



# **SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS**

**POLICY PAPER 2026**



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What are SIGs?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Founding of a SIG</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SIG criteria</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SIG positions</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SIG timelines</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>SIG support</b>	<b>13</b>

# Introduction

Dear SIG and JURE Coordinators,

By means of this SIG policy document, we would like to keep you up to date regarding the different aspects and processes related to the management of an EARLI Special Interest Group (SIG).

For further questions please contact [info@earli.org](mailto:info@earli.org).

Very best wishes,



Prof. Rui A. Alves  
EARLI President-Elect  
*Consolidation and Innovation*

# What are SIGs?

***"SIGs are the scientific backbone of EARLI."***

"EARLI aims to promote and support research initiatives between internationally active researchers, and between both established senior researchers and emerging juniors. One of the main goals of EARLI is to **encourage communication and fruitful exchange between researchers in the form of Special Interest Groups (SIGs).**"

An EARLI Special Interest Group is **formed in order to study one or more parts and/or aspects of the field of Learning and Instruction**, as well as to give substance to themes of research within the association. SIGs are the scientific backbone of EARLI, in which scientific quality is most clearly represented and in which scientific progress and innovation are most prominent.

Existing active SIGs which consistently show their scientific quality have the potential to bring forward EARLI as a vivid research society. EARLI has an attitude to support the maintenance and foundation of SIGs in their engagements with new and important aspects of research on learning and instruction.

EARLI currently supports **26 Special Interest Groups**, covering a wide range of topics in the field of learning and instruction. A full list of SIGs can be found on the EARLI website ([www.earli.org/SIG](http://www.earli.org/SIG)).

Should you feel a certain topic is not represented within the current offering, it is possible to found a new SIG.

Each SIG is governed by **two SIG coordinators** and **one JURE coordinator**, who are responsible for the organisation of SIG activities and the financial management of the SIG (see "SIG Positions"). Any deviation from the above requirements regarding the composition of a SIG coordination team requires approval from the EARLI Board of Directors.

# Founding of a SIG

"A new SIG can be installed by the EARLI Board of Directors, either on the Board's own initiative or on the initiative of at least fifty EARLI members."

To apply for the founding of a new SIG, please **send a proposal by email to the EARLI Office** ([info@earli.org](mailto:info@earli.org)), including the information listed on the next page.

The EARLI Office will present this proposal at the next meeting of the EARLI Board of Directors (BoD). These meetings are held twice a year, in March and October. The **BoD will evaluate the proposal**, after which the EARLI Office will inform the applicants of the outcome of this evaluation process.

Once a new SIG is founded, one of the two founding coordinators will serve for six years while the other will be replaced after four years. This arrangement creates a **leadership continuum** in which only one coordinator is being replaced every two years.

The two founding SIG coordinators may decide between themselves which one will serve a four-year term and which one will serve a six-year term.

Information that needs to be included in the proposal to found an EARLI Special Interest Group (SIG):

- A **mission statement** (max. 500 words) with a clear profile description of the new SIG, including the identity, aims and scope of the SIG.
- A short **curriculum vitae** of the two SIG coordinators who are willing to establish the SIG. These coordinators have to represent different countries and at least one of them must work in Europe. They must also have been an EARLI member for at least four years (these doesn't have to be four consecutive years).
- An overview of **SIG activities** to be organised in the future and an overview of **prior activities** in the theme of the proposed SIG to show its relevance to EARLI (e.g., E-CER, EFG, EARLI symposia, etc.).
- A description of **possible complementary connections** to existing SIGs and Emerging Field Groups (EFGs).
- A list of at least **50 EARLI members** who intend to join the SIG.

# SIG Criteria

"The criteria described below are required for EARLI SIGs to take into consideration when planning their activities. Each SIG will be asked to submit an **annual report** (EARLI Office will distribute a survey), in which they demonstrate which criteria they have been working on during the past year. The EARLI BoD will use these reports to evaluate each SIG. Should these criteria not be met sufficiently, the EARLI BoD will engage in a conversation with the respective SIG to discuss whether there is a need to re-orientate their activities or to evolve into a different type of research group."

