



PRE-CONFERENCE REPORT

Evaluation 2019-2022 and MEL
Framework Proposals

EQUAL
RIGHTS
COALITION

EQUAL RIGHTS COALITION

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1. KEY MESSAGES

This independent evaluation covers the period June 2019 to June 2022, most of Argentina and the UK's co-chairship of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC). Its scope extends across all activity delivered in the ERC during this time, though it is not a performance assessment of the Co-chairs themselves, nor of any individual ERC Committee or Group. This is the first such evaluation of the ERC and this should be borne in mind, particularly in terms of the data available as evidence, and in terms of the evaluation's findings, which come in the context of the mechanism's relative newness.

Evidence from participants in this evaluation suggests ERC's most significant achievements since June 2019 – the start of Argentina and the United Kingdom's co-chairship – have been related to the agreement of its Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and other steps taken to consolidate core structures and processes, as well as to the awareness ERC is able to raise on SOGIESC issues in the multilateral space.

Stakeholders noted the most effective Thematic Groups in ERC attracted high engagement from both Member States and CSOs, held regular meetings and maintained up-to-date contact lists. The International Diplomacy Thematic Group was also noted to have deepened its activities by establishing two active sub-groups.

The most significant challenges reported across the survey and interview consultations were related to Member State engagement, representation and power-sharing (particularly in relation to the Global South) and a need for more regular, ERC-wide communication.

Further challenges identified include: a lack of clarity over the States' and civil society's relative roles within ERC; a gap in staffing and financial resources limiting the delivery of some core functions; and the broad backlash against trans rights that is ERC's current operating context.

Challenges that were identified to cut across multiple Thematic Groups included: a lack of clarity in communication around what some Groups do (and aim to do), filling some leadership roles, as well as ensuring engagement from all relevant stakeholders in meetings.

It is recommended that ERC continue to invest in its administrative capacity to support the delivery of core Co-chair functions (both at the ERC and Thematic Group levels), including in communications, progress monitoring, translation and interpretations services, and oversight of a formalised Co-chair transition process.

In terms of strategy, it is recommended that the ERC prioritise engagement over quantity of members; focus on sustainable funding streams; and enhance internal, ERC-wide communications. It is further recommended that resourcing barriers faced by members in the Global South members, particularly CSOs, are explicitly addressed and that particular attention is paid to the representation of Global South stakeholders within the ERC's leadership positions.

To address challenges around engagement, it is recommended that ERC Member States take steps to agree their substantive commitments to the mechanism, and that these be, at minimum, to engage with Thematic Groups and to sign (at least some) ERC Statements. Further, it is recommended that ERC and Thematic Group Co-chairs continue to encourage all members to approach the mechanism as a space in which to collaborate towards shared priorities, rather than as one in which to advocate.

In terms of the Thematic Groups, evidence from this evaluation suggests ensuring all Groups maintain a tight focus — on issues that cut across Member States — and clearly communicate to members when there are opportunities to collaborate on a specific matter should be the priority. It is also recommended that dedicated transition resources are developed for each Group and that the ERC consider de-coupling the Co-chairs' terms, in both cases to minimise unnecessary disruption in leadership and the delivery of work.

Expanding the number of Thematic Groups is not recommended; instead, natural growth into sub-groups, as has been seen in the International Diplomacy Thematic Group, is likely to be more sustainable and minimise demands on members' time.

At this stage in the development of the ERC mechanism, it is recommended that the ERC adopt a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) strategy, focused on centrally collecting core monitoring data, as well as beginning to implement review processes to capture outcomes. This report proposes a modest strategy, adapting the ERC's pre-conference report into its primary accountability mechanism, supplementing this with a midpoint report, and that each ERC Thematic Group and Committee deliver concise outcomes capture exercises once per six months.

2. INTRODUCTION

The ERC has commissioned this pre-conference report, ahead of its 2022 Convening in Buenos Aires. The report is a high level evaluation of the ERC's activities during Argentina and the UK's tenure as ERC Co-chairs (June 2019 - September 2022). The findings of the report are intended to inform discussion at the Convening and, in addition to operational recommendations, make specific proposals for an MEL framework for the ERC to adopt in the immediate future.

Background

The ERC, established in 2016, is an intergovernmental body dedicated to inclusive development and protecting the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) persons. The ERC comprises 42 Member States from across Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America, the Pacific and West Africa, and 154 LGBTI+ civil society organisations (CSOs) from these regions as well as from East and South Asia, and Southern Africa.¹ It is currently Co-chaired by Argentina and the United Kingdom. Operating across four thematic areas, Thematic Groups exist to harness the energy and expertise of Member States, multilateral organisations and civil society, thus fostering communication and collaboration across borders. The thematic areas are as follows: Donor Coordination; International Diplomacy; National Laws and Policies; SDGs and 2030 Agenda.

2.1 Approach

Evaluation Framework

The research framework was designed in an iterative and collaborative process between The Research Base and the ERC's membership. The framework was designed in a way that would explore the main achievements of Argentina and the UK's tenure whilst also encompassing constructive feedback around challenges experienced and barriers to success in order to identify recommendations for improvement.

1. The 42 ERC Member States are: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Honduras, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.

The framework for the evaluation is below:

Research Questions

What were the key actions and achievements of Argentina and the UK's tenure as ERC Co-chairs?

What were the key operational challenges encountered during this tenure?

What were the barriers or gaps behind these challenges?

What are the recommended operational and substantive priority actions for ERC stakeholders?

Qualitative Review

A review of the documentation provided by the ERC was carried out, including the ERC Strategic Plan 2021-2026, the associated Implementation Plan and minutes from meetings across the mechanism. 12 consultation interviews were also delivered with Thematic Group Co-chairs and ERC Co-chairs: four were delivered with representatives of ERC State and CSO Co-chairs and the remainder with representatives of Thematic Groups. All Thematic Groups were represented by Co-chairs except one, which was represented by a CSO member due to scheduling challenges. Interviews lasted for around one hour. Participants were made aware of the small interview pool and were free to request confidentiality and anonymity as they felt most appropriate.

Interview sample

	# States/ CSOs	Interviews
Thematic Group Co-chairs	7	8
ERC Co-chair	4	4
Total	11	12

Interviews were conducted by Zoom or Teams at a time selected by participants. Interviews were recorded, with participant permission, for later transcription. Analysis was performed using interview notes and an analysis matrix. In order to comply with GDPR, any identifying data will be deleted within 12 months of the end of the project.

Survey

A pre-conference consultation survey was designed by The Research Base in collaboration with the ERC. It was distributed on SurveyMonkey by the ERC and was open for responses between 11 July and 2 August 2022. Responses were received in English and Spanish and then translated into English during analysis. The report has been developed in English and translated into Spanish, though all quotations are verbatim per the language they were written in.

From an initial yield of 81 responses, 64 were usable following cleaning. During cleaning, survey responses were excluded if consent had been declined, participants had completed the survey more than once, or participants had not responded to any non-demographic questions. Data was then re-coded and combined as required for analysis. *'I can't recall/' I don't know'* responses were not considered to add value to the analysis and were excluded. Analysis of quantitative questions was done in percentages, while qualitative responses, comprising the majority of the data, were recorded in absolute numbers in the footnotes.

Participant Demographics

- **Stakeholders represented.** More than half of survey participants represented CSOs (59%), more than a third (39%) member states, and (2%) multilateral organisations.² The average length of participants' involvement in ERC was 43 months, with a majority (72%) involved for a period exceeding 18 months.³
- **Gender identity.** A notable proportion (7%) of survey participants identified as trans, non-binary, and/or two-spirit (or another identity that would be considered under the Trans umbrella).
- **Sex characteristics.** The same proportion (7%) identified as intersex or another term referencing variations of sex characteristics.⁴
- **Geography.** A slight majority of responses (53%) came from the participants in the Global North, and a slight minority (45%) from the Global South and East.⁵ This broadly reflects the membership, a majority of which are States and CSOs from the Global North.⁶ The USA was the Member State representing the highest proportion of responses (11%), followed by Argentina, Canada and Spain (all 8%), and the UK (6%).⁷
- **Organisational focus.** Two fifths (42%) said that their work was mostly at the international level, a similar proportion both international and national (41%), and under a fifth national (17%). The work of nearly two fifths (19%) focused specifically on trans and/or intersex issues.⁸

2. Pre-conference consultation survey [N=64].

3. Pre-conference consultation survey [N=66].

4. Pre-conference consultation survey [N=60].

5. For this report, responses from Belgium, Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, the UK and USA were coded as 'Global North'. Responses from Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Namibia, South Africa, Thailand and Venezuela were coded as 'Global South'.

