

# **Constitution of the Steering Committee of the European Conference on Argumentation Series**

## **1. Name and purpose**

- A. This constitution regulates the activities of the Steering Committee of the European Conference on Argumentation series, and of all its organs and officers.
- B. The sole purpose of this Steering Committee is to promote and assist in organizing a periodical large-scale European Conference on Argumentation (henceforth, the ECA conference), possibly together with other, smaller satellite events, e.g. workshops, symposia, etc.
- C. The Steering Committee is committed to ensure that all editions of the ECA conference fulfill the rationale and format described in section 3 of this document.

## **2. Organs and officers**

### *A. Steering Committee*

#### A.I. Composition

- A.I.a. The Steering Committee is composed by no less than 6 and no more than 15 members.
- A.I.b. At any time, the Steering Committee preferably does not include more than 3 members working in the same country.
- A.I.c. Within the limitations set by this document, new members of the Steering Committee are recruited by invitation only: any current member of the Steering Committee can propose a new candidate, who is allowed to join only if at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the current panel agree to it. A decision on a new candidate must be reached within 2 weeks from the date when it is proposed, and the proposer is responsible for motivating the candidature to the rest of the panel.
- A.I.d. Membership to the Steering Committee entails the explicit commitment to abide by the rules set in this document. An updated version of the document will be stored online and accessible to all members of the Steering Committee.
- A.I.e. Any member can resign from the Steering Committee at any time, but s/he has to give at least 3 months of advanced notice. Any member can also be expelled from the Steering Committee, if his/her conduct is deemed incompatible with the aims and rationale of the panel: the expulsion procedure can only be initiated by at least  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the current members of the Steering Committee and has to be ratified by at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  of members to become effective, after the member being considered for expulsion has been given the chance of defending his/her case. The whole procedure cannot take longer than 4 weeks after the initial motion: if the motion is ratified, the expulsion is immediately effective, and the expelled person can no longer be proposed for membership.
- A.I.f. The initial members of the Steering Committee are the following (in alphabetical order by surname): Lilian Bermejo Luque, Katarzyna Budzynska, Marcin Koszowy, Marcin Lewinski, Dima Mohammed, Steve Oswald, Fabio Paglieri, Jan Albert van

Laar, Chris Reed, Juho Ritola, Sara Rubinelli, Frank Zenker.

A.II. Duties

A.II.a. Directly promote and supervise the organization of all editions of the ECA conference, in close collaboration with the Conference Organizers (see section 3).

A.II.b. Elect among its ranks the Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Steering Committee.

A.II.c. Elect, for each edition of the conference, at least 1 person among its ranks to join the Conference Organizers of the next edition of the ECA conference. No member of the Steering Committee can act as Conference Organizer more than twice, and not consecutively.

A.II.d. Select, invite and coordinate, for each edition of the ECA conference, the Scientific Panel responsible for the scientific quality of the event.

A.II.e. Solicit and collect from Conference Organizers the proposals for the various editions of the ECA conference, making sure they comply with the guidelines described in section 3 of this document and submitting them in due time (i.e., at least 1.5 years before the actual conference) to the Steering Committee for consideration and approval.

A.II.f. Make sure that Conference Organizers of ECA conferences adhere to the guidelines described in section 3 of this document, both in their original proposal and its concrete implementation, at all stages.

A.II.g. Ensure the proper level and quality of publicity to its initiatives, e.g. via its website.

A.II.h. Act on all the matters explicitly assigned to it by this document.

A.III. Rotation procedure: An 8 years rotation system is implemented to ensure renewal of the Steering Committee: every 8 years, at least 4 members are expected to step down and resign; if there are less than 4 volunteers for resignation, the most senior members are required to resign in place of the missing volunteers. The remaining members of the Steering Committee are then free to invite new members to join them, following the procedure detailed in section 2.A.I.

