



eular

EULAR SOPs
Standard Operating Procedures
for Task Forces

THE EUROPEAN ALLIANCE
OF ASSOCIATIONS
FOR RHEUMATOLOGY

SOPs concerning EULAR task forces

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1. GENERAL REMARKS

EULAR endorses different types of task force projects, which serve either the definition of disease for research purposes (“classification” criteria), for clinical practice (“diagnostic” criteria), the conduct of research or standardization of procedures (e.g., projects entitled “How to report...”), or the management of RMD conditions (“management recommendations or points to consider”). EULAR endorsement is reflected by the inclusion of “EULAR” in the title of a publication.

EULAR has a long history of providing field-leading recommendations for practicing rheumatologists, allied health professions, and scientists in the field of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases. The high quality of EULAR endorsed content needs to be warranted through a standard and streamlined process that gives clear guidance to all stakeholders involved in developing such recommendations, which – notwithstanding the need for quality – shall be fair, consistent, and transparent for all projects.*

Of note, EULAR does not directly fund scientific research projects: all funding for scientific projects is handled by EULAR’s independent “Foundation for Research in Rheumatology” (FOREUM), generally through dedicated, subject-focused calls. However, EULAR supports the conduct of research in the

community through “EULAR Research” by providing a variety of options (services, grants, fellowships and vouchers) to facilitate research and close gaps in the research chain. EULAR Research may also support scientific projects that aim to improve research activity, for example research methods (which are not addressed by FOREUM). Should EULAR Task Forces require data analysis on existing data sources (as opposed to literature reviews), funding of a data analyst for the project is possible within the funding limits of the overall project (see below).

For applications and relevant guidance to FOREUM please refer to <https://www.foreum.org/>.

For applications to funding options provided through EULAR Research, please refer to the EULAR website https://www.eular.org/eular_research_centre.cfm.

In the following, EULAR lays out its position on key aspects of task force projects, for which EULAR endorsement is sought, including the application process, the evaluation and selection process, the conduct of the project, the publication process (including aspects related to the EULAR Journals) and advice for implementation.

*EULAR as an organization is aware that occasional urgent medical / scientific needs or highly specific or unprecedented scenarios will require flexibility to ensure that the community is well served. Such flexibility should only be on an exceptional basis, and even then, only after unanimous agreement of the EULAR Board.

2. APPLY

2.1 Who can apply, when, and for what?

Proposals will arise from the community in a spontaneous manner, usually proposed to the committee chair in charge of the relevant thematic area. Any individual member of EULAR, or member of a national society under the umbrella of EULAR can apply for leadership of a task force project. This role is defined as the “convenor” of the project. To retain oversight and independence within the decision-making process, voting members of the EULAR Council should not take the role of the convenor in any proposal entering this evaluation process.

There are no deadlines imposed for submission, but decisions for funding will be made two times per year at the March and September EULAR Council meetings (See deadlines under [2.2](#)). Later submissions will be automatically dealt with at the subsequent meeting. Revised project applications that have been considered previously (but no new ones) may also be submitted for final decision to the June meeting taking place on Monday before the EULAR Congress every year.

EULAR has defined a standard budget for recommendation/points to consider projects (See [3.4 Budget](#)). New projects have a standard budget of up to **€45,000**, update projects have a budget of up to **€42,500**. This budget reflects a standard process for developing recommendations in EULAR. A deviating budget may be requested but must be duly justified and approved by the Board.

2.2 Project evaluation – Step #1: Pre-Eligibility Check Phase (relevance check, 1 week review time)

The convenor should send the full proposal, the lay summary and **an abstract**. The abstract should contain a short description (without the convenor’s and methodologist’s names) replying to the 3 main points listed below:

- What is known about this topic?
- What does this study add?
- How will it impact the field of interest?

These documents (full proposal, lay summary, abstract) need to be submitted to the EULAR Office by **1 November** (for March Council meeting) or **1 April** (for September Council meeting) at the latest.

Although, in principle, any EULAR member can become convenor of a EULAR TF, the person should have a sufficient expertise and proven track record relevant to the area of the proposal.

In recommendations updates, the respective proposal must also include any available data on the level of implementation of the previously issued recommendations (e.g., implementation studies, surveys, etc. that mention the level of uptake and implementation of the previously issued recommendations).

Ranking of proposal on relevance:

The EULAR Office sends the **abstract/short version of the proposal only** to the voting members of the Council who will decide within 1 week on relevance of the topic to EULAR in the context of all other current and past activities. To facilitate the ranking of the Council members on a 0-10 scale, the chair with support of the EULAR Office will provide a list of related current/past projects. If the scoring is less than 7, the application is denied at the relevance stage, the process ends. If the application is approved, it advances to Step #2.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- **Full proposal** plus **abstract/short description** using the *Full Proposal Template* ([link to full proposal template](#)) and the *Pre-Eligibility Check form* ([link to pre-eligibility check template](#)).
- The proposal must contain a **Lay Summary** to facilitate PARE review by using the *Lay Summary Template* ([link to lay summary](#))
- Submit to: taskforces@eular.org

2.3 Project evaluation – Step #2: Eligibility phase (4 weeks)

Proposals that have passed the pre-eligibility check by the Council will be checked by the EULAR Office in their full version (full proposal and lay version) from an administrative point of view (budget, format, check that all parts of the document are included). In the subsequent 4 weeks, the EULAR Quality of Care (QoC) Chair will identify a member of the committee to facilitate the proposal optimization according to the EULAR SOPs together with the convenor. The revised proposal should be sent to the EULAR Office **by 15 January** (for March Council meeting) **or 1 July** (for September Council meeting) to be considered for the respective funding cycle.

