



European Projects Advisory
Group

EPAG Strategy

unlocking the community's potential for collaboration in EU-funded activities

The European Projects Advisory Group (EPAG) is a CETAF Working Group (WG) focusing on providing **information and advice to CETAF members on matters relating to European funding**, guiding development of **collaborative projects among CETAF members** and facilitating the exchange of relevant information. EPAG aims to act as a “**one-stop shop**” for all matters related to European funding initiatives, with a special focus on biodiversity and taxonomic research. It does this by disseminating EU calls, assisting with consortium building (calls for proposals database), advising on proposal building (providing guidance, reaching out to Brussels NCPs, etc.), creating useful material and stimulating bi-directional information exchange.

Inspired and guided by the discussions on several different occasions, including the EPAG Webinar in April 2024 and the CETAF55 World Cafe, the EPAG team presents this Strategy in order to define its further activities and ensure they bring an added value to the CETAF community. The main objective of EPAG is to **bring European funding opportunities closer to CETAF members**. Our institutions vary in their size and resources, as well as their goals and priorities. While some of the larger organisations might have entire departments dedicated to securing research funding, smaller ones often lack a 360-degree vision when it comes to the complex world of European funding programmes. Similarly, many institutions lack the experience of starting application processes from scratch, which are usually cumbersome and require a lot of dedication. On the other hand, even large institutions sometimes have difficulties with tracking multiple funding streams and getting into topics where they have not previously been involved in. Such circumstances create a clear need for a **centralised information hub at the service of the Community, as a go-to place for tackling any issues related to European funding**.

The primary role of EPAG is **advisory** in nature, as the name suggests, meaning that the intention is not that its members directly engage in activities such as proposal writing or consortium building. Rather, EPAG can deliver the necessary information and help guide the process, from the initial expression of interest by a CETAF member to finding partners interested in the different aspects of a call. Another important role of EPAG is to engage in regular communication with other CETAF working groups, in order to understand their needs

and pinpoint opportunities for collaboration. This can be especially valuable in cases where certain WGs are seeking funding for a specific topic pertaining to their focus area. By keeping up-to-date with the activities of the other WGs, EPAG can also engage in early screening of grants and disseminate the relevant information in a timely manner.

In order to truly provide added value for the CETAF institutions, EPAG is in the process of developing several novel concepts to be implemented in the near future, all with the aim of making its work more systematic and as impactful as possible. The main focus of the work ahead is the design, launch and maintenance of the '[EPAG-CETAF Database of Funding Calls](#)', a tool for stimulating collaboration among CETAF members in EU-funded projects. The Database is envisaged as a **common resource**, enabling designated users to bring in new ideas to the table by directly introducing calls for proposals and seeking other parties interested in getting onboard. Each new process will be supported by EPAG, which will also collate all the information into a central table for easy navigation of the different opportunities introduced by CETAF members. In terms of access, the goal is to open the Database to all member institutions, but also to ensure streamlined and coherent communication from the start. For this reason, we propose introducing "**EPAG Contact Points**' (CP)' - a single representative from each CETAF member, acting on behalf of their organisation when it comes to communication with EPAG and other member representatives in this context. CPs would automatically have access to the Database (except the main table, which is to be 'curated' by EPAG members), while providing access to additional users could be considered on a need-to-basis. The ideal profiles for the CP role would be project officers, scientific directors or research officers - i.e. someone with solid understanding of the institution's research needs and possibly previous experience with EU-funded projects.

To complement the Database and ensure maximum engagement from the Community, EPAG will also implement **new communication methods**, the most important being periodic newsletters highlighting major upcoming opportunities of general interest. Ideally, this activity will be done in collaboration with the CETAF general secretariat in order to make use of the already well-established CETAF quarterly newsletter (e-Pulse). The idea is to allocate a part of the newsletter for the dissemination of information on EU funding, due to the cross-cutting nature of such content. Of course, the usual methods of using CETAF mailing lists will be kept for any pressing topics that do not align with the CETAF newsletter in terms of timing.

In summary, the EPAG working group has the potential to provide concrete added value to the Community and it aims to do so through the development of a central database of information on EU funding calls, accessible to all CETAF member organisations. The Database will operate according to the "as open as possible, as closed as necessary" principle to avoid any potential reluctance within the Community to share information and to ensure that the information is presented in a consistent and coherent manner. At the very end, the Database will be valuable to the extent the Community decides it is needed, but it will be the job of EPAG to make sure that our members are amply informed and tooled-up in order to understand its value and can make use of it in an optimal manner.