## **1. ORGANISE:**

Each SIG is expected to undertake a minimum number of mandatory actions to ensure a healthy flow of activities for its membership:

- Host at least **one SIG activity** in the year in between EARLI conferences (e.g., SIG conference, webinar series, etc.). SIGs are encouraged to organise multiple activities to allow for a diverse offer of activities to its members.
- Maintain **regular and effective communication** with its membership (e.g., newsletters, etc.)
- Hold a **SIG Members' Meeting** during the biennial EARLI Conference, for which the agenda is communicated to all SIG members at least two weeks before the meeting.

- Ensure a stable membership of **at least 50 SIG members per year**.

## **2. CONTRIBUTE:**

Each SIG is also required to contribute to initiatives hosted by the Association, most notably to the biennial EARLI Conference:

- Propose **keynote speakers** for the biennial EARLI Conference. Each SIG will be contacted by the EARLI Office during the preparations of the conference.
- Encourage SIG members to sign-up as **reviewers** for the biennial EARLI Conference.
- Organise a **SIG Invited Symposium** at the biennial EARLI Conference. Each SIG will be contacted by the EARLI Office during the preparations of the conference.

## **3. INNOVATE:**

Most importantly, EARLI wishes to encourage SIGs to invest in innovation. Any of the following criteria can help SIGs to establish themselves as contributors to the innovative nature of the Association:

- SIGs are invited to experiment with **new approaches** to their activities, such as the use of new media or proposing new types of SIG activities.
- In order to support the contributions of their own membership, SIGs can award **“SIG Recognitions”**\* to reward outstanding contributions to the field of interest represented by the SIG.

- EARLI encourages SIGs to try to reach a **diverse group of members**, consisting of both senior and early career researchers, representing different nationalities.
- SIGs are encouraged to **initiate collaborations** between SIGs, other research groups or even partners external to EARLI.
- SIGs are asked to **contribute to the broader visibility of EARLI** as much as possible. EARLI provides a set of social media guidelines to help SIGs in using these channels to the fullest of their potential. Furthermore, the EARLI website offers SIG coordinators the opportunity to manage their own SIG webpage.

\* To avoid confusion with the EARLI Awards presented at the biennial EARLI Conferences, SIGs are requested to use the term “SIG Recognition” rather than “SIG Award”.

# SIG Positions

“Each SIG is governed by two SIG coordinators, assisted by a JURE coordinator. All EARLI members with a minimum of four years of membership, and established research experience documented by a record of publications in a field of relevance to one of the Special Interest Groups, are eligible to stand for election as SIG coordinator.”

## JURE Coordinator:

SIGs are required to appoint a JURE (Junior Researcher) assistant coordinator to help with the organisation of SIG activities:

- A JURE coordinator can be **appointed or replaced** only in **uneven calendar years** (years linked to a biennial EARLI Conference).
- The JURE coordinator should be a **JURE member** at the start of their term and should stay on for **a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years**.
- The JURE coordinator **assists the SIG coordinators** in their activities.
- SIG coordinators have to disseminate a **call for candidates** to the JURE members of their SIG, and should manage the procedure of selection and appointment.
- **Elections** need to be organised well ahead of the EARLI Conference. EARLI can provide the SIG coordinators with a voting system.

## SIG Coordinator:

A coordinator of a Special Interest Group has to uphold important responsibilities that include:

- Taking a **leadership** role to further develop the SIG.
- Serving as a **liaison** between the members of the SIG, the EARLI BoD, the EARLI Office and the rest of the EARLI community.