The revised full proposal will be placed on the agenda of the respective next Council meeting for discussion and decision. The proposal will be presented by the chair of the relevant committee at the Council meeting covering the following project aspects:

- relevance to the EULAR strategy,
- feasibility,
- track record of the applicants,
- novelty,
- design
- compliance with these EULAR SOP's
- adherence to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion values held by EULAR

The committee chair will present a recommendation to the Council, which is based on the result of this review process.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- Submission of the revised full proposal (maximum 5 A4 pages) by using the *Full Project Proposal template* ([link to full proposal template](#))
- The proposal must contain a Lay Summary to facilitate PARE review by using the *Lay Summary Template* ([link to lay summary](#))
- Submit to: taskforces@eular.org

2.4 Project evaluation – Step #3: Funding Decision

The outcome of the Council discussion will be one of these options:

- (a) approve;
- (b) approve after minor revision;
- (c) decline with option for resubmission (process ends, and maybe reinitiated during the next cycle with **Step #2**); or
- (d) decline without option for resubmission (process ends).

The committee chair will provide the relevant feedback to the applicant and will ensure that in case of (b) the revision is implemented accordingly. The EULAR Office will send an e-mail confirming the funding decision to the project leader of the approved project with all relevant information and EULAR Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) to be followed. Once the project is approved no more change of title / objective can take place nor new project partner (e.g. joint other scientific organisation) can be proposed.

3. CONDUCT

3.1 Task force composition (4 weeks)

The convenor is responsible for ensuring that EULAR rules are followed and that the task force includes a EULAR recommended methodologist, two patient representatives, two EMEUNET representatives, one health professional, and 5 members who applied via a specific call on the EULAR website.

To create the task force best suited to deliver a quality product, the following criteria for selection of members shall be considered:

- experience and publications in the field, participation in other task forces etc.,
- membership of key academic centres working in the respective field in Europe,
- a sufficient number of experts, defined by respective publications or clinical work, whose work is not predominantly based on industry-sponsored studies,
- a comprehensive expertise in all features of the disease, clinical theme relevant to the content of the recommendation,
- adherence to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion values held by EULAR
- the total number of task force members (including fellows, EMEUNET representatives, HPR, patients) is maximum 25.

Before a task force can start its work, the task force members list must be finalised by the convenor and approved by the chair (**1 week**). In particular, representation must come from a minimum of 5 countries. In total, participants must confirm that they are not already participating in more than 3 other ongoing EULAR task forces and do not already have a key role (convenor, methodologist / co-methodologist, fellow) in more than 1 other task force at the same time. If either of this number would be exceeded for any member, then the respective person needs to be replaced or their role changed to simple task force member, as appropriate. The Board **must be informed** if the chair (or anyone else) intends to eliminate or add specific people to the Task Force. Task forces are considered active until the day of approval of the Council for submission of the respective publications.

Five slots for experts of the task force must be left open for general applications. The EULAR Office will open the 5-slot call for applications to open projects on the EULAR website. Additionally, the EULAR national organizations' members and the EULAR committee chairs will be informed of this call. Within a period of **4 weeks**, individuals of member societies shall submit a one-page letter of interest outlining briefly their expertise and motivation to participate. The EULAR Office will send the applications to the convenor. The final selection out of these applications must follow the above-mentioned selection principles and will be done by the convenor.

For the inclusion of the two young investigators from EMEUNET, please contact EMEUNET directly (<https://emeunet.eular.org/>), since these slots are coordinated by EMEUNET. The EMEUNET internal call for Task Forces' members is not related to this specific EULAR Task Forces wide general applications Call. The same applies to HPR members Regarding the inclusion of patient representatives or patient research partners, please contact PARE.

The convenor is the main contact for the taskforce individuals. The methodologist is supporting the taskforce selection process and is the first support person for the convenor. In any situation where an issue cannot be solved by the team, the convenor is encouraged to contact the QoC Committee Chair.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

- Submit task force members' list for approval to: taskforces@eular.org using an excel file including name, surname, e-mail, nationality, and the role of each member in the task force ([task force list template](#)).

3.2 Declaration of Interest and Copyright Transfer

Once approved, all task force members, as indicated in the project proposal, will have to complete a Declaration of Interest (DOI) form and a transfer of intellectual property rights ([Copyrights transfer document](#)) for the main outcome of the taskforce (main manuscript and SLRs). Both documents will be provided by the EULAR Office. The EULAR Office issues the request emails, and only after completion of all online forms, the group may start its work. In line with the BioMed Alliance Code of Conduct DOIs from all task force members will be published on the EULAR website. Please also take note of the EULAR Code of Ethics ([link to Code of Ethics](#)).

