

EGI-InSPIRE

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND INITIAL COMPOSITION OF THE POLICY RELATED GROUPS WITHIN EGI.EU

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Abstract

The purpose of this document is to describe the establishment, composition and operational procedures of EGI.eu internal policy groups as defined in their Terms of Reference (TOR).

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IV. APPLICATION AREA

This document is a formal deliverable for the European Commission, applicable to all members of the EGI-InSPIRE project, beneficiaries and Joint Research Unit members, as well as its collaborating projects.

V. DOCUMENT AMENDMENT PROCEDURE

Amendments, comments and suggestions should be sent to the authors. The procedures documented in the EGI-InSPIRE “Document Management Procedure” will be followed:

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VI. TERMINOLOGY

A complete project glossary is provided at the following page: <http://www.egi.eu/about/glossary/>.



VII. PROJECT SUMMARY

To support science and innovation, a lasting operational model for e-Science is needed – both for coordinating the infrastructure and for delivering integrated services that cross national borders.

The EGI-InSPIRE project will support the transition from a project-based system to a sustainable pan-European e-Infrastructure, by supporting ‘grids’ of high-performance computing (HPC) and high-throughput computing (HTC) resources. EGI-InSPIRE will also be ideally placed to integrate new Distributed Computing Infrastructures (DCIs) such as clouds, supercomputing networks and desktop grids, to benefit user communities within the European Research Area.

EGI-InSPIRE will collect user requirements and provide support for the current and potential new user communities, for example within the ESFRI projects. Additional support will also be given to the current heavy users of the infrastructure, such as high energy physics, computational chemistry and life sciences, as they move their critical services and tools from a centralised support model to one driven by their own individual communities.

The objectives of the project are:

1. The continued operation and expansion of today’s production infrastructure by transitioning to a governance model and operational infrastructure that can be increasingly sustained outside of specific project funding.
2. The continued support of researchers within Europe and their international collaborators that are using the current production infrastructure.
3. The support for current heavy users of the infrastructure in earth science, astronomy and astrophysics, fusion, computational chemistry and materials science technology, life sciences and high energy physics as they move to sustainable support models for their own communities.
4. Interfaces that expand access to new user communities including new potential heavy users of the infrastructure from the ESFRI projects.
5. Mechanisms to integrate existing infrastructure providers in Europe and around the world into the production infrastructure, so as to provide transparent access to all authorised users.
6. Establish processes and procedures to allow the integration of new DCI technologies (e.g. clouds, volunteer desktop grids) and heterogeneous resources (e.g. HTC and HPC) into a seamless production infrastructure as they mature and demonstrate value to the EGI community.

The EGI community is a federation of independent national and community resource providers, whose resources support specific research communities and international collaborators both within Europe and worldwide. EGI.eu, coordinator of EGI-InSPIRE, brings together partner institutions established within the community to provide a set of essential human and technical services that enable secure integrated access to distributed resources on behalf of the community.



The production infrastructure supports Virtual Research Communities (VRCs) – structured international user communities – that are grouped into specific research domains. VRCs are formally represented within EGI at both a technical and strategic level.

VIII. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this document is to report on the definition of Terms of Reference (TOR) for the EGI.eu policy groups related to the five functional areas: technology, user community, operations, security and organization. The target audience are the NGIs, EIROs, general public and all parties interested in knowing more about the policy development activities within EGI's internal policy groups.

TORs are the starting point of the EGI.eu policy group activities: they define the work that must be carried out by stipulating the working methods and setting down the procedures that will be followed. They reflect the understanding of the parties to the specific functional area within EGI, thus, constitute the basic agreement on the purpose of the policy group. In addition, TORs give an overview of requirements and expectations for the policy group. TORs should be accurate, clear, and focused; they should provide a clear mandate for the policy groups, specifically defining the scope and motivations, operational procedures and the expected outputs.