- Organising **SIG activities** (e.g., seminars, conferences, newsletters, etc.) consistent with the EARLI scientific mission and strategy.
- Monitoring the SIG's **financial situation** and the balances of its activities.
- Liaising with the EARLI Office to organise the **SIG/JURE coordinator elections** well ahead of the biennial EARLI Conference.
- Composing an **annual report** of the organised activities (the EARLI Office will send out a survey).
- Be available to act as a **reviewer** for the EARLI Outstanding Publication Award.
- **Stimulate activity** on the EARLI website (e.g., SIG's webpage and its discussion board, EARLI events calendar, etc.) and through social media.
- Attend the annual online **General Assembly** (GA) in June to approve the annual accounts, and the biennial GA held during the EARLI Conference to appoint the Board of Directors.
- Attend the **Policy Council** meeting at the biennial EARLI Conference to discuss SIG-related matters with the EARLI Board of Directors.

# SIG Timelines

## Year of the biennial EARLI Conference:

January  
-  
March

Disseminate a **call for candidates** for the open position of JURE and/or SIG coordinator.

March  
-  
June

- Organise the **election** for a new JURE and/or SIG coordinator.
- Attend the annual **GA meeting**.

June  
-  
July

Communicate the **agenda** of the **SIG Members' Meeting**.

August

### **Biennial EARLI Conference:**

- SIG Invited Symposium
- Appointment of new JURE and/or SIG coordinator
- SIG Members' Meeting
- General Assembly
- Policy Council Meeting

## Projected Timeline for a SIG Conference:



# SIG Support

“The EARLI Board of Directors and the EARLI Office aim to support SIGs in the organisation of their activities. The section below describes all the ways in which EARLI offers support to SIGs.”

The EARLI Office is committed to support SIGs in the organisation of their activities, in various ways:

- The EARLI Office can guide each SIG through the stages related to the organisation of their conference by means of a **conference roadmap** (available via the 'documents' section of each coordinator's personal [EARLI account](#)).
- The **EARLI conference management system** is available free of charge for each SIG, with additional technical support provided by the EARLI Office.
- Each SIG in need of financial support can apply for **SIG funding**, to cover initial costs related to the organisation of their conference. Based on the SIG's average membership number of the previous two years (counted in December), a progressive model in which every member counts will be used to calculate the exact funding amount (€2.000 - €4.000). Only SIGs with a minimum of 50 members can apply for financial support. For joint SIG conferences, one funding amount will be awarded, based on the average membership number of the collaborating SIGs.
- EARLI offers each SIG the option to use the **EARLI voting system** to manage SIG/JURE coordinator elections, as well as other polls amongst its membership.

- Each SIG can update their own **SIG webpage** on the EARLI website, through the use of a specific SIG user account. Additionally, SIGs can host a **conference webpage**\* linked to the EARLI website, in the form of a one-pager.
- Each SIG can make use of EARLI's **Mailchimp** account to communicate with their members in a GDPR-compliant way.
- EARLI provides a set of **social media guidelines** with some tips and tricks on how to use social media as an EARLI SIG.

\*Please note that the EARLI logo must always appear on your SIG conference website, especially if you choose not to host it on the EARLI website.

## **1. EARLI Conference Management System:**

The EARLI Conference Management System has been developed with the particular needs of SIGs in mind, and offers flexibility to set up an online conference tool tailored to your needs. EARLI offers conference support services tailored to the specific needs of your SIG. **Choose the module(s) that is/are best suited to your SIG** or get in touch with the [EARLI Office](#) with any questions you might have.

After providing some basic information about your conference, the **EARLI Office will arrange the initial setup** of the conference tool for you. You will then be offered partial admin rights, allowing you to manage and follow up each aspect of your SIG conference.

Through an extensive **manual** and a series of **tutorial videos** (which are made available to all coordinators via their personal [EARLI account](#)), you will be guided through each of the steps involved in managing your conference. Additionally, the **EARLI Office remains available for support** should you experience any difficulties throughout the process.

## **1.1 Submission and Review:**

This elaborate tool allows your SIG members to submit their preferred submission type directly into the system. Submission types can be defined and adapted to each individual conference. The tool also allows for invited sessions which bypass the review flow and are immediately accepted. The automatic matching tool will link each proposal automatically to the best suited reviewer, based on shared keywords, SIG and domain.

