THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH GROUP ON WOOD PROTECTION

IRG/WP 23-60532

XX December 2023

Guidelines for Organizing an IRG Annual Meeting

1. Introduction

The basic objective of the IRG Annual Meeting is to provide an opportunity for IRG members, including those with limited financial resources, to meet and exchange ideas. Thus, costly banquets, receptions and excursions are not necessary and should be avoided unless they are totally funded by independent sponsorship. Every effort should be made by Local Organizing Committees to ensure that the full conference package is the most socially and economically attractive way of attending a meeting. Arrangements that make it financially preferable for delegates to opt out of the package deal in favour of *ad hoc* arrangements for food and accommodation should be avoided.

2. Application procedure

2.1   Potential hosts are advised to consult the IRG Secretariat informally before proceeding with a formal application.

2.2   An application to organize an IRG Annual Meeting would normally be expected to be made by a hosting committee consisting of representatives from research institutes, universities, industrial organizations, or government departments. The prospective host organizing committee will be asked to confirm to the IRG that necessary financial and other support is available and sufficient to meet the requirements given in this Guidance Document.

2.3   Applications to organize an IRG Annual Meeting are required to be made on an application form provided by the IRG Secretariat (see Appendix 1).

2.4   The application form should be sent to the IRG Secretariat by 1 May at least four years before the intended conference, accompanied by a formal letter of invitation.

3. Decision

3.1   Applications to organize an IRG Annual Meeting are first considered by the Executive Council and satisfactory proposals are then submitted to the IRG Plenary Meeting for final decision.

3.2   The decision is reported formally to the applicant by the IRG Secretariat as soon as the minutes of the Plenary Meeting are ratified. All decisions are final.

3.3   Once a Local Organizing Committee has been constituted, a formal, signed Letter of Agreement (see Appendix 2) to organize the Annual Meeting is required in accordance with the provisions of this Guidance Document.

4. General organization

4.1   The host country is expected to establish a Local Organizing Committee as soon as possible after the IRG Secretariat has formally confirmed the Plenary decision to accept the invitation. It is then the duty of the Local Organizing Committee to co-operate closely with the IRG Secretariat to ensure a Meeting that fulfills the expectations and best interests of IRG members and other conference attendees.

4.2   The Local Organizing Committee is responsible for complying with national laws and Global Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) to protect the personal information of attendees

4.3   The Local Organizing Committee is encouraged to select the most sustainable options for hosting the meeting (see Appendix 3 for suggestions)

4.4   The responsibilities for the conference arrangements are shared between the Local Organizing Committee and the IRG Secretariat, in principle in accordance with the table below.

Be aware that the list shown in the table the below is not comprehensive, but rather provides a list of the key areas that need to be addressed by the Local Organizing Committee and the IRG Secretariat.

Local Organizing Committee*	IRG Secretariat
Select the venue (in agreement with the IRG Executive Council)	Preparation of the conference programme
Select appropriate accommodation	Collection, preparation and distribution of conference documentation
Financing of the conference, including soliciting sponsorship if necessary	Collection of conference registration fees
Preparation of the invitation and registration package and website (in collaboration with the IRG Secretariat and the CC chair)	Invitations to the President's reception
Distribution of conference invitation	
Provide accommodation booking information for attendees. Direct booking with the hotel is preferred where available	
Prepare the conference information files (in collaboration with the IRG Secretariat)	
Design the Conference logo	
Prepare name badges	
Functions during the meeting: -welcoming reception -President's reception (in collaboration with the IRG Secretariat) -Wednesday excursion -lunches and coffee breaks -conference dinner -Companions programme -all signage at the conference centre	
Supply staff for registration desk, AV support, various attendee services	

*The Local Organizing Committee may hire a conference manager to assist with the arrangements.

4.5   The Local Organizing Committee is required to consult regularly with the IRG Secretariat, in order to meet the timelines laid out in the table below, particularly during the final 3-4 months before the Conference.

4.6   The Local Organizing Committee is required to have at least one key member attend the two meetings prior their meeting and to submit the required reports to the Executive Council detailing their progress as shown in the following timetable.