Any missing completed form, one week after the first meeting, will automatically lead to exclusion of the individual in question of the project task force unless a satisfactory explanation of delay is forthcoming. This critical step and timeline will be clearly communicated by the EULAR Office.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 The planning meeting

This task force meeting, life or virtual, serves to plan the entire process, to formulate the research questions and the rewording of research questions into PICO-format (Patient, Intervention, Control, Outcome) (<https://training.cochrane.org/handbook>). This meeting implies the start of the systematic literature research, and a search deadline is established. Additional sources of data to inform the project may be considered (e.g., surveys, analysis of existing databases, interviews, etc.).

3.3.2 The systematic literature review (SLR)

At the basis of most EULAR projects is a SLR. The type of research question addressed, will guide the SLR strategy and type of evidence retrieved, which can be quantitative and/or qualitative. An SLR serves to inform the task force in the process of creating their final product (see below). Every task force should choose (and approach) one methodologist from the list of EULAR-methodologists (find here the [List of EULAR Recommended methodologists](#)). Each SLR-team consists of one or more research fellow(s) and a EULAR methodologist. EULAR may ask a task force to add a junior methodologist (who is a methodologist in training) to take part in the process. EULAR recommends to follow Cochrane's handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions (<https://training.cochrane.org/handbook>) for the evaluation of medical interventions, or principles

described by the Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluations (GRADE)-working group (<https://www.gradeworkinggroup.org>), but alternative equivalent methodologies may be acceptable too, especially when the project proposal includes non-medical interventional topics. The EULAR methodologist decides on the preferred SLR-methodology. The consultation of a skilled librarian for optimizing the search strategy is highly recommended. Among others, SLR-teams are recommended to provide *Risk of Bias* for every included study in the SLR. Risk of bias can be low, unclear or high. Different instruments are available for different study types, as outlined in the Cochrane handbook (<https://training.cochrane.org/handbook>).

Note:

Many ask 'whether GRADE, PRISMA or Oxford-methodology should be followed' by a EULAR task-force, but all these frameworks (acronyms) have different levels of complexity. GRADE is a comprehensive and structured framework of processing guidelines (from the start to the end). PRISMA is rather a checklist for the quality of SLRs and meta-analyses. Oxford 'only' refers to levels of evidence assigned to individual studies in the literature and judged in the process of SLR (vide infra). EULAR recognizes the value of the GRADE framework, but dismisses certain aspects of it, such as the comprehensively structured procedures, and the lack of feasibility of the outcomes (e.g., a multitude of PICO's and consequently, multiple low-evidence, weak/conditional recommendations). EULAR task forces are encouraged to use the PRISMA checklist(s), or to adopt aspects of GRADE that can be feasibly implemented, but mandates that the final task force product (vide infra) will include a bullet list of recommendations/points-to-consider based on an SLR with Oxford levels of evidence.

Note:

For qualitative research, a EULAR Expert Group has recommended that no hierarchy of evidence is applicable to categorise the level of evidence, in contrast with quantitative research. The Oxford Levels of Evidence are inappropriate to apply in the case of qualitative research. For recommendations based on qualitative evidence, 'Not-Applicable' should thus be indicated for the Level of Evidence (LoE). The quality of papers retrieved from the SLR needs to be consistently and rigorously checked, using the modified CASP tool (link: [Optimising the value of the critical appraisal skills programme \(CASP\) tool for quality appraisal in qualitative evidence synthesis - Hannah A Long, David P French, Joanna M Brooks, 2020 \(sagepub.com\)](#) which comprises 11 items, covering methodological appropriateness, research design, recruitment strategy, data collection, data analysis and theoretical underpinnings. Qualitative assessment, together with expert opinion should inform the Grade of Recommendation (GoR), indicated as strong, moderate or weak, following guidance by the EULAR methodologist.

3.3.3 The EULAR methodologist

The EULAR methodologist is a skilled expert in conducting and interpreting the results of the SLR. In addition, the EULAR methodologist helps the convenor of the task force to run the processes and meetings and is together with the convenor responsible for ensuring that EULAR's SOP are followed.

EULAR considers the role of the EULAR methodologist as crucial, and has implemented a EULAR-methodologist training track, for which candidates can apply (for criteria see [How to become EULAR recommended methodologist](#)). Candidates that are allowed by EULAR to take up the role of junior methodologist must take part in at least two task force projects in order to complete their training.

3.3.4 The task force consensus meetings

Task force consensus meetings, either virtual or live, are key events in the framework of EULAR projects, results of the SLR are presented and discussed, and statements or criteria are developed and agreed upon. The meeting(s) will be divided into discussion of SLR-results presented by the SLR-team, and formulation of actionable statements, typically as bullet points (recommendations, points-to-consider). After hearing the results of the SLR, the task force makes a first decision about the distinction between recommendations and point-to-consider (but the final label will be attributed by the EULAR-Council) (vide infra).