The Policy Development Team (PDT) defined a general template representing the starting point for the community experts and candidate chairs to write TOR specific to their groups. In consultation with the PDT, TORs for the various groups were drafted and are now in a mature stage. The process of consultation will continue until the involved actors come up with final draft of TOR for each policy group. Approval of the TOR by EGI's governing bodies will give the groups a mandate to start operation. Ten policy groups are being established and they will soon start operation.



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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to report on the definition of Terms of Reference (TOR) governing the functions, composition and operating procedures of the EGI policy groups. The target audience for this document are the NGIs, EIROs, general public and all parties interested to know more about the policy development activities within EGI's internal policy groups.

A number of policy groups were identified in the Document of Work [R10] together with their purpose and responsibilities. Most of them have already been activated while two groups (SSG and OTF) will not start as their duties being taken by other bodies. A new group (OAT) has also been established.

The policy development activities are being based on principles of transparency and openness, consensus and cooperation and that it is open to relevant actors and stakeholders affected by the policies. For each policy group, a TOR describing its responsibilities, composition and operational procedures has been defined. Chairs are either elected or appointed, chosen from within the community from the acknowledged experts in the appropriate subject area. They report the progress of the group's work to the EGI.eu management.

The document is structured as follows: Section 2 explains the motivation and logic behind the structuring of TORs; Section 3 provides a synthetic view of the policy groups within EGI including information about their creation and reports on specific issues related to the TOR definition; Section 4 draws up conclusions.

2 STRUCTURING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

This section describes how a general TOR template was structured and the motivation behind it. The template itself is also presented and described.

2.1 *Motivation and logic behind TOR*

Terms of References (TORs) are important to articulate the scope and limitations of policy groups since they define the group's frameworks and act as a point of reference throughout the process. TORs should be accurate, clear, and focused; they should provide a clear mandate for the policy groups, specifically defining the scope and motivations, operational procedures and the expected outputs.

TORs are the starting point of the EGI.eu policy group's activities, they define the work that must be carried out by stipulating the working methods and setting down the procedures which will be followed. They reflect the understanding of the parties to the specific functional area within EGI.eu, thus, constitute the basic agreement on the purpose of the policy group. In addition, TORs give an overview of requirements and expectations for the policy group.

The scope of the group and, thus, the formulation of the specific TOR will differ depending on a variety of factors. Some of the factors are scale of the group's activities, the number of members in the group, contextual changes, specific functional area, pre-existence of the similar group (whether the group was previously known under another name or it is completely new), the anticipated duration of the group's activities etc. It is critical that the Terms of Reference for the group are prioritised in response to the precise situation, in order to help the group to focus on the essential issues in their policy activities.

Within the Policy Development Team, a general TOR template was defined regardless of the policy group to which it refers. General template was created by Policy Development Team and forwarded to the future group's chair. The initial structure may need to be amended for specific aspects of a policy group and candidate group chairs can change the initial structure in consultation with the Policy Development Team.

The initial draft of the TOR is usually the responsibility of the candidate group chair or by an acknowledge expert with support by the policy development team for review and feedback. It is important that the TOR is developed consultatively together with the leading members of the group so that their key concerns are addressed. On the others side, the Policy Development Team takes care that their input is properly considered and fitted into general context of the best policy development practices.

TORs are structured according to the general requirements and elements that are widely recognised to be present. Furthermore, EGI.eu also took into deliberation all the specific elements every policy groups have in order to define the best possible framework for their specific responsibilities and activities. Therefore, in consultation with policy development team new elements may be added reflecting particular requirements and expectations.

Several issues were encountered while adjusting the general TOR structure to the specific situation of each policy group. It is not easy to find the fine balance between general requirements that include the necessary elements of every well-structured TOR and specifics of each group that needs to be taken into account in order to provide solid foundation for the group's optimal activity. Each TOR will be considered as a formal document that will have to pass the formal policy development process and will be approved by the EGI.eu Governing bodies (i.e., the EGI.eu Council through the EGI.eu Executive Board).