4.7   If a force majeure event requires cancellation, postponement, or significant changes to an IRG meeting, the Secretariat will work in good faith with the LOC to find a mutually satisfactory arrangement. IRG will not accept financial liability for costs incurred by the LOC in the event of a cancellation. It is recommended that the LOC obtain insurance to mitigate this risk.

Task	Time to meeting (in months)					
	48	36	24	12	9	6
Submit application	X					
Tentative acceptance by Plenary		X				
Organizing Committee established		X				
Venue selected		X				
Logistical plan for venue		X				
Presentation to EC – 1st			X			
Preliminary budget to EC			X			
Evidence of financial support			X			
Hotel selected – contract signed			X			
Presentation to Plenary – 1st			X			
Presentation to EC – 2nd				X		
Confirm hotel accommodation rates				X		
AV plan				X		
Preliminary website developed				X		
Companions programme planned				X		
Conference fees confirmed				X		
Final budget to EC				X		
Presentation to Plenary – 2nd				X		
Final website completed					X	
Pre-meeting update to EC						X

5. Financing and Fees

5.1   Conference registration fees are decided by the IRG Executive Council one year in advance of the Conference. They are collected by the IRG Secretariat and a portion, which is also decided by the Executive Council, is remitted to the Local Organizing Committee. Thus, the conference fee consists of two parts accordingly:

Conference fee (as presented in invitation) = Portion to IRG Secretariat + Portion to the Local Organizing Committee

5.2   The conference registration fees (i.e. the portion earmarked for the Local Organizing Committee) and other fees (companions programme, meal plans) that are collected by the IRG Secretariat will be transferred to the Local Organizing Committee in batches, as agreed between the Local Organizing Committee and IRG Secretariat, before and after the conference.

5.3   Hosts and Local Organizing Committees should accept that the income from attendees' Conference Registration fees levied by IRG will normally only cover a proportion of the total costs of running the Annual Meeting. A large part of the costs must therefore be raised by the Local Organizing Committee through Sponsorship from supporting organisations.

5.4   The Local Organizing Committee is required to prepare and submit a budget for the conference to the IRG Executive Council in accordance with the timelines above.
The budget should be presented in US Dollars or Euro and budget estimated for 200 and 300 attendees, respectively, or any other numbers agreed with the IRG Secretariat. The IRG Secretariat will provide template for calculating budgets.

5.5   Persons from Local Organizing Committee sponsors (i.e. official IRG Annual Meeting sponsors listed on the Conference local website by the Local Organizing Committee) may participate under the same conditions as regular IRG sponsors (see current list of fees).

5.6   Under extra ordinary circumstances, special registration fees can apply for delegates

from the host country. Such fees have to be agreed with the IRG Executive Council and IRG Secretariat before the invitation package is issued.

5.7   Fees may be waived for up to eight (8) conference attendees from the host country, appointed by the Local Organizing Committee, as well as "officials" invited for any special function at the Annual Meeting and staff involved directly in the organisation of the meeting. The IRG Secretariat must be notified in advance about these persons.

6.   Venue

6.1   The Local Organizing Committee is responsible for selecting the venue in agreement with the IRG Executive Council.

6.2   The venue should be a single hotel/conference centre that can provide conference facilities as well as accommodation for all delegates. The conference venue itself can be separate from the accommodation provided transportation/access between them is regular, rapid and economical.

7.   Minimum technical requirements

7.1   Normally an IRG Annual Meeting will be attended by 175-300 delegates and a conference hall of sufficient size to accommodate all potential attendees must at least be available for the opening session, and preferably throughout the meeting. In addition, at least one medium size room (70-100 people) and one or two smaller rooms (up to 50-60 people) must be provided. The final need for meeting rooms should be agreed with the IRG Secretariat.

7.2   A Committee room suitable for 18-20 persons must be provided for 2-3 days immediately prior to the start of the Meeting (exact timing to be agreed with the IRG Secretariat).

7.3   A clearly identifiable "congregating area" where attendees may meet for informal discussions. Ideally, coffee/tea/water should be served in this area and be available at appropriate times throughout the Meeting.

7.4   Poster display: A suitable space must be provided for presenting posters, preferably near the main conference room.