3.3.5 Recommendations and points-to-consider

The key deliverable of EULAR task forces is a list of 10-15 statements (“bullet points”), typically 10-15 recommendations or points-to-consider. Recommendations and points-to-consider should be unequivocal, concise (*one or two sentences*), actionable by wording (*see note*), and free from explanatory text (*explanation of the ‘why’ belongs in the manuscript-text*). The distinction between recommendations and points to consider is not sharp, mainly driven by the amount and strength of the underlying evidence, and the final attribution is given at the EULAR Council after reviewing the final product (draft manuscript). In general, recommendations reflect a higher level of scientific evidence and maturity and refer more directly to patient care in clinical practice, than points-to-consider do.

With respect to the number of items, EULAR adheres to the principle of *less is more* (parsimony) and therefore discourages products with more than 15 bullet-points. Some of the items may be considered as “overarching principles”. They are not mandatory but may serve to set the stage of the project, ‘delineate the arena’, state facts of highly obvious clinical reality, and thus provide some context for the recommendations/points to consider to follow. Their number should be limited to 5 at most and their rationale should be explained in the text of the main manuscript

Note:

Recommendations and point-to-consider in English language often contain words with an imperative meaning but with different nuances of ‘command’. A sentence containing the verbal construction ‘something can be or could be considered’ reflects the weakest level of coercion, with all possible degrees of freedom. The next level contains the construction ‘should be considered’. The highest possible level contains words like ‘must be done’ since it does not leave any degrees of freedom (it turns a recommendation into a guideline).

Note:

Ideally, the collection of EULAR-recommendations forms a reflection of the current state-of-the art of the management of patients with different RMDs. The collection of EULAR-points-to-consider is merely a broader reflection of EULAR’s advice to health care providers.

3.3.6 Consensus building and voting

Task forces decide on their outputs by creating consensus among task force members. Deliberately, the process to arrive at consensus is not very structured by EULAR, in contrast to - for example - in the GRADE-framework. Task forces can freely decide on how they want to achieve consensus, as long as final voting per bullet-list-item (recommendation or point to consider) serves the process of consensus building. EULAR has approved procedures for voting, while distinguishing new products from updated products (either recommendations or points-to-consider) [click here for the link on the voting rules](#). Voting serves to facilitate internal processes and are not necessarily made public in manuscripts or reports. The convenor and EULAR-methodologist are the gatekeepers of proper voting procedures.

Note:

While EULAR credits high-level evidence published in high-impact medical journals, it understands that proper evidence-based medicine (EBM) is more than evidence in the literature alone, and that many relevant clinical questions will never be solved by RCTs. EBM values evidence, expertise and (patients' and health care professionals') preferences similarly and so does EULAR. This means every deliverable of a EULAR task force (e.g., list with bullet-points) should reflect a carefully weighted balance of all three pillars of EBM (evidence, expertise, preference), rather than only a summary of published literature. The main manuscript should be a reflection of this balance process.

3.3.7 Levels of agreement

The mean level of agreement among task force members is collected per bullet-point (including overarching principles), immediately after the final task force meeting but before the writing of the main manuscript and expressed as a score between zero and ten. The convenor and the EULAR methodologist are responsible for a proper conduct of this survey, preferably per email (*Excel-sheet*). Level of agreement is reported per bullet-point in the main manuscript, as a mean (standard deviation) value and a proportion of task force members with a score of at least 8/10. Levels of agreement serve to reflect the heterogeneity of impressions (and indirectly the fervour of discussion) among the experts, and to what extent each bullet-point enjoys support by task force members.

3.3.8 Levels of evidence

The level of evidence is an estimate of the extent to which a bullet-point is supported by the availability of properly weighed scientific publications (the SLR). EULAR task forces must use the Oxford Centre for Evidence-based Medicine Levels of Evidence for grading levels of evidence (<https://www.cebm.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CEBM-Levels-of-Evidence-2.1.pdf>) and must report the levels of evidence in the main manuscript. The grading itself is a task of the SLR-team, taking all available information into consideration. Occasionally, different elements in one bullet-point may have different levels of evidence, and these should be justified and explained in the main manuscript.

3.3.9 Prioritisation of recommendations and implementability

After defining the recommendations, the TF must indicate their priority to be put into practice; trying to implement all recommendations at once is not realistic. To do this, the TF members can vote on the feasibility and impact of each recommendation with their respective Likert scales, or define other criteria, such as patients' opinion, political drive, etc. Optionally, this can be done at the time of the Delphi rounds. The methodology for this should be defined a priori.

3.3.10 The main manuscript

The main manuscript is the key task force product that describes the rationale for the project, the compilation of the task force, the target audience, the methods used for obtaining consensus, the results of the process (the 'bullet-list') plus levels of evidence and levels of agreement, as well as a concise discussion of the work in the context of the work by other groups worldwide. Apart from the bullet-list *per se*, task forces are invited to provide a brief explanation per bullet-point about their motivations and the course of the discussion that took place within the task force. The main manuscript has to be approved by the Council before submitting to a journal (see [paragraph 4.](#)).