2.2 Structure of the TOR

The Terms of Reference should cover at least the following elements listed below. Thus, Terms of Reference for the all EGI policy groups are structured as follows:

- **Definitions:** explanation of terms and abbreviations used within the policy and procedure
- **Purpose and Responsibilities:** summary of responsibilities, purpose and powers of the group
- **Authority:** definition of the source of authority for the group (i.e., from whom the group gets delegation of power) and responsibility (to whom they are responsible to and need to report)
- **Composition**
 - **Membership:** requirements for membership, voting rights and list of members
 - **Chair:** method of appointment, duties and term of office for the chair
 - **Secretary:** method of appointment, duties and term of office for the secretary
- **Operating Procedures**
 - **Communications and Meetings:** rules, frequency and duties to hold group meetings and definition of communication channels
 - **Decision Making:** rules to achieve agreement on policy documents
 - **Reports:** definition of reporting duties of the group to the governing bodies
- **Evaluation:** description of the process for evaluating the performance of the group
- **Related Material:** references about material such as statutes, regulations, policies or procedures that directly relate to the group's composition or operations.
- **Amendment:** rules to amend the TOR

According to the EGI policy development principles, EGI prescribes common standards every group should comply with in its activities. Defining common standards is of great importance since EGI must make sure that the activities of all groups are done according to the defined policy development principles. Therefore, to sum it up work of a group is inclusive since any NGI, EIRO and interested parties can participate through their membership in group activities. The policies are created by respecting bottom-up approach and all the policies are created by the EGI community and not by a centralized approach.

According to the Document of Work (DoW) [R10], the main and only risk that was identified for the bodies setting the technical policy is inability to agree on an issue. Policy development team together with the expert teams will take care that the decision making process within group is defined in the most optimal way, having in mind best general practices and distinct characteristics of a specific group. Dedicated and serious approach to this potential issue will limit the possibility of any decision-making "bottlenecks". As a general rule, whenever possible, policy development approval in

all groups is based on consensus. As proposed in the TOR template: *“Wherever possible, the Group will arrive at proposed draft recommendations documents and/or advice by clear consensus, as determined by the Chair. A voting process will only start if consensus cannot be reached in a reasonable time or if at least one third of voting members of the Group call for a vote. If the Group’s recommendations are adopted by majority vote, minority positions will be recorded and reported. The Group may refer matters for decision to the Director on issues where a consensus cannot be achieved.”*

2.3 Approval Process of the TOR

For each group, the TOR is defined by the experts (the candidate chair plus experts who will be working in the group) in consultation with the Policy Development Team (PDT). Once the TOR is considered complete, then the PDT requests the approval from the EGI.eu EB via the EGI.eu Director. In Figure 1, we describe the main steps of this process.