7.5   A room for practicing presentations is required. It should be equipped with at least one computer.

7.6   Equipment: computer projection equipment, a screen of sufficient size to be read from anywhere in the room, microphones and amplifying equipment and other usual conference equipment are essential; video facilities are not normally required. Participants must have easy access to microphones for discussion and questions. If individual cordless microphones are employed, there must be a minimum of 4 available in the large conference room (minimum of 2 in the break-out rooms) at all times to allow questions from the audience.

7.7   The Annual Meeting is intended to be an in-person event. Equipment for video recording, broadcasting, or to enable remote participation is not normally required.

7.8   Simultaneous translation may be arranged as an optional service for local attendees, but this must be entirely at the expense of the Local Organizing Committee.

8.   Invitation and registration documents

8.1   It is the Local Organizing Committee's responsibility to prepare and issue a comprehensive Conference website including the registration forms, the details of which must be agreed in advance with the IRG Secretariat before release through the IRG website.

8.2   Communication regarding the website shall be agreed with the IRG Secretariat. This may be by the Local Organizing Committee using e-mail addresses provided by the IRG Secretariat. Regular and frequent e-mail communication with members and sponsors is essential to generate interest in the meeting to ensure maximum attendance.

8.3   The conference website, including registration forms, should be available for dispatch by 15 November of the year prior to the conference. The deadline for return of registration forms and payment is normally 4-5 weeks before the Meeting to allow time for preparation and circulation of documents before the meeting.

8.4   Conference registration and attendance forms shall be returnable by web submittal to the IRG Secretariat.

9.   Accommodation Registration

9.1   The Local Organizing Committee is responsible for reserving a sufficient block of hotel rooms and providing information needed for participants to reserve their rooms. Direct booking with the hotel is preferred. If this is not available, the Local Organizing Committee must collect the information necessary to secure the bookings. Information on the venue and guidance on transport to reach the venue must be provided as part of the registration process through the conference website.

9.2   **The IRG Secretariat is not liable for hotel costs.** The Local Organizing Committee is strongly advised to enter into clearly agreed arrangements with the conference hotel regarding costs and specifications for rooms, meal plans, equipment facilities and staffing, as well as mutual responsibilities for attendees' accommodation bookings. Local Organizing Committees are advised to consider taking out liability insurance to cover possible cancellation charges or other unanticipated expenses.

9.3   It is recommended that a complete, single-option accommodation package be provided for attendees to include meals, rooms, conference rooms and meeting facilities (if necessary). A choice of low-budget alternatives for students should also be provided.

9.4   Local Organizing Committees are advised to give consideration to needs for late registration accommodation and to be careful about penalty charges if such "reserve rooms" are not used. It must be stated in the registration form that attendees are personally responsible for their hotel charges. Neither IRG nor the IRG Secretariat will accept any financial responsibility for hotel reservations, cancellations, non-attendance or non-payment of bills

9.5   Local Organizing Committee should be aware that attendees may choose alternative accommodations. Be aware that such bookings may negatively impact any financial commitments based on a committed room block for the Meeting.

10.   Conference Programme

10.1   It is the responsibility of the IRG Secretariat and not the Local Organizing Committee to prepare and distribute the conference programme. The requirements for rooms for parallel sessions and the timing of breaks shall be communicated to the Local Organizing Committee one month before the meeting. Minor changes to the programme are likely up to the start of the meeting.

10.2 The Local Organizing Committee is responsible for Organizing and funding all social activities in connection with the Meeting. These are normally expected to include a welcome reception, a conference dinner and an afternoon excursion (maximum one half day): Extra fees may be charged for attendance at these functions, but it is recommended that the costs be included in the registration fees and sponsorship contributions. A programme for accompanying persons is usually organized by the Local Organizing Committee and extra charges can be levied to cover the costs for these programmes. Local Organizing Committees should remember that the purpose of the half day excursion is to promote social exchange between attendees and should attempt to identify a single site for the excursion.

11. Conference papers and documentation

11.1 The IRG Secretariat (not the Local Organizing Committee) is responsible for collecting and distributing all technical papers before and after the Meeting.

11.2 The IRG Secretariat will prepare a preliminary list of attendees based on registration records and any information from the Local Organizing Committee for issue at the Meeting in accordance with GDPR.

