prior to any exclusion, the Chairperson must give written notice to the person concerned and give them the opportunity to explain their situation.

Working Group Chairpersons may request the exclusion of one of the nucleus members, by sending a request in writing to the entire nucleus.

If the request concerns the Chairperson, the same procedure applies, and it should be mandated by the Chairperson-Elect.

The request must be supported by:

- evidence of failing to comply with the above conditions
- evidence of previous warning
- the majority of the other voting nucleus members
- the ESC Vice President for Working Groups or another suitable nominee representing the ESC Management Group

If the request is confirmed, written notice is given to the person concerned and the exclusion from the nucleus is immediate.

Article 5.5 – Replacement of nucleus members

In the event of the death, resignation or exclusion, of any member of the nucleus, he or she will be replaced as follows:

- I. If it concerns the Chairperson, such will be succeeded for the balance of the appropriate two-year mandate by the Chairperson-Elect on an acting basis. The Chairperson-Elect will therefore cumulate the responsibilities of the Chairperson-Elect and Chairperson for the balance of the mandate.
- II. If it concerns the Chairperson-Elect, new elections will be organised in a timely manner, following the procedures laid down in this document. In the meantime, until the new vote has taken place, the task related to the position of Chairperson-Elect within the nucleus may be delegated to one of the other nucleus members.
- III. If it concerns the Past Chairperson, the nucleus may, in its own discretion, appoint any previous nucleus member for the balance of the two-year mandate. This previous nucleus member will have no voting rights.
- IV. If it concerns the Secretary/ Treasurer/ Content coordinator: the Chairperson, in consultation with the nucleus, may appoint one of the other voting nucleus members to assume such responsibilities for the balance of the two-year mandate.
- V. If it concerns any other ordinary nucleus members: the nucleus will refer the matter to the next election; the position will not be replaced in the meantime.

Article 6 – Working Group Membership

Article 6.1 – Working Group ordinary members

All ESC Working Groups are open to individual membership. Individual membership of an ESC Working Group is open to all healthcare professionals as defined by the ESC Statutes.

Potential members can apply to become a member via the online application available on the Working Group website. Specific eligibility criteria per Working Group are publicly available on the same website. Membership is effective once the application is formally approved by the Working Group Chairperson and valid for 12 months, with an option to automatically renew.

Article 6.2 – Working Group ordinary members with voting rights

Working Group members with voting rights are members of that same Working Group with a valid membership at the launch of the call for candidates, whose country of work is in an [ESC Member Country](#).

Article 7 – Working Group Operating Business

The ESC Working Group operations are handled by the ESC Working Group Team located at the European Heart House. Each Working Group is assigned a dedicated Working Group coordinator who is responsible for the coordination of the operations of the Working Group.

In order to ensure a smooth running of the activities, Working Group Chairpersons are responsible to comply with the [Working Group Operational Guidelines](#) and keep a regular contact with their Working Group coordinator.