3.3.11 Table of quality indicators

As part of the recommendations output, and for the most relevant recommendations (See point 3.3.9), the TF should define quality indicators in table format. This table should be included in the main document (it can go in an Appendix) and contain:

- The recommendation to measure its application.
- What to measure (e.g., % patients with a LDA)
- Suggested timing for measure (e.g., a year after implementation)
- Suggested measurement method (e.g., by survey, retrospective chart review, others)

3.3.12 The SLR-report

The SLR-report is a systematic report, preferably according to guidelines spelled out in the Cochrane-handbook (<https://training.cochrane.org/handbook>), or equivalent documents. A minimum EULAR-requirement is a description of research questions and PICO's, in-and exclusion criteria, search strategy, flowchart for in-and excluded studies, summary fact sheets for all included studies, and risk of bias per study.

The SLR-report is a quintessential deliverable of the task force but does not necessarily have to be supplied as a manuscript. The SLR report will be reviewed by the Council when judging the main manuscript and should be submitted in conjunction with the main manuscript (see [paragraph 4.](#))

3.4 Budget

The convenor is responsible for supervising and adhering to the approved budget. Any financial matters should be addressed to the Executive Director/CFO with the EULAR Office in cc (taskforces@eular.org and finance@eular.org in cc).

EULAR has defined a standard budget for recommendation/points to consider projects:

- Projects have a standard budget of up to **€45,000**, including
 - one physical meeting (budget of up to €25,000),
 - one virtual meeting,
 - a budget for the meeting organisation of €5,000 (2,500 per meeting, either to be used for your own meeting organisation or to be deducted from your budget for the EULAR Office support by an agency)
 - fellow work of €15,000.

In case of an update, only one meeting is foreseen and the budget will be 2500 Euro's lower.

Important notice:

- This budget reflects a standard process for developing recommendations in EULAR. A deviating budget may be requested but must be justified based on the project proposal.
- In line with EULAR's sustainability approach, a maximum of one meeting may be held in physical form. Meetings should be executed either fully virtually or fully physically; hybrid

solutions will not be offered. It is up to the convenor to decide beforehand whether the meeting should take place physically or virtually.

- A specific budget amount can only be used for the indicated purpose and, should the amount for the particular item not be fully used, it may not be transferred to another budget position. For example, if a budget amount of €25,000 for a meeting is not fully used for the purpose, the remainder may not be used for another purpose. Equally, a budget position may not be increased by way of decreasing or deleting another budget position considered not necessary. Each exception should be evaluated and decided by the EULAR Board.

All documents required for the application process can be downloaded from the EULAR website under: <https://www.eular.org/recommendations/points-to-consider-task-forces-project-applications> or clicking here: [\(link to full proposal template\)](#) and [link to pre-eligibility check template](#).

	Recommendation (€) <input type="checkbox"/>	Update of recommendation (€) <input type="checkbox"/>	If other than standard, please specify (€)
Meeting 1 (physical meeting)	25,000	25,000	
Meeting 2 (virtual meeting)	-	N/A	
Fellow	15,000	15,000	
Meeting logistics	€5,000*	2,500*	
Total EULAR fund	€45,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	€42,500 <input type="checkbox"/>	€ <input type="checkbox"/>

*2,500 per meeting, either to be used for your own meeting organisation or to be deducted from your budget for the EULAR Office support by an agency.

Please remember to tick the dedicated box choice if you need or not the EULAR support for meeting organisation ()

3.5 Reimbursement

EULAR will pay invoices related to the meetings directly to suppliers, and participants' travel expenses will be reimbursed after receipt of the reimbursement form send to EULAR Reimbursement reimbursement@eular.org with taskforces@eular.org in cc. (click here for [reimbursement form template](#))

Fellow work is usually paid in three portions:

- first portion after initial work for the first meeting,
- second portion before the second meeting, and
- third portion after receiving the draft manuscript.

Payment of fellow work will be made following receipt of relevant reports/requests from the convenor. For questions, please contact taskforces@eular.org.

Reimbursement will be granted only upon proof of purchase. This includes travel expenses (public transportation / train tickets: standard class; flights: economy class; car compensation per km: in Switzerland: CHF 0.80 / EU: EUR 0.5 / UK: GBP 0.40); taxis (transfers between home address-airport/train station-hotel in the congress city and back); overnight stays in mid-class hotels (if not booked by EULAR) with breakfast option included for the EULAR individual in the overnight hotel booking. Any additional expenses including all administrative costs of any kind, taxis (apart from the arrival and departure transfer mentioned above), additional hotel nights, food & beverages, internet and / or phone charges, costs for accompanying individuals will not be reimbursed. Any exceptions to these rules are to be approved by the EULAR Executive Director/ CFO in writing.

Any financial matters should be addressed to the Executive Director/CFO at the EULAR Secretariat: taskforces@eular.org and finance@eular.org in cc.

