



European Society for Rural Sociology Research and Study Groups (RSGs)

Rationale for Inter-Biennial Scholarly Engagement

Professional academic organizations often foster specialized **Research and Study Groups (RSGs)** to sustain disciplinary scholarship between major conferences. Given that the European Society for Rural Sociology (ESRS) convenes biennially, establishing RSGs offers a crucial mechanism for maintaining continuous scholarly dialogue, focused research output, and collaborative networking within the field of rural sociology.

These groups are expected to concentrate on specific **thematic areas** (e.g., gender dynamics, migration patterns, food systems, rural technology innovation) or **regional foci** (e.g., Central and Eastern Europe). We anticipate that successful working groups from the biennial conferences may evolve into formally recognized RSGs, ensuring the longevity of their research trajectories.

ESRS RSGs are intended to unite active researchers, postgraduate students, and, where strategically relevant, appropriate stakeholder groups. Each RSG operates autonomously in defining and executing its intellectual agenda, including the organization of seminars, workshops, and specialized conferences. The effective functioning and liaison of the group with the Executive Committee are contingent upon the appointment of a dedicated **Convenor**.

The Role of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (EC) provides a framework of institutional support for the RSGs:

1. **Formal Ratification:** To formally approve the establishment and continuation of new Research and Study Groups.
2. **Financial Subvention:** To allocate discretionary financial assistance to RSGs, subject to annual budgetary constraints and the merits of the group's proposed activities.
3. **Member Mobilization:** To assist in the recruitment of RSG Convenors and members through strategic promotion to the wider ESRS membership and dedicated visibility on the Society's official website.
4. **Dissemination of Events:** To facilitate the promotion of RSG events and scholarly output via the ESRS website, membership email lists, and official social media channels.
5. **Digital Presence:** To furnish each approved group with a dedicated section on the ESRS website, with content maintenance remaining the responsibility of the Group Convenor.
6. **Convenors' Forum:** To facilitate the exchange of knowledge, policy discussions, and collaborative planning by organizing a mandatory meeting for all RSG Convenors during the biennial ESRS conference.

The Mandate of the Convenor

The Convenor serves as the principal point of contact and organizational lead for the RSG:

1. **Academic Authority:** The Convenor retains the ultimate authority regarding decisions concerning the academic and strategic activities of the RSG. It is deemed **best practice** for the Convenor to engage in rigorous consultation with the group's members on all matters of substance.
2. **Membership Integrity:** The Convenor is responsible for maintaining an accurate and current register of group membership and ensuring this data is accurately recorded for the ESRS database.
3. **Programme Coordination:** The Convenor must diligently coordinate and execute the group's annual programme of scholarly and professional development activities.
4. **Financial Accountability:** The Convenor must provide the Executive Committee with a comprehensive financial account detailing the utilization of any ESRS subvention funds allocated to the group.
5. **Biennial Engagement:** The Convenor (or a designated representative) must actively participate in the mandatory Study Group Convenors' meeting at the biennial ESRS conference to ensure a productive dialogue on aligning the needs of the RSGs and the strategic goals of the ESRS.
6. **Communication Protocol:** The Convenor shall ensure that all relevant information pertaining to the group's status and activities is communicated regularly and accurately to the Executive Committee for publication on the website, dissemination via email, and inclusion in the ESRS members' newsletter, as appropriate.
7. **Term of Office:** The initial mandate for a Convenor shall be two (2) years, subject to a single possible renewal for an additional two (2) years.

Protocol for the Formal Formation of a New Study Group

Proposals for the establishment of new RSGs must be formally submitted to the designated member of the Executive Committee, who is responsible for circulating the documentation to the full EC for official ratification. Proponents must first verify that the proposed thematic or regional field does not substantially overlap with the existing mandate of any currently active RSG.

Proposals for new RSGs must constitute a formal document that includes the following required components:

- **Scholarly Mandate:** A concise outline of the research field to be covered, coupled with a brief explanation detailing the distinct intellectual contribution and necessity of the proposed new group.
- **Statement of Aims:** A clear articulation of the proposed group's primary objectives and anticipated scholarly outputs.
- **Formal Endorsement:** Confirmation of support from a minimum of five (5) current ESRS members (evidenced by physical or electronic signatures). This must also include the formal nomination of the Convenor, who must be a **paid-up member in good standing** of the ESRS at the time of the proposal submission, along with a list of other initial supporting participants.

- **Subvention Utilisation Plan:** A detailed, itemized plan demonstrating how any potential ESRS financial subvention would be utilized to advance the group's activities.

Membership, Activities, and Acknowledgement

RSG Convenors and all formal members are required to maintain active membership status within the ESRS. ESRS membership includes automatic, complimentary affiliation with any RSG.

RSG activities (e.g., seminars, workshops) may be open to non-members to promote scholarly exchange.

Acknowledgement Mandate: All promotional and published materials for RSG events that receive any level of financial contribution from the ESRS (e.g., funds disbursed from the group's designated subvention) must display the following standardized acknowledgment:

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

Protocol for the Dissolution of a Study Group

In instances where an RSG demonstrates insufficient viability or inadequate levels of sustained engagement and scholarly output, the Executive Committee will initially provide assistance to raise its profile and aid in member recruitment. However, recognizing that the array of scholarly interests evolves over time, once it is determined that a group is no longer active or viable, the Convenor(s) must formally notify the Executive Committee. This notification is essential to ensure the prompt and accurate amendment of ESRS public records and promotional materials.