

European Research Vessel Operators (ERVO) – Terms of Reference

1. Objectives

The objective of the ERVO members is to create and maintain a forum for European research vessel operators, with special focus on research vessels and associated equipment and/or instruments, which will give the members the following opportunities:

- Attend ERVO meetings where common technical, operational, safety, environmental and legal issues/problems are identified and discussed, and possible solutions presented,
- Contribute to the development within Europe of best practice in the operation of research vessels and associated equipment,
- Learn about developments and plans for procurement of new research vessels, equipment and instruments, and upgrades of existing research vessels, equipment and/or instruments.
- Be a member of a pan-European network of research vessel operators which presents opportunities for:
 - exchange of information and best practices,
 - exchange of ship time, personnel, instruments and equipment (barter arrangements),
 - co-funding and co-ownership of vessel, instruments and/or equipment,
 - participation in benchmarking exercises to look for the most cost efficient ways to man and operate research vessels and equipment.
- Identify methods and ways to minimize the impact of the operations of research vessels and associated instruments and equipment on the environment and marine life.
- Develop and maintain a strategy for the future growth of ERVO in terms of membership, and the development in topics and activities that ERVO will take an interest in to stay relevant and useful for European research vessel operators in particular and the European Marine science community and its stakeholders in general.

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ERVO, with its broad membership of research vessel operators representing the majority of European nations who has their own fleet of research vessels, **is the ideal focal point for any organization in Europe looking for ways to communicate directly with the experts on research vessels and associated instruments and equipment, and should therefore as a group and as individual members take every opportunity to promote the collective expertise and knowledge that ERVO represents.**

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2. Background

In 1999, the European Science Foundation Marine Board (ESF/MB) decided to initiate an action to promote the co-ordination of small to medium sized research vessel operators in Europe as a complement to the Ocean Fleets Exchange Group which was established a few years earlier.

This led to the first ERVO meeting being held in Roscoff, France, in December 1999 and since then an annual ERVO meeting has been held in different European countries and today the ERVO group is concerned with all sizes of research vessels, from coastal to global.

3. Membership

ERVO membership is open to all European research vessel operators, both from government or private research vessel operator organizations/companies. New members will be formally accepted at the annual ERVO meetings.

Each member pays an annual membership fee to cover the running cost of ERVO, such as maintaining a web site, producing leaflets and other promotional materials, courtesy,

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gifts, mail expenses etc. In addition each member pays a conference fee when attending ERVO meetings. The size of the membership fee and conference fee is agreed on at every annual ERVO meeting.

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A member list will be maintained by EurOcean and will be available on the ERVO web site.

Non-members, such as industrial representatives, scientists, policymakers, stakeholders and other can attend all or part of ERVO meetings and/or ERVO organized working groups/workshops by invitation of the ERVO chair.

The ERVO chair also has the right to arrange “government only” sessions during ERVO meetings or create “government only” working groups/workshops if required by members in order to discuss topics that are competition sensitive and therefore not open to commercial companies.

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4. ERVO organization

ERVO is an **open, member driven**, non-profit group of European research vessel operators, and **therefore the group does not report to any other group, organization or authority**. The members elect a chairperson and a vice-chair every two years at the annual ERVO meetings, and all members present at the meeting has the right to vote for the acceptance or rejection of the proposed candidates. **The election is done by simple majority (more than 50% of the votes). The vote can be either written or by raise of hands.**

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The chair is elected for two years and his or her primary tasks are to:

- work out the agenda for the annual meeting in cooperation with the vice-chair and the host of the meeting
- conduct the annual ERVO meetings
- establish working groups and/or workshops as deemed necessary and beneficial
- act as the formal ERVO representative to other groups and organizations
- 6. promote ERVO and recruiting of new members.

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The chair period starts at the end of the annual meeting were the election took place, and formally ends at the end of the second meeting after the election when hand over to the new chair takes place at the end of the meeting.

The vice-chair's main responsibility is the production of minutes of meetings and to support the chair as necessary. Draft minutes of meeting shall be circulated among the meeting participants no later than two calendar months after the meeting and final minutes shall be circulated among the participants and be posted on the ERVO web site, no later than four calendar months after the meeting. Minutes of meetings shall also be distributed to the following groups:

- European Science Foundation/Marine board
- International Research Ship Operators (IRSO)
- Ocean Fleet Exchange Group (OFEG)

In addition, the vice-chair, in cooperation with EurOcean, shall produce a press release which sums up the results of the annual meeting and distribute it through ERVO members, ERVO web site and EurOcean newsletter. Normally the vice-chair will be the primary candidate to be the next chair of the ERVO, if he or she is willing and able to take on the task.

The hosting of the annual ERVO meeting is a voluntary task for the members of ERVO, and the meeting host is responsible for all local arrangements at the meeting site and to help the meeting

attendees as necessary with travel arrangements, accommodation etc. The host is also welcome to arrange local tours/presentations of relevant infrastructure, in particular research vessels, equipment and land based facilities. The host is also encouraged to invite local/national speakers or experts with special relevance to the ERVO group areas of interest, for example classification societies, maritime authorities, science groups, policy makers or stakeholders.

5. Cooperation with EurOcean

The European information center for marine science and technology, EurOcean, is responsible for the ERVO web site as part of the EurOcean web portal, see www.eurocean.org for more details, and EurOcean is also responsible for the maintenance of the ERVO membership register, dissemination activities, development and maintenance of ERVO's graphical profile, and the production of posters, leaflets and other promotional **material according to a negotiated agreement between ERVO and EurOcean**, see Annex I for more details.

NEXT ITEM

6. Meetings

As a minimum, an annual ERVO plenary meeting should be arranged, and in addition special workshops and ad-hoc meetings can be arranged as necessary. An ERVO plenary meeting will normally have a two days agenda, but in special cases where there are a number of local facilities to visit an extra day will be added if necessary. To make it possible for all members to host such meeting, a conference fee can be agreed on before the meeting.

When the International Research Ship Operators (IRSO) have their annual meeting in Europe, ERVO should explore the possibility to arrange a joint meeting between the two groups since the two groups have a number of common members and the two groups also have overlapping objectives and tasks.

7. Workshops, ad hoc working groups and study groups

If the ERVO plenary meeting so desire, or if the ERVO chair by correspondence proposes it, **a work shop, ad-hoc working group or study group to work on a particular issue or problem, such activities can be initiated and the group then reports back to the next ERVO plenary meeting.** If ESF, European Commission or other groups requests specific inputs from ERVO this will also be done through the establishment of a Ad hoc working or study group (requested via the Chair

8. Relations to other groups and organizations

ERVO will make efforts to maintain and improve relationships with the following organizations for the benefit of both parties:

- European Science Foundation/Marine Board (ESF/MB)
- International Research Ship Operators (IRSO)
 - OFEG (Ocean Facilities Exchange Group)
 - Research Vessel Operator Committee (RVOC) in USA
- **EUROFLEETS**

These groups shall receive a formal invitation to attend the annual ERVO meetings as observers.

Date and place,

Sign.

ERVO chair

Date and place,

Sign.

ERVO vice-chair

Annexes:

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Annex I – EurOcean service agreement