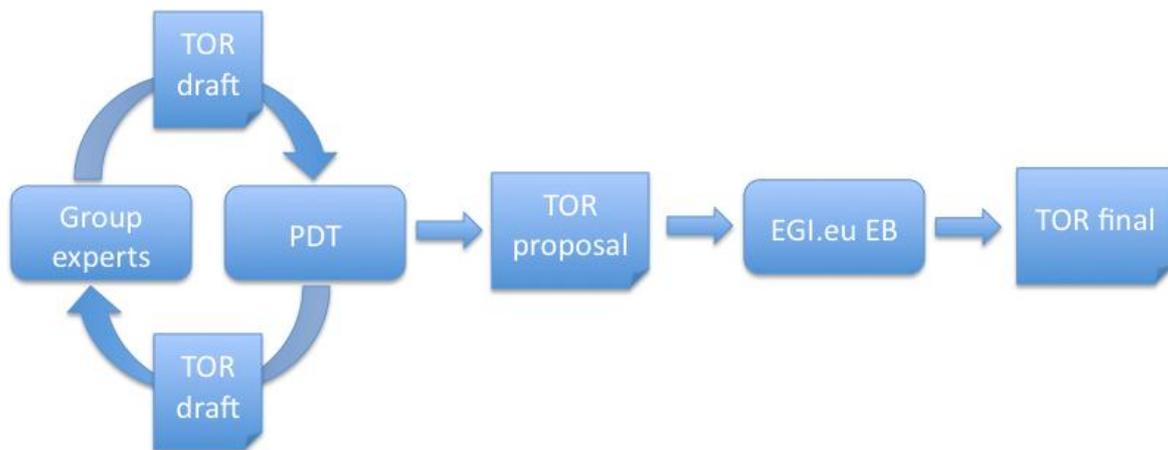


Figure 1 - Approval process of the TOR

3 EGI POLICY GROUPS

In this section, we list the policy groups that have been set up and for which TOR have been defined. Starting from the planned groups identified in the DoW, nine groups have been started. Among these, one group is new (i.e., not envisioned in the DoW), while two planned groups have not been started and other bodies have taken their duties. The groups are presented classified by their functional area: technology, user community, operations, policy and organization (see Figure 2). Additional groups and task forces will be established as required.

Technology	Operations	User Community	Security	Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TCB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OMB• OAT• OATG	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UCB• USAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SPG• SVG• SSG	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OTF• EAC

Figure 2 Policy groups by area

The policy groups operate upon openness, transparency, accountability and participatory principles. Policies are developed and defined through a transparent process, with a bottom-up approach and consensus-based decision-making.

3.1 Technology Area

3.1.1 Technology Coordination Board (TCB)

The TCB [R1] is defined in the DoW to provide focus for the technologies that will be used within EGI to deliver a distributed computing infrastructure for the research communities. To support this goal it will: 1) prioritise requirements from the operations and end-user communities relating to their functional needs and behaviour of the EGI production infrastructure; 2) develop a technology roadmap for EGI that will be implemented through its Unified Middleware Distribution (UMD); 3) source components in UMD through bi-lateral relationships with technology providers in the community; 4) define generic or component specific criteria relating to the acceptance of new software releases from these technology providers; 5) ensure a supply of software components that meet the needs of the operations and end-user communities within EGI.

3.2 Operations Area

3.2.1 Operations Management Board (OMB)

The OMB [R2] is defined in the DoW to develop strategy and technical priorities concerning the deployment and operation of the production infrastructure, oversees the status and progress of the global EGI operational services and of the NGI operational services. Responsibilities of the OMB are: 1) to advise the EGI.eu Director on strategic and technical issues relating to the operation of the production infrastructure; 2) to identify possible or actual problem areas that are not being addressed and propose corrective actions; 3) to develop and approve policies and procedures that

require formal consensus from the NGI operations managers and their respective resource providers; 4) to collect information and requirements from parties within the NGIs and EGI on the usage and take-up of the Grid middleware and operational tools, and bring this input to the Technical Coordination Board (TCB); 5) to consolidate all requirements taking into consideration the needs and operational procedures of the NGIs and their sites; 6) to examine requirements from other parties within EGI (Virtual Research Communities - VRCs, external software provider, etc.) which will require changes to the operational procedures and tools, and to liaise with the User Community Board (UCB); 7) to define work plans for the long-term development of the EGI operations. Detailed technical discussion and development of the operational tools is delegated to the Operational Tools Advisory Group (OTAG). In EGEE-III, a similar activity was carried out on the SA1 Coordination meetings.

3.2.2 Operational Tools Advisory Group (OTAG)

The OTAG [R3] is defined in the DoW to manage the development and evolution of operational tools in response to new scenarios and feedback from its users, primarily the NGI/EIRO Operation Centres and the EGI.eu Operations Team. New requirements are collected and prioritised, and ongoing development, testing and release activities are reported. OTAG provides a forum to discuss the future evolution of the operations tools and to agree tool roadmaps that meet the expressed needs of the EGI community. It has representation from the tool users, and the software product teams (both for operational tools and relevant middleware components) located within or external to the project. (EGI-InSPIRE Proposal [R10]).