B. *Chair of the Steering Committee*

B.I. Duties

B.I.a. Serve as the official representative of the Steering Committee, in all the appropriate places and occasions.

B.I.b. Convene the Steering Committee and preside its meetings, in person or online, or appoint a substitute among the other members of the Steering Committee, whenever unable to attend.

B.I.c. Supervise and actively promote all activities of the Steering Committee.

B.I.d. Decide on all matters where no clear majority emerges within the Steering Committee, after at least two voting sessions.

B.I.e. Adjudicate any voting controversy, unless s/he is directly involved in it (see section 4).

B.I.f. Redact and publicize in due time any amendment approved by the Steering

Committee to this constitution (see section 5).

B.I.g. Act on all the matters explicitly assigned to him/her by this document.

B.II. Selection of the Chair: The Chair shall be selected by majority vote of the Steering Committee every 4 years. Active and passive right to vote is limited to all and only current members of the Steering Committee. If there is a tie between two or more candidates as Chair, the most senior member of the Steering Committee other than the candidates is required to break the tie.

B.III. Term of office: The Chair shall serve for 4 years. Resignation and expulsion are regulated as per any other member of the Steering Committee (see 2.A.I.e): if the Chair resigns or is expelled, the Deputy Chair becomes the new Chair and then only complete the current term, even if this implies serving as Chair for less than 4 years. Nobody is allowed to serve more than 2 terms as Chair (for a total of 8 years), either consequently or not.

### C. *Deputy Chair of the Steering Committee*

#### C.I. Duties

C.I.a. Take on temporarily all duties of the Chair of the Steering Committee, as specified in section 2.B.I, whenever the Chair is indisposed or absent.

C.I.b. Take on permanently, until the end of the current term of office, all duties of the Chair of the Steering Committee, as specified in section 2.B.I, whenever the Chair resigns or is expelled.

C.II. Selection of the Deputy Chair: The Deputy Chair shall be selected by majority vote of the Steering Committee every 4 years, in conjunction with the election of the Chair. Active and passive right to vote is limited to all and only current members of the Steering Committee. If there is a tie between two or more candidates as potential Deputy Chair, the most senior member of the Steering Committee other than the candidates is required to break the tie.

C.III. Term of office: The Deputy Chair shall serve for 4 years. Resignation and expulsion are regulated as per any other member of the Steering Committee (see 2.A.I.e): if the Deputy Chair resigns, is expelled or becomes Chair (due to resignation or expulsion of the previous Chair, see 2.B.III), a new Deputy Chair is elected by the Steering Committee and then only complete the current term, even if this implies serving for less than 4 years as Deputy Chair. Nobody is allowed to serve more than 2 terms as Deputy Chair (for a total of 8 years), either consequently or not.

### 3. **Rationale and format of the European Conference on Argumentation**

A. *Periodicity*. The ECA conference is to be held at least every 4 years, and possibly more often, making sure to avoid as much as possible any overlapping with kindred events, such as the conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation (ISSA), the conference of the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation (OSSA), and similar others.

B. *Venue*. The ECA conference is conceived as an itinerant event, to bring the benefits of such a large-scale event to any academic community willing and able to host it. Albeit originally conceived as an EU-based event, nothing prevents from organizing it elsewhere in the world, as long as the guidelines set forth in this document are respected.