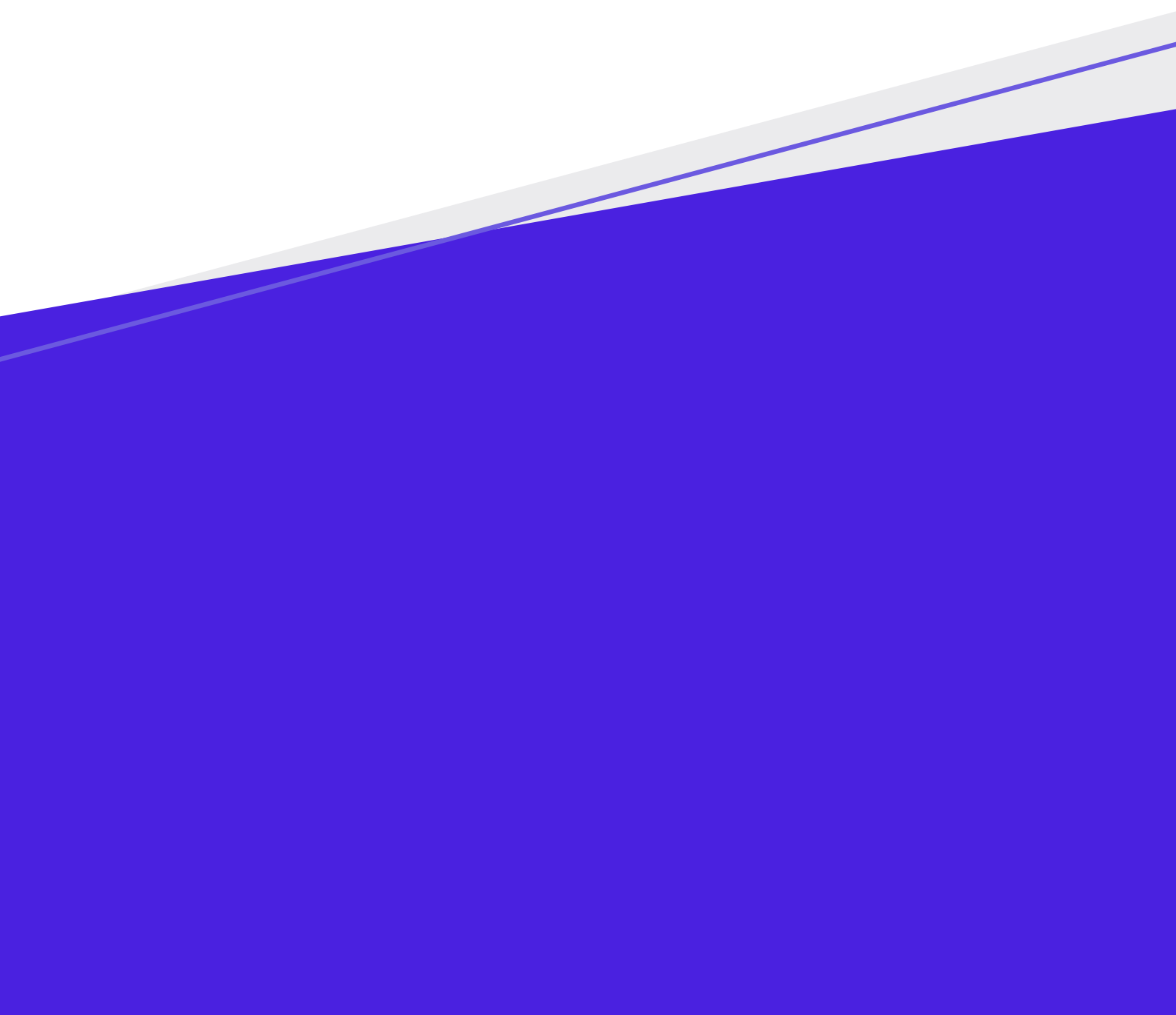
6. EU Member States, and others in northern and western Europe, by themselves comprise a majority of the ERC's Member States (24 out of 42), for example. Elsewhere in this report, it is recommended that the ERC explicitly take up the question of how it organises itself geographically. Among other things this would facilitate sharper analysis of the extent to which future data collection samples are representative of the ERC membership's geography, in ways directly pertinent to the ERC.

7. Pre-conference consultation survey [N=63].

8. Pre-conference consultation survey [N=64].

Limitations

The key limitation applying to this report is the low volume of existing data within the ERC on which to assess progress and outcomes. This is due to the relative newness of the Coalition, which has not yet adopted formal MEL processes. Instead this report relies on perceptions data from ERC stakeholders. Furthermore, the evaluation was delivered rapidly in the period immediately prior to the Convening. This necessarily limited the pool of people available for interview, though the team was pleased to speak with representatives for each Thematic Group and to receive a healthy survey response rate from the membership. Readers should bear in mind the small sample size for the interviews and lack of core delivery data, and interpret findings accordingly. Recommendations for strengthening the ERC's MEL infrastructure are made in the Learning and Recommendations section.



3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND EFFECTIVENESS

3.1 ERC Members' Assessment of Effectiveness

ERC stakeholders responding to the survey were fairly evenly split in their assessment of the extent to which the ERC had delivered effectively against its aims since June 2019. Contextually, it is crucial to note that this time period extends across the full length of the present ERC Co-Chair tenure, specifically including the period before the agreement of the Strategic Plan 2021-2026. Prior to this, the ERC operated with only preliminary statements of its aims and without an agreed implementation plan for their achievement. While more than two fifths (42%) of stakeholders felt the ERC had been moderately effective between June 2019 and July 2022, and more than a third (35%) felt it had been highly or very highly effective, a large minority of almost one in four (23%) did not feel the ERC had been effective.⁹

Effectiveness of Delivery



9. Pre-conference consultation survey [N=52].

3.2 Consolidating Structures and Processes

Much of the feedback from ERC stakeholders centred on its progress through a phase of initial development. Accordingly, developing core processes and structures feature prominently as both key achievements of the ERC since June 2019 and as recommendations for further development.

Strategic Plan 2021-2026

Interview participants were clear that the key achievement during the June 2019 - June 2022 Co-chairship was the elaboration of the Strategic Plan 2021-2026, and this was also reflected in responses from the member survey.¹⁰ The collaboration of the ERC's members to clarify strategic aims and distil these into themes and activities was considered a '*major achievement for this stage*',¹¹ with the consultation process around the strategy reported to have encompassed both Member States and civil society, including consultation with the CSO Core Group, Executive Committee, UNDP and World Bank. Securing engagement on the strategy during the Covid-19 crisis, as governments were diverting resources elsewhere, was considered to be a particular success for the Co-chairs.¹²

While the four Thematic Groups were established prior to June 2019 and the ERC's founding principles were agreed in Montevideo in 2016, the strategy has provided a framework for cohesion and direction, according to interview participants. Furthermore, direction-setting through the strategy was considered to be an attempt to reinvigorate the membership, with some success: by July 2021, 30 Member States had re-committed to the Coalition at a two-day virtual launch for the strategy, hosted by Wilton Park, attracting 172 participants. Momentum was observed in some new members joining Thematic Groups following the strategy's launch.¹³ Furthermore, efforts to consolidate this strategic foundation were continued, including through an online check-in, also convened by Wilton Park (January 2022) and attended by 21 States.¹⁴

Other Achievements

- **Regularisation of Executive Committee meetings.** Interview participants noted the establishment of regular Executive Committee meetings as part of a broader formalisation associated with the strategy. Committee members have therefore been kept updated on activity in the Thematic Groups.¹⁵ Minutes from these monthly meetings began being circulated to the State and CSO membership in 2021.¹⁶

10. Consultation interviews; pre-conference consultation survey, 13 responses.

11. Consultation interviews.

12. Consultation interviews.

13. Consultation interviews, Final attendance List by Session WP1953V(78).xlsx

14. Validation workshop; consultation interviews, correspondence with ERC Co-chairs.

15. Consultation interviews.

16. Correspondence with ERC Co-chairs.

- **ERC Officer.** Funding for ERC Officer position, provided by the UK Government,¹⁷ allowed ERC Co-chairs to focus more on moving the mechanism forward.¹⁸ This was seen as particularly valuable against a backdrop of high workload at Co-chair level.

