

## Working Group on defining an elections mechanism for the SEEDIG executive committee

### Final report

#### A. About the working group

Since the creation of SEEDIG, in 2015, the [executive committee](#) has been the body entrusted with the coordination of SEEDIG activities. During SEEDIG's three years of existence, the composition of the executive committee was established on the basis of public calls for volunteers and public endorsements, within the SEEDIG community. As SEEDIG has grown, it was determined that a proper elections mechanism for the executive committee needs to be put in place, to bring more clarity, predictability, and transparency. Hence, a working group was created with the purpose of defining an election mechanism for the executive committee (WG Elections).

WG Elections was constituted in August 2017, following a [call for volunteers](#) within the SEEDIG community. The working group includes the following individuals: Andrea Beccalli (observer), Marija Blagojevic, Dušan Caf, Sasho Dimitrijoski, Sabajete Elezaj, Lianna Galstyan, Anja Gengo, Zdravko Jukić, Arvin Kamberi, Narine Khachatryan, Fotjon Kosta, Loreta Kroj, Uada Mema, Liljana Pecova, Domen Savič, Sorina Teleanu.

The WG has worked through online means (e-mail, online meetings, and Google docs) during the months of August and September 2017.

#### B. Open consultation

WG Elections produced a **draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for the SEEDIG executive committee**, and a [public consultation on this draft](#) was launched on 1 September 2017. The draft was distributed via the SEEDIG mailing list, published on the SEEDIG website, and shared with SEEDIG supporting organisations.

The public comment period lasted between 1 and 15 September 2017. On 20 September, an online public meeting was held, with the aim to discuss the draft ToR and the comments submitted during the open consultation. Some of the submitted comments lead to amendments to the draft ToR; these include, for example:

- Replacing the term 'gender diversity' with 'gender balance' with regard to the composition of the executive committee (art.3.2, art.6.31).
- Clarifying that the chair of the executive committee is elected through vote (art.3.4).
- Clarifying the role of the executive committee chair in the case of decision-making processes, with regard to declaring consensus or calling for vote (art.3.5).
- Introducing a responsibility for executive committee members to attend the annual SEEDIG meetings (art.4.1).
- Eliminating superfluous provisions in art.4.1 concerning SEEDIG supporting organisations.
- Introducing more clear and consistent wording concerning the start of the election cycle and the publication of information concerning the election process (art.6).
- Introducing additional clarifications concerning the process for voting over a petition to remove individual members of the executive committee or recall the entire committee (art.7.5).

Some comments were considered by the WG to be of a long-term nature, and it is recommended that they are considered for the future (more details under Recommendations below).

### C. Explanatory notes and recommendations

Together with the final ToR, the WG would also like to bring to the community's attention the following explanatory notes and recommendations:

#### 1. Composition of the executive committee (art. 3)

In its [note to the community submitted in July 2017](#), the executive committee suggested that consideration is given to expanding the executive committee from five (5) to seven (7) members. A comment in this regard was also made during the open consultation period. During its deliberations, the WG has considered this option and concluded that the executive committee should be limited to five (5) members, for the following reasons: a smaller committee is more stable and efficient in terms of internal communication, organisation, and decision making; two additional members would also involve additional costs, for example when it comes to participation in the SEEDIG annual; if SEEDIG continues its [Internship Programme](#), this would contribute to easing the workload of committee members.

**The WG recommends that, while the executive committee is limited to five (5) members, SEEDIG continues its Internship Programme, with a view to have two interns at any given point to assist with SEEDIG-related activities.**

## 2. Term of office

The ToR provides that members of the executive committee shall be elected for a two-year term. Considering comments submitted during the open consultation, a clause was introduced in the final

ToR providing for a staggered renewal of the executive committee. Hence, in order to ensure certain continuity within the executive committee, partial elections, for roughly one half of the membership, are to be held every year. This would avoid cases in which a completely new executive committee takes office.

**To allow for this staggered renewal, and by way of exception from the two-year term rule, members of the executive committee elected in 2017 will have the following term:** three years, for the three members that receive most votes during the election process; two years for the remaining two members.

Building on another comment, the **WG recommends that, for the future, consideration is given to linking the elections with the annual SEEDIG meeting, so that some of the voting could happen at the meeting, thus increasing the likelihood of participation.**

## 3. Operating rules for the executive committee (art.5)

The draft ToR outlines a series of minimum overarching principles and rules under which the executive committee should operate. During the open consultation, comments were made concerning specific tasks within the executive committee. The WG was of the view that the ToR should not go into detail on issues relating to the internal functioning of the executive committee, but that such issues should be detailed in subsequent rules of operation.

