

## REPORT - ERIAFF Coordination Committee Meeting (hybrid mode)

April 15th 2026, 14:30 - 16:30pm

Basque Country's Delegation in Brussels - Rue des Deux Églises 27, 1000 Bruxelles, België

Participant: 23 (5 in person and 18 online)

### AGENDA

#### 1. **Welcome words:** Marta Marín - Delegate of the Basque Country.

Luis Elizondo took the floor on behalf of Marta Marín, Delegate of the Basque Country. He welcomed everyone and expressed his sincere gratitude to the network for their continued support and collaboration.

#### 2. **AC26 Programme and Registration:**

The Secretariat, Samuele Pii, gave the floor to Maaïke Buecher from the organising team to provide further details. She presented a map based on "agri-network", where umbrella and network websites are shown as a single main marker with a link to the underlying sub-map.

She also noted that the conference will be held in a hybrid format, allowing participants to join online.

Registration for the AC26 will be open until the end of this month, **so the last available day to register will be April 30th**. Additionally, she informed attendees that a matchmaking dinner will take place on Monday (May 11th) evening. All registered participants will receive an invitation and an email with the necessary details.

She emphasized the importance of receiving photos and biographies of the speakers from each region (**deadline April 24th**). This ensures that the programme information is accurate and can be published as soon as possible, giving participants a clear overview of the Conference topics.

The Secretariat also noted that the organising team has invited them to join forces in securing the participation of institutional representatives at regional, national, and European levels for both the opening and closing sessions.

They also highlighted the need to distribute participants evenly among the study visits, ensuring that each visit has a similar number of attendees. Prior to the conference, participants will receive an email confirming which study visit they have been assigned to.

The Secretariat also mentioned the press release related to the conference. Regions can adapt it and publish it, and representatives are asked to communicate, to both the Secretariat and the WG Communication, when they proceed with the publishing (see attachment).

#### 3. **AC28 Candidature:** presentation of the candidature from the Region of Turku.

Presentation of the Turku Region: the Secretariat gave the floor to the representative of Turku and Southwest Finland.

The Food & Fun Festival (30.09–03.10.2026) was presented in the context of ERIAFF AC28 in a presentation delivered by Jouni Kuru, who noted that, if Turku is selected as the host city, the festival could become a joint side event. Rikka Leskinen (Regional Council of Southwest Finland) then took the floor, providing a broader overview of the application and the region. Following this, Essi Virtanen (Turku-Southwest Finland European Office) presented to the CC the city of Turku, explaining why they support the application and why hosting an annual conference would be important for the city, also highlighting the 800th anniversary of Turku in 2029.

Minna Storm then took the floor to thank the team for the presentation. The proposal was well received by CC members, particularly the opportunity to include the Food & Fun Festival as a side event and the regional authorities.

The selection procedure is still ongoing, and discussion will take place in the following weeks and also in Amsterdam, when the CC members will also have the time to discuss it in person with the candidates. The Secretariat noted that, since both proposals are valid, the network will explore an arrangement that would allow both to be considered in the future.

**4. Survey (deadline April 25th):** ERIAFF Website Update & Communication.

Elisabetta Cecchi from the Communication Working Group reported that they have already received some responses. She explained the reasons behind sending it, outlining the needs and perspectives of members regarding both internal and external communication, as well as areas for improving the website. Please complete the [survey](#) before the deadline of April 25th.

**5. Working Groups:** updates and discussion.

The Secretariat gave the floor to the CC members to share any updates.

Concha Civantos (WG Missions) informed the group that the WG Mission has decided to revise its coordination structure, and she is now the sole coordinator. She will also be the one representing the group and speaking at AC26. She further announced an upcoming collaboration with the Forested Regions Working Group, which is set to begin tomorrow. In addition, she indicated that she will reach out to other coordinators to strengthen interaction and cooperation between her working group and the others.

Pau Brunet (WG bioeconomy and resilience) also mentioned that they have been in contact with the Secretariat to find some political representative

The Working Group Communication also shared an “I’ll be attending” graphic featuring the AC26 logo, allowing participants to post it on their social media to announce their attendance and help attract more people to the conference. This graphic will be shared with the organising team, who will then proceed with sharing it with the participants.

Francesca Ricardi (WG Agroecology) announced that [ECHO](#) is currently seeking new Ambassadors in Belgium and Luxembourg. The initiative aims to enhance soil awareness among citizens across Europe and to actively engage them in the collection and analysis of soil samples. It was further explained that ECHO Ambassadors are expected to act as local facilitators, supporting groups of citizen scientists and assisting in the distribution and use of the sampling kits. For more information and to apply, please visit [this link](#).

**6. Any other business (AOB).**

No items were raised under Any Other Business. Therefore the meeting proceeded to close.

**Wrap-up and Conclusion**

Participants were reminded to register for the 12th Annual Conference in Amsterdam. The Secretariat also emphasized the importance of active participation in AC26 as a key opportunity to relaunch the projects promoted by the network, while preparing to make the most of the upcoming 2028–2035 programming period. Some technical difficulties were encountered during the meeting, however, these are expected to be addressed and improved in the future. It was also noted that another CC meeting may be called at short notice prior to AC26, likely between the end of April and the first days of May.

At 16:30, having addressed all items on the agenda, the Secretariat closed the meeting.

(Report edited by Carlotta La Mastra)