3.3 Communication

The most prominent achievements reported by participants in the member survey focused on communication.¹⁹ Stakeholders reported information sharing and joint working, including between CSOs, diplomatic efforts between Member States, and between CSOs and Member States. A number of stakeholders reported that the development of the ERC's platform, and the opportunities this creates to raise awareness on SOGIESC issues, as a key achievement,²⁰ citing dialogue around the impact of Covid-19, for example. Other successes in terms of communication reported by ERC stakeholders include:

- **equalrightscalition.org.** Small numbers of survey and interview participants highlighted the publication of the ERC's website in May 2021 as a key achievement. According to interviewees, the website is the beginning of a successful repository of information, collecting the history of the Coalition, how it functions and details on the State parties. Most importantly, the founding documents are featured and there is now an easy point of first contact for external stakeholders. Survey participants noted that the website had supported their work.²¹
- **Information and learning sessions.** To ensure Member State representatives were knowledgeable on the ERC, its ways of working and expectations regarding their involvement, two 'teach-ins' were held between 4 and 8 June 2021, ahead of the launch of the Strategic Plan 2021-2026. Across the two sessions, 15 Member States attended. Furthermore, various centralised resources were developed, including those focused on outlining the procedural steps for Statements, and resources outlining the implications of membership of the ERC and of Thematic Group.²²
- **Funding for interpretation.** Funding for interpretation of ERC meetings was made available by the UK Government in the Year 2 budget. Funds were allocated to a professional interpreter and related Zoom functionality. Notably, all meetings of the CSO Core Group were accessible in both English and Spanish.

17. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 13/10/20.

18. Consultation interviews.

19. Pre-conference consultation survey, 14 responses.

20. Pre-conference consultation survey, 10 responses.

21. Pre-conference consultation survey, 2 responses; consultation interviews.

22. Correspondence with ERC Co-chairs.

3.4 External Advocacy

Achievements relating to external advocacy were also heavily cited by ERC stakeholder responses to the survey.²³ A number of successes were discussed including efforts towards monitoring the LGBTI+ community in Ukraine, providing support for activists being persecuted and effecting particular policy changes (including on gender identity recognition) within certain states. ERC stakeholders surveyed were also positive about the agreement of coordinated advocacy statements on a number of SOGIESC issues including the impact of Covid-19, the war in Ukraine, deteriorating human rights situations in particular regions, and for the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.²⁴

- **Statement on UN Independent Expert.** Several interviewees and survey participants noted the importance of the Statement on the mandate renewal of the UN Independent Expert on SOGIESC: *'The increase in visibility of ERC through, for example, the joint statement of 100% of the Member States supporting the mandate of SOGI in the 50th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.'*²⁵
- **Impact Statement on Covid-19.** Published in May 2020, and drafted by the State Co-chairs and securing signatures from 38 of 42 Member States, this Statement was also a noted success.^{26/27} The Statement was based on a report, *Global Impact of Covid-19 on LGBTI Communities* (April 2020), drafted by the CSO CO-chairs and Covid-19 Working Group that outlined a human rights framework, current and future risks for LGBTI+ people, examples of violations by countries, and recommendations for action. This was circulated to the CSO network for use in advocacy.²⁸
- **Afghanistan meeting.** Following the Taliban's capture of Kabul, concerns were raised in several ERC Working Groups regarding the plight of the Afghan LGBTI+ community. In September 2021, within one month of the takeover, a successful meeting was convened, reported to be a valuable opportunity for Member States to learn about how developments in Afghanistan intersected with SOGIESC issues and what was being done in response, as well as to develop a shared sense of responsibility.²⁹ It was also a noted example of cross-Group collaboration and coordination, involving members of the International Diplomacy and National Laws and Policies Working Groups, as well as the ERC co-chairs.³⁰

23. Pre-conference consultation survey, 27 responses.

24. Pre-conference consultation survey, 12 responses.

25. Pre-conference consultation survey, 27 responses. *'Aumento de la visibilidad de la ERC a través de, por ejemplo, comunicado conjunto del 100% de los países miembros en apoyo al mandato El SOGI en la 50 sesión del Consejo de Derechos Humanos [de la ONU]'*.

26. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 28/04/20

27. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 27/05/20

28. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 28/04/20

29. Consultation interviews.

30. Consultation interviews and validation workshop.

3.5 Thematic Groups

Thematic Groups Summary³¹

Thematic Group	Focus Summary
International Diplomacy	Gathering and sharing information from local CSOs, host-country governments and others and sharing among ERC members; engaging governments and civil society to build relationships, support capacity development and enhance responses to crises.
Donor Coordination	Increasing funding for work in support of LGBTI persons; ensuring assistance and diplomacy efforts are guided by need; encouraging transparency around funding mechanisms.
National Laws and Policies	To share and promote good practices, experiences and regulations regarding SOGIESC, with the goal of encouraging the development of progressive policies in other States.
SDGs and Agenda 2030	To investigate how the Global Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development can be used to benefit LGBTI communities across the globe. To encourage States to conduct LGBTI+ inclusive SDG reviews of progress at the national level, which can serve as a basis for inclusive contributions to the High-Level Political Forum.

31. <https://equalrightscoalition.org/thematic-areas>

Donor Coordination

Engagement for this Group was challenging, particularly during the previous Administration in the USA, the State co-Chair of the Group. As such regular monthly meetings only recommenced after January 2021. Nevertheless, achievements included:³²

- **Information-sharing activities.** The Group has delivered webinars, prominently including one on the extent to which Covid-19 relief funding would include LGBTI+ earmarks, as well as best practice and challenges here. Almost 500 attendees were reported.
- **Knowledge production.** The above-mentioned event also generated a significant collection of Covid-related resources, collated by the Thematic Group.³³

International Diplomacy

Commonly perceived to be the most active and successful Thematic Group by interview participants, the International Diplomacy Thematic Group's work plan launched in the summer of 2021 and work has continued to progress since, with approximately monthly meetings regularly attracting more than 30 attendees. Meeting attendees include representatives of both Member States and CSOs, estimated to comprise 55-60% diplomats and 40-45% civil society stakeholders. The Group currently maintains its own mailing list of over 130 contacts.³⁴ Key successes include:

- **Updated meeting format.** Each month the Group's meetings now focus on a given crisis, success story or other theme which is discussed and commented on by civil society members who are directly involved in the issue. Interview participants felt this format, with a clear diplomatic call to action across local, national and international levels, led to a steep uptick in attention paid to, and actions taken in relation to, specific country contexts.
- **Statement on UN Expert renewal.** The sub-group on Multi-Level Advocacy's coordination of the ERC's position regarding the mandate renewal of the UN's Independent Expert on SOGIESC. The published statement was signed unanimously by Member States. Interviewees variously reported that the group's work had played a role in securing the mandate's renewal (though what role exactly is likely unmeasurable) and that the statement was evidence that despite Member State engagement being a challenge, when presented with something '*concrete and important*', states will respond through the ERC.³⁵
- **Decriminalisation work.** The Group established an active sub-group on decriminalisation in early 2022, led by the Human Dignity Trust, which gives a clear venue for work delivered under the ERC's Strategic Objective 1, relating to decriminalisation.³⁶ This group is currently working to identify around five priority countries for ERC lobbying. nt collection of Covid-related resources, collated by the Thematic Group.³⁷

32. Consultation interviews.

33. Consultation interviews.

34. Consultation interviews.

35. Consultation interviews.

36. International Diplomacy Thematic Group is the allocated lead or co-lead for five of the nine actions falling under SO1 in ERC's Strategic Plan 2021-2026.

37. Consultation interviews.

The success of the Thematic Group was attributed by interview participants to the CSO Co-chair's global network and efforts on the part of the current State Co-chair to bring in new diplomats.³⁸

National Laws and Policies³⁹

This Thematic Group maintains a membership of six Member States, including the Co-chair, 30 CSOs and a multilateral organisation. Of these, four Member States and 11 CSOs regularly attend meetings. Achievement for this Group centre on information-sharing: at least two webinars were held: a webinar on legal gender recognition, led by GATE and the OHCHR (3rd December 2021) and a webinar on LGBTI Refugees, led by Rainbow Railroad and Canada (8th April 2022). Associated with the Legal Gender Recognition webinar, the National Laws and Policies Thematic Group developed a comprehensive fact sheet on this policy area.⁴⁰ The events attracted good levels of participation, indicating effective delivery of one of the Group's core functions, summarised in the table below.⁴¹ In terms of outcomes, while evidence is limited, there was an uptick in State membership of the Thematic Group following the first webinar, with Argentina, Malta and the Netherlands joining. Furthermore, the webinar themes were selected specifically to ensure coverage of issues often overlooked or subsumed into larger narratives in multilateral spaces. As such, the good levels of engagement with these webinars have served to raise the profile of these issues.

