



Message from the President

By Julia Forjanic Klapproth

Now that the dust has settled after the conference, I want to take a moment to clarify the new ideas for the Executive Committee (EC). I realized during the Annual General Meeting (AGM), and while talking to people afterwards, that not all these new ideas were sufficiently clear. So I would like to use this President’s message to explain how the new terms for Presidency and Vice Presidency, and how the proposed subcommittees of the EC, are meant to work.

In recent years, there were 2 key issues for the EC: how to find new people to fill the EC positions coming up for re-election every 2 years, and how to provide continuity when we did. Without new people coming on to the EC it will stagnate and ultimately cease to represent the opinions and needs of the membership. And with the system we had up to now, when we managed to convince (some might say, coerce) someone to join the EC, they had no experience of how the EC functions and, moreover, there was no form of knowledge transfer from the outgoing to the incoming officer.

So the question was, how can we encourage people to volunteer and how can we improve knowledge transfer and continuity within the EC? People were daunted by the fact that they would have no one to support them for whatever responsibilities they would be taking on. Understandably, most people are more than a little wary of committing themselves to a 2-year term of office without knowing

exactly what would be involved. But what we discovered is that people are more willing to join a subcommittee in which they have a less formal obligation but can still provide their opinions and insights, and learn something of the way EMWA works. Et voilà! The idea to establish subcommittees to assist the various EC officers was born.

While exploring the idea of subcommittees we realized that they would reduce the burden of the EC position by providing ideas, enthusiasm and support to the EC member. They would also give people a chance to get to know what it means to be an EC member and learn about the responsibilities associated with particular positions. This would help the people on these subcommittees make more informed decisions about joining the EC. It would also serve as a platform for knowledge transfer to potential candidates so that they can come up to speed with a particular position before getting started.

In a nutshell, subcommittees enable us to tap into a broader resource base and at the same time create a natural pool of candidates who can volunteer to join the EC. Which doesn’t mean that people who are not on a subcommittee are excluded from running for a position on the EC! Everyone is always welcome. The goal is simply to create a system to improve the odds of finding new candidates.

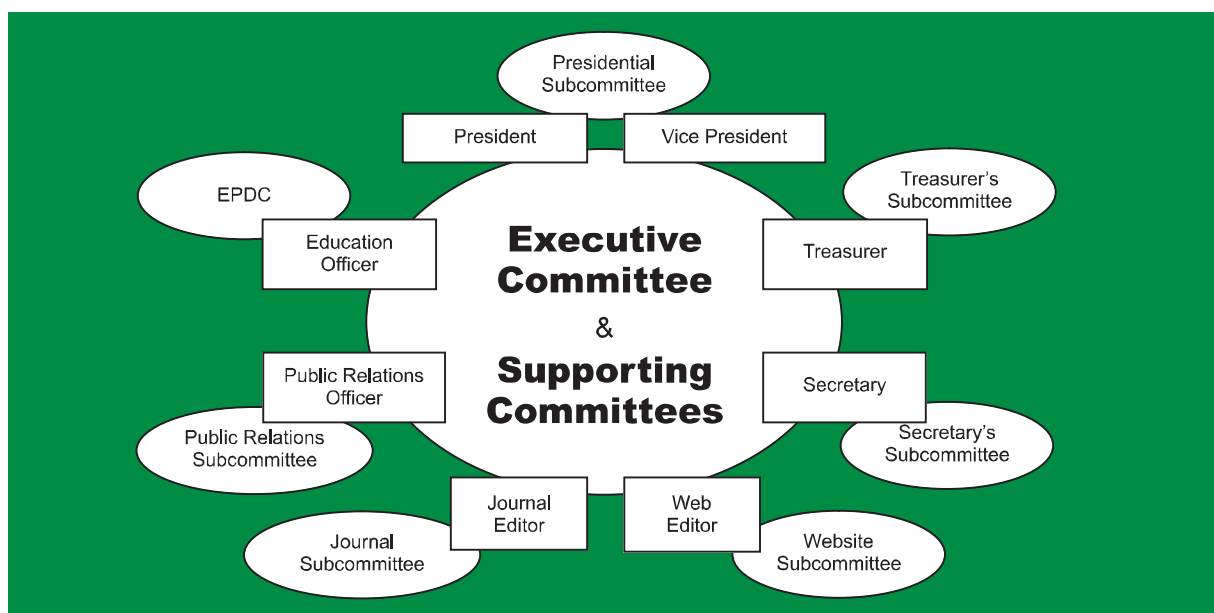


Figure 1. Organigram of the EMWA Executive Committee and Supporting Committees

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So, that is the theory. But what does this mean in the real world? To try and address this I am going to describe the overall structure of the EC and the associated subcommittees and I am going to answer some of the specific questions people asked about the details of these subcommittees.