11.3 The IRG Secretariat is responsible, in consultation with the Local Organizing Committee, for Organizing and announcing details of the locations and time schedules for paper presentations.

12. Attendee services

12.1 Clear and explicit information on the mechanisms and costs for getting to the hotel(s) and conference venue from airports, railway stations and by road should be provided to all attendees as part of the conference website.

12.2 The Local Organizing Committee is responsible for preparing name badges for the registrants. It is essential that the delegates names are in large enough print (see Appendix 4) to be easily read from a distance of one (1) meter.

12.3 The Local Organizing Committee should arrange for a staffed registration desk to be available during the Meeting so that attendees can confirm their attendance and receive any last minute conference information.

12.4 A large message board should be provided near the registration desk; small programme boards should be posted outside the large conference room and each of the smaller break-out rooms.

12.5 Organizers are advised to appoint an Audio-Visual chairperson to assist speakers in the use of the audiovisual equipment throughout the Meeting. At least three computer projection systems should be available for Power point presentations and staff should be available to deal with any technical problems during the sessions.

13. Pre- and Post- Conference Tours

13.1 There is no formal requirement or expectation that conference organizers will arrange Pre- or Post- Conference Tours. Such arrangements are at the discretion of the Local Organizing Committees. The popularity of such tours has proved highly dependent on price and programme. Such tours must be self-funded by those participating and are not considered to be part of the IRG Annual Meeting itself.

Appendix 1

APPLICATION FORM

Application to organize an IRG Annual Meeting

Applicant (Organization etc)	
Address	
Tel	
E-mail	
Intended conference year	
Preliminary venue	
Other bodies supporting/ sponsoring the application (state name, address, tel, e-mail and name of contact person)	

We undertake to ensure that no delegates are prevented on grounds of nationality from entering the country to attend the Meeting.

Signature of representative _____ Date_____

Appendix 2

(to be written on official letterhead)

dated xx day of (month) 20xx

IRG Secretariat
SE-100 44 Stockholm
Sweden

Letter of agreement to organize an IRG Annual Meeting

We, the undersigned, being the members of the IRG-xx Organizing Committee constituted to organize the IRG Annual Meeting in (country) in 20xx, on behalf of (host organization) hereby confirm that we have read and accepted the Guidelines for organizing an IRG Annual Meeting as set out in IRG/WP 23-60532.

We agree to organize the IRG-xx Meeting on xx (dates) in accordance with the above mentioned guidelines and in so doing to absolve the International Research Group on Wood Protection, its Officers and Secretariat of any financial or other liability arising out of the organization and taking place of this Meeting.

Chairman   (name in full)

Secretary   (name in full)

Finance Officer   (name in full)

Member   (name in full)

Member   (name in full)

Member   (name in full)

Member   (name in full)

Appendix 3

Sustainability awareness guidelines

These awareness guidelines are meant as a supportive document for the local organizing committee to help raise awareness of how to make the IRG conference more sustainable. The suggestions are voluntary, and all efforts are highly appreciated.

The 3 principles of sustainability are environmental sustainability, social sustainability, and economic sustainability. These principles can guide us in creating a balanced and sustainable future for our planet and its inhabitants.

The local organization committee (LOC) should consider appointing one person to be in charge of sustainability. This person will advocate the implementation of sustainable choices that are feasible within the context of the location of the conference and the customs within the country. Below are a set of focus areas and examples that can give inspiration when organizing an IRG-WP conference. The examples will be sustainable and doable in some countries, but not in others.

LOCATION
The location is the first important step towards a sustainable event.

🌿	Choose a location that is easily accessible internationally. Preferably it is accessible by public transport from neighboring countries and from an international airport.
🌿	Choose a venue with an appropriate size for your event. A venue that is too large often requires more energy for lighting and heating.
🌿	The LOC should select hotels that are committed to sustainability and may demonstrate this by offering a sustainability certification.
🌿	Inform about appropriate clothing according to weather/season and the need for heating/cooling indoors. Reducing/increasing the temperature with for example 1-2°C when it is cold/warm, will save energy. An extra jumper or lighter clothing will make the participant feel comfortable.

MOBILITY
Transportation is often responsible for a large part of the environmental impact of an event. Try to limit the need for participants to fly when alternate transportation is available.