3.6 Meeting Organisation

3.6.1. If you organise the meetings yourself

Convenor's responsibility

- Observe project budget.
For physical task force meetings, EULAR calculates approx. €1,000 per attendee/night for meetings in Zurich, Switzerland. Depending on location this can differ. The amount includes flight, transfer, 1 hotel night, meal (dinner in the hotel), catering and meeting cost for *one day and one meeting room*. Note that two half day meetings are more expensive. Consider long distance flights are more expensive and will result in 2 nights minimum).
- You are responsible for the **entire meeting organisation**:
 - Invite task force to a project meeting and collect registrations incl. hotel room reservation wishes and dietary requirements. (You may inform that EULAR will cover travel expenses in economy class with an upper limit of €600 (Europe), hotel room, dinner and meeting costs. Travel costs will be reimbursed after the meeting has taken place. Each invitee is asked to make ticket reservation early to benefit from best fares available.)
 - Collect registrations and coordinate reservation with the wished hotel (rooms, meeting room set-up, catering etc.).
 - Develop meeting content. Set up agenda and provide along with logistics information to meeting attendees.
- Check attendance on site.
- You must send EULAR Office the hotel contract offer 2 months before the date of your meeting. The contract should be approved and signed by EULAR Office.
- The organisation of the full meeting can be started by you only if the hotel contract it is signed by EULAR.

EULAR Office responsibility

- Sign hotel contracts and issue guarantee payments to suppliers.
- Reimburse attendees after the meeting.
- Issue attendance confirmation, if necessary, after the meeting.

3.6.2. If the EULAR Office supports you in organising a meeting:

EULAR will assist in organising the suggested meetings through the support of an external agency, if this option is selected at time of application submission.

For this purpose, EULAR has contracted pre-selected hotels in a few European cities.

Please contact EULAR Events (events@eular.org with taskforces@eular.org in cc) 2 months in advance to let EULAR Office negotiate and sign the hotel contract.

The organisation of the full meeting can start only when the hotel contract is signed by EULAR.

Convenor's responsibility

- Observe project budget.
- Send name list incl. email contacts, date and wished meeting location (limited selection!), completed hotel reservation requirements catalogue form and completed invitation template to the EULAR Office (events@eular.org). The Office will coordinate meeting location with its preferred agency. Note the agency will send you the completed meeting attendee list once all invitees have registered. In case of non-responses, you will be asked to support the agency admin.
- Develop meeting content. Set up agenda and provide to agency (events@eular.org) three weeks before meeting date.
- Inform agency about additional required meeting materials and equipment three weeks before the meeting at the latest.
- Check attendance on site.

EULAR Office responsibility

- Coordinate meeting organisation with agency.
- Reimburse attendees after the meeting.

Agency responsibility

- Coordinate hotel contract, reservation meeting facility, equipment, materials and catering.
- Send invitation to meeting attendees and collect registration.
The agency will send the invitation to all meeting participants (events@eular.org) and collect registrations incl. hotel room reservation wishes and dietary requirements. Note that hotels enquire a complete guest list for room reservations no later than **one month** prior to the meeting.
- Reserve accommodation, if necessary, dinners at hotel.
- Coordinate logistics and inform attendees accordingly approx. two weeks before the meeting date.
- Issue attendance confirmation, if necessary, after the meeting.

Venue locations known to EULAR Secretariat ([link to list of hotels](#))**3.6.3. Task Force meetings during the EULAR Congress**

For meetings taking place during the EULAR Congress, please contact the congress department to reserve a room by sending an email to congress@eular.org. If you have chosen the option where you are organising the meeting(s) yourself, please note that taskforce meetings are usually organised close to major airports, of one to 2 days duration. Please contact several hotels and make your choice. Contract signing and invoice payments will be covered by the EULAR Office. Meeting

reimbursement should be sent to the EULAR Office (reimbursement@eular.org). Please use the official EULAR reimbursement form.

3.7 Annual Progress Report

At the beginning of each year, the EULAR Office will ask convenors to submit a progress report ([link to Annual progress report template](#)) which documents the current status of the project, achieved milestones and remaining work to be done with a time forecast. The report will also serve to monitor funding and payments and must be available before the EULAR Congress (Committee business meetings). The reporting continues until first draft of manuscript and SLRs is ready. By April, the reports will be sent to the chair, who will inform the Council in June, if there are any concerns. A reminder will be sent to the convenor if the deadline is missed. One week later, if no response is received, the respective committee chair should be informed. The committee chair will contact the convenor reiterating the request.

Failure to submit a progress report will result in a delay or loss of remaining funding from EULAR and suspension of payments until reception of the report. Failure to respond adequately to these requests will result in the project being tabled for the upcoming EULAR Council meeting in June for a final decision. A project should be questioned if one annual report is missed. The final decision will be communicated to the convenor by the respective committee chair. The EULAR Council reserves the right to close a project in such cases.

4. PUBLISH

4.1 Review by the Council (5 weeks): Main manuscript and SLR

Manuscripts resulting from work by the task force are written under the responsibility of the Convenor.

When the **main manuscript** is ready for submission it shall be sent **together with the SLR(s) manuscript and a slide presentation summarizing the results** ([download here the slide deck template](#)) to the EULAR Office and the respective EULAR Committee chair.

The **chair** or his/her nominee will then carry out a first high-level check **within 2 weeks**, if the paper meets the requirements for EULAR endorsed recommendations. The EULAR Office verifies if all experts involved in the project have completed the "EULAR Declaration of Interest" form. The EULAR Office sends feedback to the convenor to complete; individuals for whom no disclosure of potential conflicts is available, will not be named on the publication.