- C. *Conference organizers.* Whoever is interested in organizing an edition of the ECA conference is welcome to submit a proposal to the Steering Committee; moreover, the Steering Committee will actively solicit proposals from potential Conference Organizers. By submitting a proposal, Conference Organizers accept to abide by the rules of this constitution.
- D. *Proposal format and timing.* A proposal to organize an edition of the ECA conference must comply with the following guidelines, to be eligible for consideration:
- D.I. It must be submitted within the deadline set by the Steering Committee.
  - D.II. It must include a suitable theme for the conference, its tentative date, a list of potential keynote speakers relevant for that topic, a rationale for choosing such a theme, an outline of the organizational layout for the event (availability of suitable venues and student volunteers, support from local institutions, sources of funding other than conference fees, etc.), plans for publication of the conference proceedings, and a list of proposed Conference Organizers (no less than 3 and no more than 5, with one of them clearly indicated as the main responsible for the event, e.g. general chair or conference director). The more detailed the proposal, the more likely it is that the Steering Committee will be able to assess in a timely and fair manner.
  - D.III. It must include at least one member of the current Steering Committee among the Local Organizers.
- E. *Conference format.* The rationale of the ECA conference is to provide a relaxed yet serious forum for in-depth discussion among scholars interested in argumentation theory, conceived in the most broad and comprehensive terms. Ideally, each edition should provide the optimal environment for the argumentation community to meet, discuss, and enlarge its scope. In order to realize these aims, the following guidelines must be met by all editions of the conference:
- E.I. Initial submission of contributions requires only an abstract, instead of a full paper, to facilitate participation of as large a community as possible.
  - E.II. The deadline for the initial abstract submission must be set at least 8 months before the date of the conference.
  - E.III. The Steering Committee, in collaboration with Conference Organizers, will be in charge of selecting the abstracts accepted for the conference; while the exact procedures might vary from one edition to another, the following principles will always be upheld:
    - E.III.a. The selection is based on anonymous peer-reviewing, possibly in interaction with other criteria (e.g., promoting early-stage researchers and scholars from countries where argumentation studies are still relatively underdeveloped).
    - E.III.b. Peer-reviewing is conducted by the Scientific Panel (possibly with the help of ad-hoc reviewers, if needed), and the members of the Scientific Panel are selected by the Steering Committee, in consultation with Conference Organizers.
    - E.III.c. Each abstract is assessed by no less than 3 independent referees, competent on its subject matter, and acceptance is based on their reports.
    - E.III.d. Submissions are welcome on any topic of potential relevance for argumentation theory, and not limited to the specific theme chosen for that particular edition. More generally, no special treatment is given to submissions based on topic: only scientific merits and relevance for argumentation theory in general constitute pertinent

selection criteria, in addition to those mentioned in 3.E.III.a.

E.III.e. Efforts are made to ensure that all members of the Scientific Panel take active part in the selection procedure, providing reports on multiple submissions and suggesting additional referees to be enlisted.

E.IV. Notification of acceptance / rejection must be sent to all authors at least 6 months before the conference. Authors of accepted contributions are asked to confirm their participation and provide a shorter abstract for the conference programme at least 5 months before the conference, and are required to provide the full paper at least 2 months before the conference, formatted according to the guidelines agreed upon by the Steering Committee and the Local Organizers.

E.V. Shorter abstracts of accepted submissions are used to find a commentator for each contribution, typically among authors of other accepted papers. The Steering Committee and the Conference Organizers are responsible for finding suitable matches and overseeing the whole process. Those who agree to comment on a paper will receive a copy of it from its authors at least 2 months before the conference, and will have to provide a written version of their commentary at least 2 weeks before the conference.

E.VI. The typical duration of the ECA conference is 3 days.

E.VII. All accepted contributions are allotted a 1 hour slot at the conference, typically structured as follows: 25-30 minutes for presentation, 10-12 minutes for the invited commentary, and the rest for discussion. Each session will be chaired by another scholar, who will have to ensure the respect of this schedule, as well as to bring the session to an end after 55 minutes, so that people can switch to other parallel sessions.

E.VIII. Parallel sessions are welcome, although an effort should be made to reduce their number as much as possible, and keynote addresses should be plenary, if possible. The Steering Committee and the Conference Organizers should organize the programme in ways that minimize the risks of “mass desertion” of any given session.