Figure 1 is an organigram of the EC with the associated subcommittees. Each of the members of the EC has equal voting rights. All but 2 of the positions are elected, 2-year term positions; the Journal Editor and the Web Editor positions are assigned by decision of the EC and are for undefined lengths of time. The Vice President, once elected, automatically becomes President at the end of their term as Vice President, making the combined posts a 4-year term altogether.

The decision to increase the Vice Presidency and Presidency to 2-year terms each (from previous single-year terms) was also a move to improve continuity within the organisation. It is an idea that has been suggested by numerous members over the years and the EC felt the time had come to give it a try. Until now, the President and Vice President worked essentially independently of each other. The Vice President came in and had to hit the ground running to organise the following year's Spring Conference. Rarely did the Vice President receive any guidance from the President and frequently they just reinvented the wheel. By shifting full responsibility to the President for all conferences, the Vice President can learn the ropes while supporting the President. So again, the goal was to reduce the burden of the individual by sharing the work load between the 2 positions, and to allow for knowledge transfer from the President to the Vice President and thereby create a sustainable process that provides for continuity.

The Education Officer is elected to the EC and is simultaneously chairperson of the EMWA Professional Development Committee (EPDC). The Education Officer organizes the workshop programme at EMWA conferences and represents the EPDC on the EC. All EMWA education officers have previously served on the EPDC. The EPDC itself, specified in EMWA's policies and procedures, is currently composed of 7 EMWA members who were invited to join the committee for a 5-year term after an application and selection process. The EPDC develops and maintains the EMWA Professional Development Programme (EPDP), issues the Workshop Leaders Handbook, and mentors new workshop leaders. The much increased workload of the EPDC—the number of workshops at the spring and autumn conferences has more than doubled since the EPDP was first launched—means that subcommittees of the EPDC will also be established.

Each of the other EC members will lead their own subcommittee, which is developed on the initiative of the respective EC member. The subcommittee is formed by those members who approach the EC with a desire to help out and any other members actively solicited by the EC member. While these are to be seen as official committees of EMWA, they are not elected and are informal in structure and function. The main role for subcommittee members is

to provide ideas or support to the EC member heading the subcommittee. The specific activities of a given subcommittee will depend on the needs of the EC position it supports and the ideas of the members contributing. For example, our Public Relations Officer is putting together a subcommittee of representatives from as many countries as EMWA has members in order to have local insights and contacts when targeting a particular country.

There is no set limit to the size of these subcommittees, and they will vary depending on the way they interact with the EC member. It is not foreseen that any face-to-face meetings will be needed for these committees as all communication can be managed by email and telephone. There is also no time limit for participation on a subcommittee. Members can stay on as long as they like and leave whenever they like. Members can also be on more than 1 subcommittee if they are so inclined. A list of all the members currently on each of the subcommittees is given at <http://www.emwa.org/Officers.html>.

According to our the EMWA Policies and Procedures, any member who has attended at least 1 Annual Spring Conference in the last 3 years is eligible to run for the position of Treasurer, Public Relations Officer or Secretary. However, to be eligible for the position of Vice President, it is also necessary to have served on the EC or represented EMWA in an official capacity in the last 5 years. The purpose of these conditions is to ensure that someone who wishes to run the organisation has demonstrated a certain amount of continued interest in EMWA and has had a chance to learn about how EMWA runs from the inside. The problem arose in that, previously, the pool of people who fulfilled these criteria was slim, and often consisted of people happily serving other functions they did not wish to leave.

By implementing the idea of the subcommittees we are enabling more people to actively get involved in how EMWA runs. The Vice President can now be chosen from the EC, the EPDC and any of the subcommittees. Which does not imply that by joining a subcommittee, particularly the Presidential Subcommittee, a member is automatically expected to run for Vice President. What it does mean is that the EC has a chance to observe people from a larger pool who might be good candidates for the position of Vice President, which should help reduce the chance of electing someone who does not have the ideas, enthusiasm and commitment to do the job well.

I hope that this has answered most, if not all, of your questions about the rationale for these subcommittees and how they are meant to function. If you have other questions, or would like to join a subcommittee, please feel free to contact me or any other EC member. We would be happy to hear from you.

Julia Forjanic Klapproth

*Trilogy Writing & Consulting
Frankfurt am Main, Germany
Julia@trilogypublishing.com*