NLP Thematic Group: Engagement with Selected Events

Webinar	Attendance
Legal Gender Recognition, 3 December 2021	61 total (40 government, 18 CSO, 3 multilateral)
LGBTI Refugees, 8 April 2022	63 total (24 government, 36 CSO, 3 multilateral)

38. Consultation interviews.

39. Readers are reminded that due to scheduling challenges Co-chairs for this Group were unable to input directly into this report. As a result, achievements noted here may be underreported.

40. <https://equalrightscoalition.org/documents/legal-gender-recognition-factsheet/>

41. Correspondence with ERC Co-Chairs, numbers of attendees are not equivalent to the numbers of Member States or CSO members.

SDGs and Agenda 2030

Engagement was particularly challenging for this Thematic Group, which maintains a mailing list of 32 CSOs. While achievements were less clear to interview participants overall, the following were highlighted as key:

- **Information-sharing.** Webinars were hosted on topics exploring SOGIESC priorities from a Global South perspective, namely: LGBTI+ inclusion in the 2030 Agenda session, at The Global Launch of the Equal Rights Coalition Strategy; the ERC - Q&A session with Civil Society Organizations; and How to Integrate a Voluntary National Review (VNR) workshop, focused on levels of LGBTI+ inclusion. Two of these information sessions attracted, respectively, 16 CSOs, three States and one multilateral participant, and 21 CSOs, one State and one multilateral participant.⁴²
- **Balance of representation.** The balance in the attendees of the webinars between Member States and civil society, and between Global North and Global South was also noted.⁴³
- **Recent sharing of best practice.** The most recent meeting of the Group, which was reported to be strong by an interviewee, showcased good practice by a CSO member on the topic of cooperation with Government to take up SOGIESC issues within employment and education policy.⁴⁴
- **Fostering connections.** The connections made between those in a Member State government and Report Out, a consultancy working with States on the presentation of their VNRs.⁴⁵

42. On the information available, it is unclear to which of the information sharing events these figures correspond.

43. Consultation interviews.

44. Consultation interviews.

45. Consultation interviews.

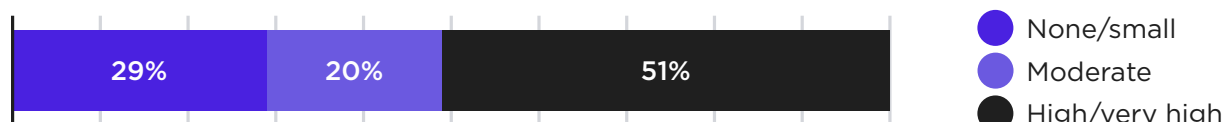
4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

4.1 ERC-level Challenges

i. Member State Engagement

The most consistently reported challenge across survey and interview data provided by ERC stakeholders was Member State engagement. A majority of survey participants (51%) reported that engagement was a challenge to a high or very high extent.⁴⁶

Challenge: Member State Engagement



Despite concerted effort to engage some Member States, interviewees felt **membership was seen by some States as a formality** rather than something requiring an active commitment to contribute. This included attendance at meetings and responses to emails. In a couple of instances, interviewees also noted that the engagement with the ERC by multilateral members was also inconsistent or decreasing.⁴⁷ In addition to low levels of engagement, the **quality of this engagement** was also noted to be a challenge. For example, interviewees reported limited co-operation between some States and their most prominent national SOGIESC stakeholders, and that regular turnover of government personnel sometimes hampered progress.

46. Pre-conference consultation survey. [N=41]

47. Consultation interviews.

Factors driving down State engagement include: State representatives' high workloads, with portfolios typically extending well beyond the ERC; the Covid-19 pandemic causing a diversion of resources to governments' crisis responses; and a lack of clarity for Member States as to ERC's added value.⁴⁸ More generally, some interviewees also referred to the ERC's internal culture, which can sometimes be *'quite adversarial'*. Individuals were occasionally said to be uncomfortable inputting into ERC meetings for this reason.

ii. Representation and Power-sharing

Representation of the Global South and East

Evidence from the interviews and survey shows that ERC stakeholders overwhelmingly feel that representation of the Global South and East has continued to be a challenge during the current ERC Co-chair tenure.⁴⁹ The **prominence of Global North leaders within the Thematic Groups and the relative absence of Global South agenda items** compared with other multilateral spaces were noted by interviewees.⁵⁰ In the survey, evidence suggests stronger polarisation on the topic of leadership: while 44% of participants felt power-sharing to be a key challenge, almost a third (33%) felt the opposite.⁵¹ ERC Co-chair suggestions, made once the imbalance among incoming Thematic Group Co-chairs became clear, to implement joint CSO co-chairs (one each representing North and South) were not approved by Thematic Group CSO Co-chairs.

Challenge: Representation of the Global South and East



Challenge: Power-sharing within Governance and Leadership



48. Consultation interviews; Minutes, CSO Core Group, 25/03/20; Minutes, CSO Core Group, 27/05/20.

49. Pre-conference consultation survey. [N=36]

50. Survey participants noted the lack of activity around LGBT+ issues in Latin America and Southeast Asia.

51. Pre-conference consultation survey. [N=34]

Interviewees were generally pleased to note the improvement in representation of Global South organisations and states at the upcoming 2022 Convening in Buenos Aires, as well as the CSO Core Group welcoming five new members from Cameroon, India, Namibia, South Africa and Thailand in February 2020. However, despite targeted recruitment to fill regional gaps in the Core Group membership in early 2020, no applications were received from the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, or the Middle East and North Africa.⁵² Several interviewees noted concerns over the barriers faced by some Global South members, CSOs in particular, in contributing the staff time and resources needed to take on, for example, a Co-chair role.⁵³ This created challenges for both participation in, and achieving impact through, the ERC: *'In the case of civil society from the Global South, there is a huge difference in terms of financial resources as to how much participation and impact is possible.'*⁵⁴

Comprehensive Community Representation

The participation of trans-focused and intersex-focused organisations was seen as a key challenge ERC has faced since June 2019 by exactly half (50.0%) of those who responded to the survey and further third (33%) felt it was a key challenge to a moderate extent.⁵⁵ Furthermore, one of the core components felt to be missing from the draft of ERC Strategic Plan 2021-2026 were clear action steps in terms of trans and intersex inclusion.⁵⁶

Challenge: Participation of Trans- and/or Intersex-Focused Organisations



iii. Communication

While communications featured as a key recent achievement within the ERC, stakeholders responding to the survey also identified communication and collaboration as the predominant challenge for the mechanism from a fixed list of options.⁵⁷ Two key areas explored by interviewees include the **need for further regularisation of communications and the use of Spanish.**

52. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 23/01/20.

53. Consultation interviews; Minutes, CSO Core Group, 25/03/20.

54. Consultation interviews and quoting from a survey participant: *'En el caso de sociedad civil del Sur Global, hay una gran diferencia en términos de recursos financieros para poder participar y hacer incidencia.'*

55. Pre-conference consultation survey. [N=30]

56. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 28/02/20.

57. Interview consultations; pre-conference consultation survey, 20 responses.

Further Regularising of Communications

Interview participants reflected that an enhanced system of internal communication would be beneficial. 'It is unclear what some of the groups are doing.' Two stakeholders felt that where information is not at present circulated across the ERC, this was the result of a lack of a clear and suitably high-level strategy: '*...there is no universal strategy or agreement on how to disseminate actions from the Thematic Groups.*'⁵⁸

Use of Spanish

Interview participants commonly noted the inconsistent implementation in practice of ERC's co-official language, Spanish. Funding for professional meeting interpretation was made available in the Year 2 budget, though was voluntary prior to this.⁵⁹ As such, some Thematic Group meetings in the last few years have been uninterpreted and, while nearly all ERC documents have been translated, Spanish versions of internal documents have sometimes only been made available later due to a gap in staffing capacity.⁶⁰ This is a key area in which future evaluations would benefit from the availability of core monitoring data that clearly establishes what proportion of meetings over a given period were accessible in (at least) English and Spanish.

