The *CETAF* *Collections Group [CCG]*

**Terms of Reference**

[4th October 2017 / 20th March 2018\*]

\* The Terms of References were agreed upon by the CETAF General Assembly in Heraklion 3/4 October 2017 and updated by the CCG at the work plan meeting in Leiden, 19/20 March 2018

***Description***

The *CETAF Collections Group* aims to sustain and enhance the CETAF network of European natural history collections managers, and to contribute to the delivery of the CETAF strategy by:

* creating common collection management and access policies,
* promoting the physical or digital accessibility to collections,
* sharing knowledge and skills, and
* enhancing natural history collections.

The work programme will facilitate the convergence of policies, compatibility of methodologies and standards, and interoperability of systems across CETAF and non-CETAF institutions alike. These outcomes will support the creation of a European-wide research infrastructure. To meet its ends, the *CETAF Collections Group* cooperates with other CETAF working groups and initiatives, contributes to CETAF actions and activities and engages with collaborative partners at the European and global levels, including SYNTHESYS, SPNHC, ICOM, and GBIF.

***Framework***

The *CETAF Collections Group* is central to the CETAF strategy and Strategic Development Plan 2015-2025, strategic focus area 3 (Natural History collection management and access to collections).

**Mission**: The mission of the *CETAF Collections Group* is to improve the management, conservation, accessibility and best practices of European Natural History Collections to ensure their value to science and society.

**Vision**: The ambition of the *CETAF Collections Group* is to create a European network of collections of high scientific and societal relevance that are accessible for current and future generations.

***Aims***

The *CETAF Collections Group* aims at

* Developing, adopting and implementing best practices, common policies and joint initiatives that promote physical and digital access to European natural history collections (NHC)
* Enhancing NHC’s
* Ensuring community engagement in NHC issues that affect CETAF member institutions by providing a forum for discussion and exchange
* Developing NHC training opportunities and mechanisms for staff development, e.g. exchange programmes
* Providing tools and advice on NHC and their management
* Creating position papers and statements on NHC and their management needs within and across Europe

***Functioning, communications and meetings***

The work of the *CETAF Collections Group* is realized through

* Regular reporting to CETAF Secretariat, the Executive Committee and at the General Meeting,
* Communication and exchange of ideas via email or Skype,
* Use of the community space provided by the CETAF website (www.cetaf.org) for creating, discussing, sharing and hosting of documents,
* Ad hoc meetings, when necessary, back to back with CETAF general meetings, or at venues were CETAF members are meeting for other reasons.

The group will convene for as long as it is needed within the framework of CETAF.

The group will create sub-groups, if and when required, to work on specific questions / issues.

***Contact***

Dr. Christiane Quaisser, Museum für Naturkunde, Invalidenstrasse 43, 10115 Berlin, Germany; christiane.quaisser@mfn.berlin; +49 (0)30 889140 8377

***Background***

In 2008, a working group of heads of collections was initiated in the framework of the EU project EDIT to work towards integration of the European distributed collection infrastructures. It focussed on agreed policies, increased efficiency, cooperation with regard to collection preservation and access, and the implementation of SYNTHESYS results. A review at the end of the project in 2011 revealed the need and wish of institutions to maintain the group. Under the name “Collections Policy Board” (CPB) it was integrated as new working group in CETAF. The mission of the CPB was to develop common policies and strategies, to encourage communication, and to promote best practice between the partner institutions in order to strengthen the role of European natural history collections.

Between 2008 and 2016, the group developed and implemented common principles on scientific loans, physical access, and digital data produced by external users, it discussed and developed a clearing house mechanism for orphaned collections, a European competency framework for the management of natural history collections (supported by the project EUColComp), and it worked towards a European collections management forum. Annual meetings were used to exchange information and discuss issues within the mission in order to find solutions and develop a common approach for topics such as digitisation strategies, management of new types of collections, collections value and security, acquisition and disposal, legal issues etc.

In the light of the newly developed strategic framework of CETAF and emerging new challenges a substantial review of the group started in autumn 2016. The basis of all considerations was the recognition by the CETAF Governing Board that collections are central to the activities of CETAF and that there is an ongoing need for an active working group in this field. The CETAF strategy with its strategic areas (especially area 3), actions and targets provided the strategic framework. The new group was restructured within two meetings (Frankfurt, March 2017 & Berlin, September 2017) and feedback from CETAF members over the course of the year 2017. Terms of References were proposed to and agreed upon by the CETAF GB at the CETAF42 General Meeting in Heraklion, October 2017, the official start of the new ***CETAF Collections Group***.

A preliminary work plan set the way to a full three year work plan that will be proposed to the CETAF GB at the CETAF43 General Meeting in London, April 2018. An approval will enable the group to start its work as described in this document and in the work plan.