3.2.3 Operations Automation Team (OAT)

The OAT [R4] is a new group not envisioned in the DoW, but existing in EGEE-III with a slightly different mandate. The scope of the new OAT is to facilitate cooperation between operational tool developers working in the framework of different projects, to ensure that tool development roadmaps are consistent and to harmonize development plans with the ultimate goal of preserving interoperability and ensure a consistent overall architectural model. Responsibilities include: 1) to regularly update the community of tool architects about the advancements in tool development, about development plans and the related milestones; 2) to jointly define integrated development plans, to make sure that interworking is preserved between mutually dependent tools; 3) To exchange information that is relevant to the entire community.

3.3 User Community Area

3.3.1 User Community Board (UCB)

The UCB [R5] is the focal point within EGI for identifying and resolving issues relating to the User Communities. UCB provides a forum for end-users in structured user communities to shape the infrastructure for their needs. This includes defining the policies relating to their use of the infrastructure and by identifying and prioritising the requirements and issues relating to their use of EGI's production infrastructure. User communities in EGI are recognised through Virtual Research Communities (VRCs) as this provides a means for grouping aligned Virtual Organisations (VOs) that use the infrastructure in order to: 1) provide technical feedback on the services offered by EGI to its users; 2) provide requirements to EGI for new and enhanced services.

3.3.2 User Services Advisory Group (USAG)

The USAG [R6] is defined in the DoW to provide feedback on the user-facing tools and services provided to the EGI user community. USAG will guide the evolution of the EGI Helpdesk and also collect broader requirements and feedback relating to the services offered through the EGI-InSPIRE NA3 (i.e. documentation, training database, application database, etc.) and the processes provided for user support in EGI. USAG will have representation from the User Forum (including both small and large user communities) and from the operational staff responsible for managing the EGI Helpdesk.

3.4 Security Area

3.4.1 Security Policy Group (SPG)

The SPG [R7] is defined in the DoW to develop and maintain security policies for use by EGI and the NGIs. This EGI Security Policy defines the expected behaviour of NGIs, Sites, Users and other participants, required to facilitate the operation of a secure and trustworthy distributed computing infrastructure. SPG may also provide policy advice on any security matter related to the operation of the production infrastructure. SPG should, wherever possible, aim to prepare and maintain simple and general policies which are not only applicable to EGI/NGIs but that are also of use to other Grid infrastructures and DCIs in Europe and across the world. The adoption of common policies by multiple infrastructures eases the problems of interoperability. SPG does not formally approve or adopt policies or advice; this is the responsibility of the EGI.eu Executive Board and the appropriate management bodies of the NGIs. The topics and issues to be addressed can be specified either by EGI management or by SPG itself. SPG may create special focused sub-groups to tackle specific issues. The group is an evolution of the previous JSPG (<http://jspg.org>)

3.4.2 Software Vulnerability Group (SVG)

The SVG [R8] is being defined according to the DoW to reduce the number of software vulnerabilities in the EGI infrastructure. The main purpose as stated in the EGI proposal of the Group is “to eliminate existing vulnerabilities from the deployed infrastructure, primarily from the grid middleware, prevent the introduction of new ones and prevent security incidents”.

This is done in the following way: 1) providing a process for reporting, handling, and resolution of software vulnerabilities found in middleware made available to sites by the EGI Technology Unit as the EGI Unified Middleware Distribution (UMD). This is the largest part of the activity, and the process is described in “The Vulnerability issue handling process”, part of EGI milestone MS405 referred to in section 1.6; 2) the Group may be consulted by the CSIRT team or other groups in EGI on vulnerabilities in other software; 3) where effort is available, collaborate with others who assess software provided in the EGI UMD to look for vulnerabilities; 4) developer education and awareness, to encourage developers to write secure code, thus reducing the likelihood of the introduction of new vulnerabilities. In EGEE-II and EGEE-III, the Grid Security Vulnerability Group (GSVG) carried out a similar activity.

3.4.3 Security Coordination Group (SCG)

The SCG [R9] is defined in the DoW to bring together representatives of the various security functions within the EGI to ensure that there is coordination between the operational security, the security policy governing the use of the production infrastructure and the technology providers



whose software is used within the production infrastructure. The group provides: 1) Information exchange between the various security groups; 2) a coordinated response and planning to EGI on security issues.