Despite recent progress in the consistent use of Spanish, one evaluation participant reported colleagues were dropping engagement with ERC due to the issue of accessibility in Spanish.⁶¹ Since Global South members of ERC are disproportionately Latin American at present, continuing to address this issue is a proxy for North-South inclusion. Stakeholders also noted a lack of translation services catering for different language needs, such as French and Portuguese.

iv. Roles, Responsibility and Accountability

Role of Members

Despite ERC's structure as a "Coalition", and the value of CSOs' participation in the mechanism,⁶² evidence from the interviews suggests there is still scope for the ERC to **better communicate the roles intended for its Member States and CSOs members**. Multiple interviewees, for example, noted challenges arising from some organisations approaching the ERC as a space in which to advocate for causes or policy changes, rather than as one in which to collaborate with like-minded organisations and States to advance SOGIESC priorities. Specifically, it was suggested that some member CSOs view the mechanism as a space in which to lobby for policy changes within Member States, rather than as an opportunity to work alongside governments on priority issues.

58. '*...no hay una estrategia/acuerdo único de comunicación relativa a las acciones de los grupos de trabajo.*' Pre-conference consultation survey, 2 responses.

59. Validation workshop.

60. Correspondence with ERC Co-chairs.

61. Consultation interviews.

62. Emphasised in ERC's Founding Principles; Equal Rights Coalition Founding Principles EN SP FR.docx

There was widespread agreement among interview participants that the ERC's role was specifically not to shame states into action, but rather about supporting them to drive change.⁶³ However, a lack of clarity over the unique role of CSOs within the space, and an absence of accountability mechanisms, were identified as key drivers of under-engagement by Member States. Further, State representation within the ERC is commonly allocated to diplomats or other personnel of foreign ministries, and is not as commonly extended to those with domestic policy portfolios. This has to some extent limited the fulfilment of States' roles within the mechanism, particularly in some of the domestically-focused Thematic Groups.

Demonstration of States' Commitment

The tension between some Member States' ERC membership and the progression of their domestic SOGIESC agendas has been prominently noted to be a challenge by CSO representatives, and is related to the issue of purpose noted above. This includes Member States Co-chairing organs of the Coalition, exacerbating the challenge by raising its profile and undermining confidence in certain states' roles within ERC: *'Many of us are having difficulty reconciling the position of the [Member State Government] domestically... with its [role in ERC]. Whilst we appreciate the... support they have provided... there is concern as to what this may mean regarding foreign policy.'*⁶⁴

ERC Independence

Several interviewees noted that clarity around the ERC's independent functioning from Member States was recently confused by the appearance that the 2022 ERC Convening was being merged with the UK Government's own global conference, *Safe to Be Me*, being scheduled consecutively. The latter conference was subject to significant domestic political controversy and dissatisfaction among LGBTI organisations. The appearance of the merging of the two international agendas was strongly criticised by some interviewees who stressed it must be prevented from happening again.⁶⁵

'...a major barrier is that these mechanisms are all dependent on people in CSOs and government often doing the work 'on the side of their desks'. Some do it well, some struggle.... and this has been a real challenge.'

— Pre-conference consultation survey participant

63. Consultation interviews.

64. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 13/10/20.

65. Consultation interviews.

v. Resources

Participants in the interview consultations noted the ERC's limited capacity, in terms of staff and financing, to deliver some key functions. These prominently included the regular communication of Thematic Group and Executive Committee activities to the wider membership, as well as monitoring progress indicators, following-up with Member States to capture outcomes and producing statements of results.⁶⁶ A tenth of members (11%) responding to the survey reported not participating in any of the Thematic Groups⁶⁷ and just under half of these members said this was due to a lack of resources or capacity: *'Limited human resources to attend and participate in these groups, which inhibit the State to lead or work actively.'*⁶⁸

In addition to the particular resource barrier, noted above, faced by civil society actors in the Global South in participating in the ERC, resources challenges included:

- A specific lack of funding for administrative functions: *'...the lack of a funded Secretariat...'*⁶⁹
- Issues in obtaining financial resources for groups focused on trans women.⁷⁰
- A lack of resources and remuneration for CSOs in leadership positions: *'The lack of resources and/or recompense can make it very challenging for CSOs to manage leadership roles in the network, particularly over the extended terms they have faced due to COVID.'*⁷¹
- No action from multilateral development banks to provide funding streams.⁷²

vi. Contextual Barriers

Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly slowed activity within the ERC, according to interview participants. As governments diverted resources, engagement with Member States was said to be very challenging at the height of the crisis. Due to the slow down in activity, the launch of the Strategic Plan was delayed until July 2021.⁷³ Covid-19 also caused issues including disruption to conferences and planned international meetings, slowing progress and cooperation between international counterparts.⁷⁴

66. Consultation interviews.

67. Pre-conference consultation survey, 7 participants.

68. *'Limitación de recurso humano para atender y participar en estos grupos que impiden al Estado liderar o trabajar activamente.'* Pre-conference consultation survey, 5 participants.

69. Pre-conference consultation survey, 1 participant.

70. Pre-conference consultation survey, 1 participant.

71. Pre-conference consultation survey, 1 participant.

72. Pre-conference consultation survey, 1 participant.

73. Consultation interviews.

74. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 25/03/20.

Anti-Trans Backlash

CSOs continually raised *'the current wave of transphobia'* internationally as a key barrier to delivering against the ERC's objectives.⁷⁵ During the 2019-2022 chair, many well-funded organisations with public influence and/or political power have either refrained from supporting trans rights, or come out as 'anti-gender' or 'gender critical'.⁷⁶ Similarly, according to the CSO Core Group, barriers have been erected to hinder charities who support transgender individuals, including the denial of funding renewal,⁷⁷ and intentional strategic activity including litigation and personal attacks against trans-inclusive LGBTI+ advocacy, to which ERC is avowedly committed.⁷⁸

This backlash sits behind some of the challenges encountered during Argentina and the UK's chair of the ERC. Prominently, domestic policy developments, especially those relating to trans rights, were cited in various documents as having undermined confidence in the ERC's leadership.^{79/80} The lack of support for the ERC statement relating to intersex issues, as well as the conflation of the 2022 ERC convening with the UK Government's global *Safe to Be Me* conference, were also cited.

4.2 Thematic Groups

Interviewees frequently reflected on challenges with the ERC's Thematic Groups, with some expressing that progress against the Strategic Plan 2021-2026 has been impeded by Groups' lack of activity. The following challenges have been identified as cutting across multiple Groups:

- **Clearly communicating purpose.** A lack of clarity over what some of the Thematic Groups aim to do (and actually do) was expressed across various evaluation participants: *'...it is unclear sometimes what the group does besides sharing knowledge and information. This seems to be the case for the other [thematic] groups as well.'*⁸¹ Often, participants articulated this to be the result of unstructured or infrequent communications and in turn sometimes noted that a failure to communicate specific value added by the ERC space has likely driven down Member State participation.
- **Filling some leadership roles.** The **National Laws and Policies Thematic Group** has been without a CSO Co-chair since January 2022, with the role increasingly difficult to fill as the end of the term drew closer. The Group's existence has been ensured by the active engagement of the State Co-chair. The **SDGs and Agenda 2030 Thematic Group** was without a State Co-chair for some time and, while Mexico stepped into this role, this coincided with the CSO Co-chair stepping back, leaving the Group without joint leadership between June 2019 and December 2020.⁸²

75. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 16/07/20.

76. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 25/03/21.

77. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 27/05/20.

78. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 25/03/21.

79. Minutes, National Laws & Policies, 14/05/2020.

80. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 05/04/22.