**The WG recommends that the executive committee, once installed, adopts a more comprehensive and detailed set of rules of operation.** These rules should be in line with the ToR, and provide more details on aspects such as roles and responsibilities of the executive committee, procedures for calling and conducting meetings, meeting minutes, etc.

## 4. Election cycle and timeline (art. 6 section A)

In July 2017, the executive committee proposed a timeline that would have seen a new executive committee in place by end September. However, during its deliberations, the WG has determined that complying with this timeline is impossible, as more time is needed for an election process to be conducted in an open, inclusive, and transparent manner.

The WG is, nevertheless, aware of the challenges of SEEDIG not having a full executive committee in place at the moment, and, as such, of the need for a new executive committee to be installed as soon as possible.

Given the above, the WG has strived to come up with a reasonable minimum timeline for the overall election process. The ToR describes an election process that is to last a minimum of seven weeks.

**The WG notes that, for the future, the election process can be extended in duration, to cater for any needs that the community may identify by then.**

In line with the above, **the WG also recommends that the current executive committee continues to fulfill its duties until such time when the election cycle is concluded and a new executive committee takes office.**

## **5. Election committee (art. 6 section B)**

The draft ToR describes the functions of an election committee responsible for administering the election process. For practical reasons, this committee should be limited to three (3) members from within the SEEDIG community.

The election committee is to be created following a call for volunteers, and seats allocated on a first come first served basis. While this model might not be ideal, the WG was of the view that diversity criteria are not of outmost importance in the composition of the election committee, as its functions are limited and strictly defined in the ToR. Moreover, the committee is to act following a set of clear and detailed principles established in the ToR (art.6).

The draft ToR envisioned an **observer seat on the election committee for SEEDIG supporting organisations** (art. 6.8.). Taking into account comments submitted during the public consultation, the clause has been amended to state that all supporting organisations will be invited to assume individual observer seats (as opposed to having one observer seat for all organisations). The observers would act as neutral third parties whose main role would be to help ensure that SEEDIG principles are complied with throughout the activity of the election committee.

Additionally, and taking into account a comment made during the open consultation, **the WG recommends that, once the executive committee proceeds with early partial elections, consideration is given to having the functions of the election committee performed by those members of the executive committee whose mandate does not expire during that particular year when the elections are held.**

## 6. Voting members

Intensive discussions were held with regard to the list of voting members of the SEEDIG community. On the one hand, it was said that, for transparency reasons, the list of voting members should be public.

Moreover, SEEDIG is an open initiative, and it could be expected that members of the community would not have strong reasons not to disclose their membership. On the other hand, concerns were expressed with regard to privacy and data protection. In an attempt to reconcile the two views, the agreed mechanism was to have a list published, but only including those who do not object to their names being included. A note can be added in the public list clarifying that the number of voting members is larger, but some members did not want their names to be published. A complete list with all voting members will stay in the possession of the election committee.

## 7. Additional recommendations

During its deliberations, the WG has discussed several aspects that are not necessarily related to an election mechanism for the executive committee. Based on these discussions, the WG makes the following recommendations for the SEEDIG community to consider during its work on defining a comprehensive set of operating principles for SEEDIG (as envisioned by the executive committee in its July 2017 note to the community).

### 7.1. Youth involvement

Given the encouraging experience with the [SEEDIG Youth School](#), the WG recommends that SEEDIG continues its efforts to integrate youth into its process. With this aim, **consideration should be given to setting up a youth working group** (following a public call for volunteers), with a mandate to assist the executive committee on issues related to youth outreach and involvement of youth in SEEDIG activities. The group would include members from various countries within the region, and would be renewed on a yearly basis.

### 7.2. SEEDIG ambassadors

**The WG recommends that the SEEDIG community considers introducing the concept of SEEDIG ambassadors:** The executive committee, in consultation with the SEEDIG community (and, possibly, following a call for volunteers and/or building on the experience of the [SEEDIG Fellowship Programme](#)) would appoint one SEEDIG ambassador in each country in the region. The ambassadors, appointed for a one year term, would mainly be responsible for outreach activities at a national level, with a view to promote SEEDIG and bring more stakeholders into its processes. The ambassadors would also contribute to other SEEDIG activities, such as the monthly summary of Internet governance developments (by submitting updates from their countries).

### 7.3. SEEDIG honorary chair

**The WG recommends that consideration is given, even at a later stage, to the idea of having an 'honorary chair' (title can be revised) for the SEEDIG process.** The position would be filled by a high-profile individual from the region, and from any of the stakeholder groups recognised by SEEDIG. The chair's role would be to promote SEEDIG and contribute to the initiative's outreach and communications efforts, especially within high-level circles.

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