3.4.4 Software Security Group (SSG)

The SSG was envisioned by the DoW, nevertheless in the starting phase of EGI it was decided that its duties should be taken by the SCG considering that the relevant stakeholders will be represented as well. This decision may be reconsidered in the future if the need for a more focused activity will be required.

3.5 Organization Area

3.5.1 Organizational Task Force (OTF)

The OTF was envisioned by the DoW, nevertheless in the starting phase of EGI it was seen that many of the discussions would fall within the remit of working groups established from the EGI Council. This choice may be reconsidered in the future if the need for a more focused activity will be required.

3.5.2 External Advisory Committee (EAC)

The EAC [R11] is a group part of the EGI-InSPIRE project and not part of the EGI.eu organization. It provides strategic advice to the EGI-InSPIRE Project Management Board (PMB) through the Project Director on the evolution of the project to expand its user base and increase its impact and applicability amongst structured pan-European user communities. Such strategic advices are provided in the form of written recommendations that should be adopted in order to achieve the strategic goals. The EAC is not the forum for detailed technical advice. This should be directed through representation within the Operations Management Board (for the e-Infrastructure providers) and the User Community Board (for the user communities).

4 CONCLUSION

This document described how the Terms of References for the EGI policy groups have been structured and defined. Motivation and logic behind the structure of a TOR, the general template and process for defining them were explained. Furthermore, the policy groups being activated have been presented and the purpose was described.

Currently, TORs of policy groups are work in progress at a mature stage. The process of consultation will continue until the involved actors come up with a final draft for each policy group. Following this, the process of final approval will start by authorisation of TORs that will be approved by EGI.eu governing bodies.

Thus, TORs content will be available for the public in order to show information that is necessary for the interested parties to grasp the way policy development process works in each of the EGI.eu policy groups.

The availability of a TOR template together with sample descriptions showed to be beneficial for the forming groups in order to set a common minimum standard across the various bodies. Furthermore, it has been useful to let the potential chairs focus on the relevant aspects governing a group and understand the importance of rules related to defining quorum to hold meetings or clarification on the voting process.

According to the Document of Work (DoW), the main and only risk that was identified for policy groups is the inability to agree on an issue. It was remarked that the Policy Development Team in consultation with different group representatives will make sure that the decision making process within a group is defined in the best possible way. Dedicated and serious approach to this potential issue will limit the possibility of any decision-making bottlenecks.

Establishing the well-defined TORs for EGI.eu policy groups also helps NGIs, EIROs and other interested parties in quickly identifying policy development activities, designated contact points in the policy groups they are interested to contact and cooperate. In addition, they will easily identify the policy documents of specific policy groups they are interested to have.

EGI.eu is dedicated to involve all relevant stakeholders in the policy development process by ensuring that all relevant parties have the opportunity to be part of policy discussions and policy-making development. This will ultimately lead to well defined and well balanced policies which will represent the best interest of its key stakeholders (NGIs, EIROs etc.) and contribute to the sustainable grid infrastructure available to all European scientists and their international collaborators.

5 REFERENCES

R1	TOR of TCB - https://documents.egi.eu/document/109
R2	TOR of OMB - https://documents.egi.eu/document/117
R3	TOR of OTAG - https://documents.egi.eu/document/103
R4	TOR of OAT - https://documents.egi.eu/document/123
R5	TOR of UCB - https://documents.egi.eu/document/120
R6	TOR of USAG - https://documents.egi.eu/document/121
R7	TOR of SPG - https://documents.egi.eu/document/64
R8	TOR of SVG - https://documents.egi.eu/document/108
R9	TOR of SCG - https://documents.egi.eu/document/119
R10	EGI-InSPIRE Description of Work (DoW) – https://documents.egi.eu/document/10
R11	TOR of EAC - https://documents.egi.eu/document/170
R12	MS205 Establishing the policy area of the website covering the policy bodies and collaborating projects - https://documents.egi.eu/document/93