Upon approval of the chair, the Office will send the manuscript plus the SLR(s) for a comment feedback round (2 weeks) to the EULAR Council (in blind copy, compilation of all comments received with judgement of the chair will be sent as a second step for information only) with the request to consider two aspects:

- 1) Does the paper confer with EULAR rules and objectives?
and
- 2) Does the paper reflect the objectives of the task force? (The primary project proposal will be provided for this purpose).

The EULAR Council during the manuscript review decides whether the publication may carry the title "EULAR Recommendations" or "EULAR Points to Consider" or no "EULAR" in the title. If the decision is to keep "EULAR" in the title, the manuscript is considered "EULAR-endorsed" and the publication process must align with the below flowcharts (Fig.1 and Fig. 2).

During the Council review, if major issues are reported, these will be shared with the committee chair for review with the authors. In case of any discrepancy in the various comments, the chair will send a compilation of the comments to the Board for final approval. The committee chair will then support the authors in revising the manuscript accordingly. Once the authors have considered the review comments, they will have to re-submit the revised manuscript to the chair for a final review and approval for submission. The chair in turn may ask additional Council members for a second review (especially those who had expressed concerns). However, a second round of review by the entire Council is not needed.

Occasionally a chair may receive comments from Council members that deal with scientific aspects of the manuscript rather than with the two questions named above or other procedural aspects. Such comments can also be forwarded to the convenor, but with the understanding that responsibility for the scientific quality of the manuscript lies with the authors and the responsibility for the scientific review process with the journal.

If the Council has not expressed concerns with the publication of the manuscript, the EULAR Office informs the respective chair of this, who then contacts the authors directly and asks them to submit the manuscript and SLR according to the Council's decision (see above). If the decision was to send for consideration to ARD, this must be accompanied by a letter confirming the Council review approval for submission, signed by the chair. **This letter needs to be presented to the editors when submitting the papers.**

If the respective chair is an author and cannot be involved in the review process, the past chair, or chair-elect should step in. If both chairs are involved in the project a first technical review can be performed by another committee chair, not responsible for the current project. The assignment will be done by a member of the Presidency. The final decision can be sought by contacting one experienced member of the Council, one member of the Presidency and the Editor of ARD.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- Once the main manuscript and the SLR(s) are finalised, please send the documents, along with a Microsoft PowerPoint slide presentation summarising the results, and an implementation plan, to the EULAR Office (taskforces@eular.org). To receive final approval by the EULAR Council takes up to 5 weeks.
- If the end product is education related, please get in contact with the EULAR Education department by sending an email to education@eular.org

4.2 Submission to the EULAR Journal(s) and sanction

4.2.1 Preliminary publications (abstracts and presentations):

Should a presentation or abstract be made before the project has come to an end, i.e. the final manuscript has already been submitted, authors have two options:

- remove any reference to EULAR or one of its committees from title or author line, and add a statement to the Background or Introduction section that "...that the presentation is preliminary (or preparatory) work done by members of the EULAR task force on.....";
- alternatively, they may keep the EULAR reference and submit it to the EULAR office for committee approval at least allowing 1 weeks' time; only after approval, the presentation or abstract may be submitted.

4.2.2 Main manuscript and SLR(s):

If the manuscript/ SLR(s) are approved by EULAR, authors must, by default, submit the **main manuscript to the Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases (ARD)**, and the **SLR(s) to EULAR Rheumatology Open (ERO)**, where they go through the normal review process, alongside the written confirmation of the Council's approval. The **title of the SLR(s)** must include a reference to the main manuscript, for example the addition "... informing a EULAR Task Force" (or similar).

- The key outcome of a EULAR Task Force is summarised in one main manuscript (as outlined in the proposal); this must be published first (i.e., before any other manuscripts related to the process, see below).
- The SLR / methodological manuscripts cannot be submitted before the main manuscript (ideally, they should be submitted simultaneously). This also applies to large projects with more than one SLR.
- At the Journal, the manuscript/ SLR(s) will undergo the standard review process (i.e., they might be rejected despite approval by the EULAR Council).
- If ARD rejects the manuscript, authors must submit it to ERO. If ERO rejects the manuscript or the SLR, EULAR offers the authors full coverage of the endorsed work through publication on the EULAR website.
- If authors decide against publication on the EULAR website, they are free to submit to another (non-EULAR) journal with all relevant acknowledgements. If the paper gets accepted in a non-EULAR journal, it must keep "EULAR" in the title, as it was previously endorsed by the EULAR Council.
- All EULAR-endorsed manuscripts/SLRs must be published as open access (regardless of whether they are published in a EULAR journal or a non-EULAR journal). For all EULAR-endorsed manuscripts and **one** supporting SLR, EULAR covers the publication fees (regardless of whether they are published in a EULAR journal or a non-EULAR journal). Funding for additional SLRs must be approved by the Council when the initial proposal is presented.
- The work has to be summarised in a MS PowerPoint presentation slide deck that will be published on the EULAR website along with a link referring to the publication in the journal.
- Additionally, all recommendations will be linked on the EULAR website after publication.
- EULAR-endorsed manuscripts, which are published in ARD or ERO should be accompanied by a lay abstract version on the journal and/or EULAR website, if relevant for lay audiences. For more guidelines on this process, please refer to the [EULAR website](https://www.eular.org/lay-recommendations) (<https://www.eular.org/lay-recommendations>).