🌿	If the location can be reached by train or bus or car-pool, encourage IRG-WP members to go for this option.
🌿	Inform IRG members on how to reach the location. Suggest the most sustainable options. Include a map with the nearest train stations, bus stops, bicycle parking, etc. If you expect that a large proportion of the participants will come by car, encourage the formation for carpooling groups.
🌿	Choose local vendors and caterers who do not have to travel far for their services and who offer their services using a sustainable transportation method.

FOOD AND DRINK
Check out your caterer's products as well. Plant-based dishes and meat substitutes can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Take the opportunity to give people a taste of a tasty and sustainable alternative.

🌿	It is highly recommended to follow the policy on sustainable catering with at least 50% varied veggie offerings. Note: When fish is included, preferably ask for fish with a label and with a plant-based diet.
🌿	Or going a step further and opt for 100% vegetarian or even 100% vegan catering, - if this is considered as a sustainable choice given the location/country/custom.
🌿	When you ask for the dietary preferences of the guests in advance, you may use vegetarian or vegan as the default choice. Explain why you are doing this. That way you may get the majority of people, who don't mind eating vegetarian but "don't want to be difficult," to go along.
🌿	If the water quality allows it - offer tap water instead of bottled water.
🌿	Choose fair trade coffee and tea. Purchase this or ask your caterer if they can provide it. Ask for a bottle of milk and a pot of sugar instead of small milks and sugars etc. to avoid waste.
🌿	Think in advance about what will happen to any food leftovers. Does your caterer have a system for this? Arrangements can be made for leftover pick-up or deliveries.

WASTE

A thoughtful waste plan will ensure less plastic in the oceans, less fossil fuels, less material in the incinerator, and less litter in our environment. By also thinking consciously about the materials that are used and their possible reuse, you, as the organizer of a low-waste event, also contribute to the transition to a disposable-free society.

When food and drinks are served, this is often accompanied by a lot of waste. Make arrangements with the caterers to avoid excess waste. The following choices can reduce the amount of waste:

- ➢ Use water carafes instead of bottled water (if possible due to water quality). Bottled water is also often more expensive than tap water.
- ➢ Encourage the participant to bring their own water bottle, coffee mug, etc.
- ➢ Choose reusable mugs, cups, cutlery, plates, etc. Only provide straws for drinks when explicitly requested.
- ➢ When snacks are provided, choose snacks without packaging such as fresh fruit, cookies from a box, etc.
- ➢ Choose linen, sustainably sourced fibre and/or recycled napkins.
- ➢ Reduce the amount of plastic wrap and replace it with reusable trays, baskets, jars or boxes.

Avoid the use of excess paper at your event by carefully and consciously handling post-its, bundles, advertising flyers, note blocks etc.

When using banners, other decorations, clothing, etc., - consider not to include dates or other specific information, so that the materials can be used for later occations.

Choose badge holders and lanyard that can be reused after the event, and set up a system for collecting them at the end of the event..

Consider reusable cups, crockery, boxes etc on the Wednesday excursion

Consider the type of promotional items that are handed out at the event – including the bags. Think about sustainable alternatives (reusable water bottle, coffee cup, local product, etc) and let participants choose them themselves.

PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

An event involves a great deal of communication, and here too, smart planning and creative thinking can have a great impact on the environment. Apart from the promotion and information about the conference itself, it is also important to communicate about the sustainability aspect. This ensures that the participants know in what way they can actively contribute, but also that after the event itself they are able to integrate sustainability into their own events or daily lives.

Include IRG-WP's sustainability efforts in the promotion of your IRG event right away.

Give information about certain 'sustainable choices' during the event. This ensures more understanding for certain measures. It also gives insight into the impact of certain decisions, such as when you provide information about which caterer was chosen and why, etc.

Where possible, measure and evaluate the impact of certain measures (for example: number of disposable cups saved, flights avoided, etc) and communicate this to the participants after the event.

When communicating about the conference, consider this:
- Try to minimize the number of posters, flyers, etc. and consider electronic alternatives.
- Provide digital alternatives to information brochures and documentation folders.
- If you do print, consider sustainably sourced fibre paper and print recto verso with environmentally friendly printing ink, in an appropriate format.

Appendix 4

Example of design of badge