81. Pre-conference consultation survey; consultation interviews.

82. Consultation interviews.

- **Leadership transition.** The current absence of transition resources, including information on expectations for incoming Co-chairs, and the consequent difficulties for these Co-chairs were cited across Groups.⁸³
- **Engagement from all the right stakeholders.** In the case of the **National Laws and Policies Thematic Group**, several stakeholders commented on the ongoing need for input from state representatives in order to achieve goals: *'The challenge is that national laws and policies related to SOGIESC are driven by Ministries of Equality, or Justice, or Women, or Education or Health, etc., etc., and not the Foreign Affairs Ministry.'*⁸⁴ Similarly, in the case of **SDGs and Agenda 2030 Thematic Group**, the challenge has emanated from the network of individuals that the Group must engage (officials working on sustainable development) being different from the networks drawn on in other Groups (those generally working under human rights briefs), according to both interview and survey participants.⁸⁵ *'Again, [it's] hard to really understand how this can be effective without the right people from member state governments around the table who are working on the SDG Agenda.'*⁸⁶
- **State input into work plans.** The **Donor Coordination Thematic Group** was not able to develop a work plan due to a lack of input and information from States. With the exception of the State Co-chair, there was also a *'total'* lack of State input into the **SDGs and Agenda 2030 Thematic Group's** work plan, though one was developed.⁸⁷
- **Scheduling.** The **International Diplomacy Thematic Group's** standing meeting is scheduled for 4.00pm CET to accommodate participation from the Americas. However, this makes it virtually impossible for colleagues from East Asia to join. Participation from this region was felt to be likely if the meeting was more accessibly scheduled, though shifting the schedule would create similar challenges for members in Latin America. Similarly, survey participants noted that major ERC events scheduling did not account for those engaged in UN-level work as part of the ERC calendar.
- **Domestic political challenges and leadership.** A lack of leadership and direction was reported by four surveyed members of the **National Laws and Policies Thematic Group**, including a feeling that there is a lack of support on national laws from the ERC for its own member countries: *'The ERC has not been able to communicate and offer leadership to their own member countries that are regressing or not fulfilling ERC vision for LGBTI rights. Specifically trans and intersex.'* Furthermore, the **Donor Coordination Thematic Group**, Co-chaired by the USA, faced acute challenges prior to the change in the USA administration and government priorities in January 2021. Meetings, and consequently action planning, in this Group were sporadic prior to this.⁸⁸

83. Consultation interviews.

84. Pre-conference consultation survey, 3 participants.

85. Consultation interviews; Pre-conference consultation survey, 3 participants.

86. Pre-conference consultation survey.

87. Consultation interviews.

88. Consultation interviews.

International Diplomacy

In some cases the process for agreeing statement language was felt to be challenging ('labo[u]r-intensive'),⁸⁹ while others regretted the complication posed by some Member States' broader foreign policy of refraining from naming individual countries.⁹⁰ Furthermore, it was reflected that requests by some states for a 'first look' at Statement drafts was counterproductive to balancing the influence of States within the Coalition.⁹¹

Some questions were raised around the feasibility of the Group's implementation plan, which was intentionally ambitious. One suggestion raised was that the implementation plan should be made less process-oriented, thus inhibiting Member States reporting progress without evidence. Substantive outputs and outcomes from international diplomacy were felt to be key to demonstrating the added value of the ERC mechanism as a whole and of this Working Group in particular.⁹²

Donor Coordination

Participants in the interviews and the survey both expressed hesitation as to the Group's core goal: *'The goals don't seem well-aligned to what the group is able to actually do, which is to elevate learning from civil society, build knowledge, exchange best practices. Focus has been on pledging/making funding commitments, which is out of scope for what ERC seems able to do, and how funding processes actually work.'*⁹³ The Group was unable to take meaningful action without the participation of donors ('we can just talk') and the absence of participation from any States in Latin America was also particularly noted. Interview participants reflected that States may be put off by an expectation that they will be put on the spot in the Group as to what resources they can provide.⁹⁴

SDGs and Agenda 2030

Survey participants noted this Group had met infrequently over the last year and that in general there was some lack of clarity and understanding in relation to the Group's objectives, work and structure.⁹⁵ While CSOs have been in attendance at Group meetings, attracting any State attendance has been challenging. There was no State input into the Group's work plan, nor into its contribution to the upcoming convening in Buenos Aires, for example.⁹⁶ Other challenges included outdated contact details⁹⁷ and a strategic gap: an interview participant felt that for the SDG Thematic Group, the ERC's strategy and implementation plan focus heavily on States' responsibilities in progressing SOGIESC development, but with little focus on CSOs' roles.⁹⁸

89. Pre-conference consultation survey, 5 participants.

90. Consultation interviews.

91. Consultation interviews.

92. Minutes, CSO Core Group, 27/08/20.

93. Pre-conference consultation survey, 1 participant.

94. Consultation interviews.

95. '[Hay] poca comprensión del objetivo del grupo temático en general'; Pre-conference consultation survey, 3 participants.

96. Consultation interviews.

97. Consultation interviews.

98. Consultation interviews.

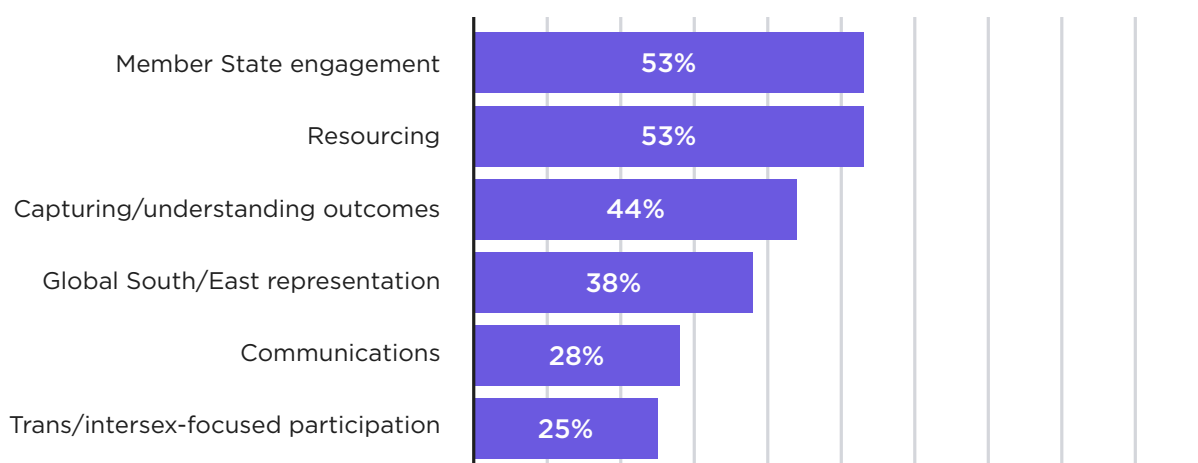
5. LEARNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Priorities

i. ERC Member Priorities

Member State engagement (53%) and resourcing (53%) were the highest organisational priorities for ERC stakeholders responding to the survey, followed by capturing and understanding the outcomes of ERC activities (44%) and representation of the Global South and East (38%).⁹⁹

ERC Member Priorities, Pre-conference Survey



99. Pre-conference consultation survey, [N=154 selections]. Nb. Fixed answer options were provided on the survey, including 'Trans/intersex-focused participation', though these identities are distinct.

ii. Priorities for ERC Co-chairs

- **Implementation Plan.** Incoming Co-chairs, according to interview participants, should first and foremost encourage and facilitate Member States to action the implementation plan.¹⁰⁰
- **Monitoring and evaluation.** Based on the above, Co-chairs should begin to systematically collect monitoring data and to facilitate outcomes capture among the Thematic Groups and Executive Committee. Specific proposals in this regard are included below.¹⁰¹
- **Focus on engagement strategies.** ERC Co-chairs are encouraged to use diverse, tailored strategies to encourage Member State engagement, including one-to-one engagement where necessary to investigate the reasons for a State's lower engagement.¹⁰²
- **Facilitate and enable Member meetings.** Several interviewees noted a priority for incoming Co-chairs should be to ensure more opportunities for the ERC membership to meet at large. The meeting of the Coordinating Committee, for example, is mandated by the ERC's foundational documents but does not currently meet regularly.¹⁰³ However, the posited structure of this specific committee (the Executive Committee members plus all Member States), does not address concerns raised by several interviewees regarding the already minimal CSO role in the decision-making.¹⁰⁴

5.2 Thematic Recommendations

i. Administration

Capacity: a Secretariat or Administrative Unit

Most participants in the interview consultations felt strongly that the ERC should establish an administrative unit or Secretariat to support some of the core functions noted to be undelivered above, or with functions that currently divert Co-chair resources away from the Strategic Plan. Recommendations for this structure were also offered by survey participants.¹⁰⁵ Functions that interviewees felt should or could sit within a new administrative unit included: communications (internal and external), progress monitoring, translation services, archiving, website maintenance, and oversight of a formalised Co-chair transition processes.¹⁰⁶ The need for the ERC to systematically update contact lists was stressed by both interview and survey participants.¹⁰⁷

100. Consultation interviews.

101. Consultation interviews.

102. Consultation interviews.

103. Meetings with all Member States were occasionally held – for example a recent update meeting focused on the development 2022 Convening – though these were not convened explicitly as meetings of the Coordinating Committee.