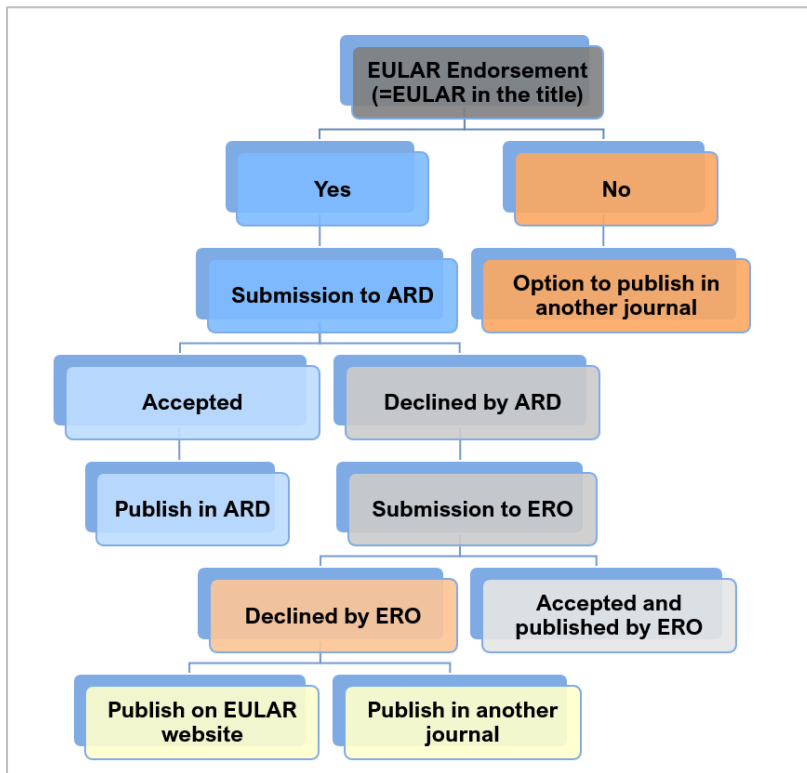


Fig. 1: Flowchart for **main manuscript** submission process

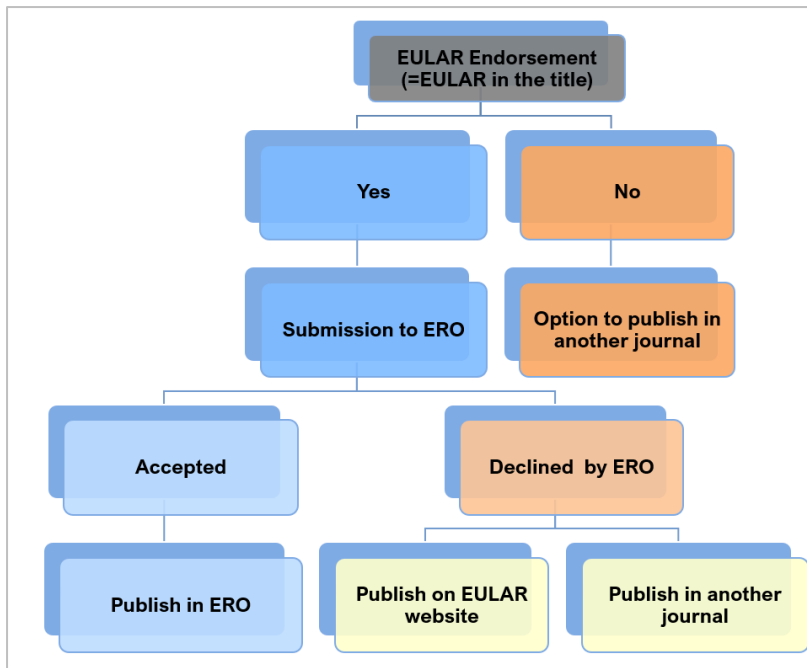


Fig. 2: Flowchart for **SLR** submission process

4.2.3 Additional publications:

- Further manuscripts/side manuscripts resulting from work by the task force are written under the responsibility of the convenor but can only be published **after** the main manuscript and the SLR(s).
- Please note: Publication fees for secondary papers will not be covered by EULAR.
- Secondary papers may not carry the name “EULAR” in the title, but should include all relevant acknowledgements referring to the main paper. EULAR needs to be informed about a planned submission in its role as funding agency, but the EULAR Council does not need to endorse the manuscript.

4.2.4 Sanctions

In case of infringement of the rules of this section 4.2, EULAR may, at its full discretion, request:

- that the publication is withdrawn from ARD or any other journal and/or
- a penalty of up to € 2'000 to be paid by the convenor and by each author, depending on the severity of his/her fault and violation, the undue benefit resulting thereof and his/her economic situation.

4.3 PROJECT FOLLOW-UP /POST PUBLICATION STEP

The convenor will send the DOI link of the paper immediately after publication to the EULAR Office (taskforces@eular.org) and inform of the publication dates. The EULAR Office will prepare a press release to be published in parallel with the main manuscript and a lay summary and will add the new publication product to the EULAR website.