F. *Proceedings*. The Conference Organizers are in charge of editing the conference proceedings and/or finding those who will: their plans in this respect are subject to the approval of the Steering Committee. Even if specific forms of publication are arranged for a sub-set of contributions (e.g., a journal special issue with all the keynote addresses, plus some selected papers on the same topic), publication of all accepted papers and their commentaries must still be ensured, possibly in the form of online proceedings.

G. *Role and responsibilities of the Conference Organizers*. Conference Organizers propose the theme and the keynote speakers for the conference, subject to the approval of the Steering Committee; they are also in charge of all local arrangements, including financial matters, and are the sole recipients of any funding destined to finance the conference, including conference fees paid by participants. The amount of such fees is subject to the approval of the Steering Committee, and it should be broadly in line with fees charged by similar events (e.g., the ISSA and the OSSA conference), with substantial reductions for students. Conference Organizers are also in charge of ensuring proper publicity to the event and to the related CFP, as well as ensuring publication of the conference proceedings. They collaborate closely with the Steering Committee at all stages of the process, and the Conference Organizers are ultimately responsible for the satisfactory realization of the event. The member(s) of the Steering Committee elected to act as Conference Organizer(s) for that edition of the ECA conference must verify compliance with the rules set in this constitution,

and report timely to the Steering Committee on any infraction or problem.

H. *Role and responsibilities of the Steering Committee and Scientific Panel.* The Steering Committee collaborate closely with Conference Organizers and supervise the whole organization of the event: in particular, they decide what proposal to approve for the next edition of the conference, determine the composition of the Scientific Panel, and oversee preparation of the original proposal, redaction and distribution of the CFP, selection of submitted contributions, determination of commentators, and preparation of the conference programme. The Steering Committee is thus responsible for ensuring that organization of the ECA conference proceeds smoothly and according to schedule. The Scientific Panel, instead, participate actively in the selection of submitted contributions, and in general take responsibility for the scientific quality of the event. In case of prolonged and severe problems in their liaison with Conference Organizers (e.g., explicit breach of the guidelines described in this document), the Steering Committee has the power to initiate a procedure to retract support to Conference Organizers, thus forbidding them to present the event in question as a legitimate edition of the ECA conference. Such procedure must be initiated by at least  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the Steering Committee, and it is brought into effect only if at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the Steering Committee agree with it. In general, however, the Steering Committee is committed to establish a thoroughly amicable and highly productive relationship with the Conference Organizers.

#### 4. **Voting procedure**

A. Unless stated otherwise, all elections and voting procedures mentioned in this constitution can take place either in person or online, require a quorum (i.e., eligible voters that actually vote, in person or online) of at least half of the eligible voters to be valid, and the stated majority needed to reach a decision refers to the current total number of members of the relevant organ, and not to those that actually cast their vote: e.g., “ $\frac{2}{3}$  of the Steering Committee” means “ $\frac{2}{3}$  of the people currently forming the Steering Committee, regardless of whether they vote or not in this particular case”. In case of controversy on voting procedures and/or outcomes, any member of the Steering Committee can appeal to the current Chair of the Steering Committee, who will adjudicate the case, after having reviewed the evidence. If the controversy concerns directly the Chair (e.g., s/he is contesting a vote for his/her expulsion), the appeal is directed to the most senior member of the Steering Committee not directly involved in the controversy, who will then adjudicate the case, based on existing evidence.

#### 5. **Approval and amendment**

A. This constitution has been unanimously approved by the original Steering Committee (see 2.A.I.f) on 9 June 2015.

B. Amendments to this constitution shall be presented in writing at least 2 weeks prior to votes on approval. Proposal for amendment can only be presented by no less than 4 current members of the Steering Committee. Approval shall be by  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the Steering Committee: the current Chair of the Steering Committee will have the responsibility of enforcing any approved amendment immediately, modifying accordingly this constitution in writing within 2 weeks of approval, and distributing the revised version to all interested parties (i.e., current members of the Steering Committee and, for matters the conference format, Conference Organizers of future editions of the ECA conference).