104. Consultation interviews.

105. Pre-conference consultation survey, 6 participants.

106. Consultation interviews.

107. Consultation interviews; pre-conference consultation survey, 2 participants.

Interview participants were nearly unanimous in their view of the necessity of an enhanced administrative function within the ERC. Where participants did demur, it was felt a clear Terms of Reference was required for discussion with the wider membership and that these Terms should focus on how the envisioned unit would enhance the capabilities of Thematic Groups and their Co-chairs.¹⁰⁸

Process Formalisation

Interviewees noted that within the context of the ERC's generally consensus-based model and fairly complex structure, processes could be formalised and clarified. It is recommended that the ERC continue to pursue the formalisation of its processes:

- **Consolidating implementation of the ERC's official languages.** Building on the resources made available for interpretation and translation during the current Co-chairs' tenure, it is strongly recommended incoming Co-chairs aim to ensure total consistency of English and Spanish accessibility in meetings, such that all participants can assume this facility will be available without needing to request or confirm it, and that where possible investment in staffing resources is continued to speed up document translation.¹⁰⁹ It is important that this be regarded as the minimum standard required of the ERC as a multilateral space, and that English-only spaces and resources are understood as discrete, removable barriers to participation for some Global South members. More widely, there have also been requests made for interpretation at meetings for speakers of other languages, including French and Portuguese.¹¹⁰
- **Clear processes around statement language approvals.** Revisiting the process of agreeing statement language could also be beneficial. Participants recommended the process be closer to the Council of the EU's silence procedure, at least in the case of non-sensitive statements. Such a process should include a short response time requirement for non-sensitive statements. A Member State survey participant explained this would reduce the workload on all sides and quicken the process.
- **Inclusive approaches to direction-setting.** In another example, a Member State participant recommended that new, democratised processes, transparently facilitating members at all levels to recommend agenda items, panel topics and so forth, would be consistent with an overall direction-setting role of ERC's governing bodies.¹¹¹

108. Consultation interviews.

109. Pre-conference consultation survey, 2 participants.

110. Isolated references in the pre-conference consultation survey.

111. Consultation interviews.

ii. Strategy

Growth

- **Prioritising engagement over quantity of members.** Interviewees were commonly of the view that growing ERC's membership had been elevated too high within its strategic commitments. Several noted the challenges posed to the organisation of inactive or lower resource members, as well as a suspicion that ERC membership was more a matter of optics for some States. As such there is a risk of the ERC's credibility being undermined if continued growth in membership is not preceded by improvement in Member State engagement and confidence in existing members' commitment to concrete actions: *'we may as well be at the UN if [States] aren't like-minded.'*¹¹²
- **Focused engagement of CSOs.** In the case of CSOs, however, survey participants noted the need to continue growing this membership through proactive outreach, particularly where CSOs from existing Member States are not represented in the ERC.¹¹³ Where the ERC has previously attempted to engage CSOs from these states, they have occasionally declined to participate on the basis that they do not work internationally.¹¹⁴ Consolidating the ERC activities under the National Laws and Policies Thematic Group, and clearly distilling and communicating the Group's offer to these CSOs, may therefore be the strongest long-term strategy to engage these organisations.

Resourcing

- **Focus on funding streams.** To ensure financial sustainability beyond the two year Co-chair cycle, Member States, particularly those with more resources, should consider providing seed funding for the ERC.¹¹⁵ Occasionally participants also reflected that a Secretariat or administrative unit would help to attract and manage funding.¹¹⁶
- **Addressing resourcing challenges for Global South CSOs.** Relatedly, funding and resourcing should at all times be considered in light of resource imbalances and participation challenges: *'the NGOs of the Global South do not have the same amount of resources as the Global North and therefore it will be different until there are governments or donors who are interested in giving us funds directly.'*^{117/118} Enhanced efforts could be made to understand and support the needs of those who have other commitments outside of activism: *'It's important to understand that in the [Latin American and Caribbean region], not all activists work as activists. The vast majority of us have other jobs.'*^{119/120} However, ultimately, the resource imbalance barrier encountered by civil society in the Global South is unlikely to be overcome without dedicated budget lines or earmarks in funding arrangements going forward.
- **Maintaining funding for translation services.** See above.

112. Consultation interviews.

113. Pre-conference consultation survey, 3 participants of which 1 noted the gap of CSOs from current Member States.

114. Consultation interviews.

115. Pre-conference consultation survey, 1 participant.

116. Consultation interviews.

117. Pre-conference consultation survey, 1 participant.

118. *'Entender que las ONGs del Sur Global no contamos con la misma cantidad de recursos que el Norte Global y por ende va a ser diferente hasta que haya gobiernos o donantes que tengan el interés de darnos fondos de manera directa...'*

119. *'Es importante que se comprenda que en LAC no todos los activistas trabajamos como activistas. La gran mayoría tenemos otros empleos.'*

120. Pre-conference consultation survey, 1 participant.

Communications

- **Enhanced, systematic communications processes.** An enhanced communications strategy is recommended. Most importantly, internal updates and communications should be systematised and shared with the wider membership on a regular basis. This is likely to encourage engagement generally, as well as interconnection between the Thematic Groups.¹²¹ Multiple participants in the interviews and survey felt external communications and publicity campaigns, building on ERC Statements, were also a possibility to enhance the ERC's profile, though in some cases this was felt to depend on the increased capacity provided by an administrative unit. It is noted that the ERC does not maintain its own Twitter account, which would be a reasonably low-resource investment for centralised external communications.

iii. Engagement and Expectation Setting

- **Member State commitments.** The ERC is likely to benefit from Member States working to formally agree their core commitments to the Coalition, according to interview participants representing both State and CSO parties. While the details of these commitments are to be established by States themselves, interviewees were clear that attending Thematic Group meetings and regularly signing ERC Statements ought to be a minimum requirement and did not, for example, extend to commitments to then deliver on agreed priorities through programmes of work.¹²² There is also a need for more clearly articulated commitments to be accompanied by some measure of accountability, enforceable by both ERC and Thematic Group Co-chairs, i.e. bilateral follow-up with under-engaging States.¹²³
- **Collaboration from CSOs.** Participants in the interviews, representing both Member States and civil society, were broadly clear that there is a need to guide some CSO members away from approaching the ERC as a space primarily in which to advocate and instead stress the approach ought to be first and foremost one of collaborative expertise and best practice development in response to Member States' SOGIESC priorities. While no interviewees reported advocacy to be out of place in the ERC, it was nevertheless generally felt that cultivating a culture of collaboration to deliver on shared strategic priorities was the best approach to pursue.¹²⁴
- **Establishing a common event calendar.** Survey participants noted several opportunities to enhance engagement by adjusting the ERC's event scheduling. Providing a shared calendar of events over fixed periods would present clear opportunities for engagement and allow States to ensure availability. Scheduling ERC Convenings to coincide with other key international fora would provide opportunities to increase the publicity and influence of the Coalition. However, such an approach should be strictly confined to events organised at the international level ('like the UNGA, the G20') to avoid the blurring of the ERC's activity with Member States' national agendas.¹²⁵

121. Consultation interviews; pre-conference consultation survey, 4 participants.

122. Consultation interviews.

123. Consultation interviews.

124. Consultation interviews.

125. Pre-conference consultation survey, 1 participant each.

iv. Global South/Global North Balance

- **Increasing representation of the Global South.** A recurrent theme has been the urgent need for increased representation and inclusion of the Global South within the ERC and in the ERC's leadership. Notably, frustration was expressed that other, larger and more complex multilateral mechanisms are able to ensure higher levels of Global South participation than the comparatively simple ERC mechanism. Implementing structures that are conducive to inclusive representation and access amongst CSO communities is vital: *'Evening the playing field to ensure participation across CSO communities and geographies is key for the ERC's future as in order for it to be effective it has to have systems and structures that heighten participation.'*¹²⁶
- **Addressing resourcing challenges for Global South CSOs.** See above.

v. Thematic Groups

Overall

- **Tighter focus for Thematic Groups.** Several interviewees recommended Thematic Groups that are more tightly focused, providing clear opportunities to collaborate on well-defined areas of interest. Particularly, issues that cut across Member States should be prioritised: there is reportedly support among Member States for a crisis response Thematic Group, for example, as well as persistent interest in both trans and intersex issues ('let's get on with it!'). Other examples included refugee protection and national laws and policies with a regional focus.¹²⁷
- **Natural expansion of working groups.** However, since interviewees also expressed consistent reservations in terms of splitting Member States time too thinly between many groups and meetings, and since some current Thematic Groups face low levels of engagement, establishing more Groups is not recommended. The best model may be demonstrated by the International Diplomacy Thematic Group's successful launching of two active sub-groups, based on demand from those already engaged in the Group. An interviewee reported, for example, that the National Laws and Policies Thematic Group is well positioned to lead on building capacity and sharing information in thematic areas in particular: intersex issues and the anti-gender movement.¹²⁸

126. Pre-conference consultation survey, 2 participants.

127. Consultation interviews. In one opposing instance, in relation to the SDGs and Agenda 2030 Thematic Group, a survey participant recommended a wider scope.

128. Consultation interviews.

- **Adjusting the Co-chair tenures.** The present Co-chair system for the Thematic Groups was also noted to have challenging structural elements, including the requirement to have the CSO Co-chair rotate in alignment with the State chair, which unnecessarily disrupts continuity, according some interviewees, especially in the context of engagement challenges.¹²⁹ Decoupling the Co-chairs' terms may encourage uptake by lessening the burden on resources and avoiding the challenge noted elsewhere in recruiting Co-chairs for expiring terms.
- **Developing transition resources.** The need for a transfer pack was made clear by participants from almost all Thematic Groups, with some noting that such a resource was the minimum required and that, ideally, coaching successor Co-chairs would be incorporated into the responsibilities associated with the position. Several Group Co-chairs are currently considering coaching arrangements for their successors at present, based on their own experience of taking up the role.¹³⁰

Group-specific

- **International Diplomacy: statement agreement.** A renewed effort to agree, formalise and enforce procedural rules could be beneficial in removing bottlenecks from the process of agreeing statement language and ensure resources can be dedicated to securing as many signatures as possible.¹³¹ The Group is currently using draft procedural rules developed under the previous Co-chairs and as noted above a silence procedure is recommended. A wider discussion within the ERC, exploring in more detail what kinds of issues are the most appropriate for it to focus its Statements on, may also be beneficial by clarifying expectations. An interview participant additionally recommended that the most efficient system for managing statement development ERC-wide may be for all statements to be brought within the competence of the International Diplomacy Thematic Group.¹³²
- **Donor Coordination: establishing a baseline for sector funding.** A key priority for the Donor Coordination Thematic Group is to work with States to determine what, if anything, can be established as to the current funding streams and earmarks for SOGIESC issues. Several participants noted concern for the purpose and future of the group if no baseline on funding could be established and insufficient information was made available to inform the Group's work plan. A frank discussion with Member States is required to ascertain what contributions States can make to the Group's work and how the Group is best to respond if it is not in fact possible for it to access needed data on funding priorities. An interviewee recommended a closer relationship between the Thematic Group and the Global Philanthropy Project (GPP), which the ERC has encouraged Member States to participate in with limited success.¹³³

129. Consultation interviews.

130. Consultation interviews.

131. Consultation interviews.

132. Consultation interviews.

133. Consultation interviews.

- **National Laws and Policies: involvement of stakeholders with national portfolios.**

A key priority for this Group is to work to ensure greater participation of stakeholders with national policy portfolios since participation in the Group at present is disproportionately from international organisations. An interview participant cited Canada's use of domestic representation within the Group, and using the same representative at the World Bank, as helpful and innovative, for example.¹³⁴

- **SDGs and Agenda 2030: build and clarify the offer to States around Voluntary National Review (VNRs).** The current chair's tenure demonstrates that Group sessions themed on SOGIESC inclusion within Voluntary National Reviews are viable and could be successfully continued. Work delivered with Report Out, a consulting agency working States on their VNRs, was also successful and recommended to be continued and extended if possible.¹³⁵ To secure Member State engagement, the Group may wish to consider giving more structure to the process by which it engages with matters arising organically from meeting discussion – specifically, activities relating to individual States' VNRs or their engagement with the High-level Political Forum. No processes currently exist for managing these matters and a record of this work could inform a clarification of the Thematic Group's offer to Member States.¹³⁶

5.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

This section presents The Research Base's recommendations for future monitoring, evaluation and learning practice in the ERC, drawing on and supplementing contributions from participants in the consultation. After introducing the proposed framework and mechanism for accountability practice, specific monitoring indicators and a review exercise tool are given.

Operations: Monitoring the ERC's Development

The first priority for the ERC in terms of monitoring, evaluation and learning should be to begin developing and implementing limited formal processes. Since the ERC has newly adopted its first Strategic Plan and currently lacks systematic monitoring, and in light of the resource limitations noted above, it is not recommended for the ERC to attempt to build an intricate data infrastructure all at once. Rather, the ERC could ensure future evaluation reporting can supplement evidence drawn from stakeholder perceptions with a just small amount of simple quantitative data relating to Member State engagement, Thematic Groups' core functions and the flow of information.

134. Consultation interviews.

135. Consultation interviews.

136. Consultation interviews.

Beneficial Outcomes: Monitoring Strategic Progress

The ERC's Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and associated Five-Year Implementation Plan are suitable for the development of a Theory of Change, to articulate the proposed link between the Coalition's intended actions and objectives. Furthermore, when all ERC Thematic Groups are actively pursuing plans of strategy-aligned work, and with appropriate resourcing, it will in the future be possible to develop indicators for each action specified in the Implementation Plan. Monitoring these indicators would allow the ERC to test the theory behind the actions it takes within its unique sphere of influence, and to use the results to inform future strategy.

However, action-specific indicators are considered unlikely to yield consistent data at present, and the volume of indicators likely entailed by the Implementation Plan is not suited to current capacity. Instead, it is recommended that the ERC prioritise habituating evaluative practice by beginning to capture outcomes at a higher level. The objective should be to accumulate a year on year record of actions, changes and possible relationships between these, both for analysis of ERC strategic progress but also to inform the development of a fuller subsequent MEL framework.

i. Summary Framework

The table below summarises the proposed MEL framework for the ERC to use in monitoring progress and capturing outcomes. While it does not map directly onto the ERC's current Strategic Plan, for the reasons given above, it collects high priority areas for accountability (either directly in the framework or in the indicators given below) that will provide meaningful data of immediate interest.

Summary Framework

Dimension	Monitoring and Evaluation Question
Effectiveness	<p>1a. Engagement: To what extent are Member States engaging with the ERC, in line with their commitments to do so?</p> <p>1b. Thematic Groups: To what extent are ERC Thematic Groups' core functions being performed effectively?</p> <p>1c. Communication: To what extent is information able to flow easily and widely throughout the membership?</p>
Outcomes	<p>2a. What outcomes can reasonably be attributed to ERC activities?</p> <p>2b. On what basis are those outcomes attributed to the ERC?</p>

ii. Reporting and Accountability

The most natural period around which the ERC could develop its MEL structure is the two-year ERC Co-chair term, capped by the biannual ERC Convening. The pre-conference report is an existing tool that could be readily developed into the core mechanism of accountability of the ERC Co-chairs, Thematic Group Co-chairs and Executive Committee to the wider ERC membership. The ERC Convening is also a natural milestone around which targets can be developed.

However, this longer biannual process is insufficient for monitoring alone. A midpoint review is therefore also recommended, such that the ERC should alternate annually between a midpoint report and a fuller evaluation report. While core monitoring data related to effective processes should be continually collected by a central unit or responsible person, outcomes data collection can be more limited. Six monthly review sessions are recommended to a total of four per Group/Committee per Co-chair tenure is recommended. The most straightforward way to do this is likely to be to incorporate review sessions as a standing (but infrequent) agenda item for existing meetings. On the basis of a September-September tenure for ERC Co-chairs, these exercises should be run no later than January and July each year to allow for yearly analysis, or at least bi-yearly analysis ahead of Co-chair transition.

iii. Proposed Monitoring Indicators and Outcomes Capture Tool

See the Annex to this report.





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