## **1.2 Clustering and Scheduling:**

Thematically cluster individual presentations together and automatically allocate them to a time slot. This allows your SIG to generate the best possible conference programme, taking into account parameters such as session popularity, room capacity and presenter availability.

## **1.3 Registrations:**

Please note that it is currently not possible to manage the registrations for your conference via the EARLI Conference Management System. EARLI can however provide some assistance in identifying the available options to manage your conference registrations.

## **1.4 Guidebook Conference App:**

There is an API link between the EARLI Conference Management System and the Guidebook mobile app, which allows for an automatic transfer of your conference programme to Guidebook's mobile app. Please bear in mind that the use of this conference app is not free of charge.

You can consult the [Guidebook website](#) for specific price information.

## 2. Financial Support:

### 2.1 SIG Funding:

By providing biennial SIG funding, EARLI hopes to offer SIGs a certain **financial buffer** to reduce the financial risks involved in hosting a SIG conference.

This funding is primarily aimed to help SIGs cover the initial costs of their conference before any conference income is available. Therefore, the application should be submitted to the EARLI Office ([info@earli.org](mailto:info@earli.org)) at least **4 months prior** to the conference.

Please note that the financial support is not a direct monetary transfer. Instead, **it represents a maximum amount of refundable expenses**. This financial support can be used to:

- Pay invoices from organisers (typically including VAT), or
- Reimburse individuals for verified expenses.

The SIG financial support request should at least include the following elements:

- Information about the **nature, goals and aims** of the activity and the **preliminary programme** (e.g., invited speakers, submission formats, etc.).
- The expected number of **participants** and/or the number of **submissions** received.
- A **preliminary budget** showing the estimated income and expenses of the event, as well as the costs for which the funding will be used.

- An **open call** for participation, which can be sent to all EARLI members.

The funding request should be submitted to the EARLI Office by one of the SIG coordinators and it should take into account the following:

- Any activity taking place **during the year of the biennial EARLI Conference** cannot be considered for funding.
- Should the SIG activity include a **registration fee**, a reduced registration fee should apply for EARLI and JURE members.
- This reduced rate should be **no more than 80%** of the fee charged for non-EARLI participants.
- The EARLI Board of Directors highly recommends SIGs not to charge more than **€300** for EARLI members.
- The SIG activity must take place within **Europe**.
- For a **SIG conference** that is co-organised by multiple SIGs, a joint funding request needs to be submitted.

## 2.2 SIG Financial Reserves:

if your SIG would like to make use of its financial reserves. It is important to know that EARLI can only transfer money in the following two cases:

- Reimbursement of proven costs from individuals
- Direct payment of invoices (which should include the following details: EARLI vzw, Peterseliegang 1 box 1, 3000 Leuven, Belgium, BE0806.313.062, info@EARLI.org)

Please note that, in order to comply with accounting regulations, any financial reserves from the SIGs held in the EARLI account must be used by 2030.

## 2.3 Budget Management:

The SIG coordinators are responsible for the SIG's **budget management**. This budget balance should be communicated during the yearly SIG Members' Meeting.

## 2.4 Financial Follow-Up:

The EARLI Office can be contacted to request a **budget template**, which can help your SIG to make a realistic financial forecast and to monitor the financial status of your SIG activity throughout the process.

## 3. Communication:

### 3.1 EARLI Voting System:

SIG coordinators are responsible for the **continuity** of their SIG and are therefore in charge of **organising elections** to find a suitable successor. The election procedure should be started up well ahead of the biennial EARLI Conference. The EARLI Office can support SIGs with a voting system to manage the election process. SIG coordinators should disseminate a call for candidates and an announcement of the upcoming elections.

Even if there is only one candidate that wants to stand for election, it is still strongly recommended to hold an election so that the SIG members are given the chance to express their support or to abstain from voting.

Should a SIG choose to use the EARLI voting system, please contact the [EARLI Office](#) for further information. Each of the candidates standing for election will need to supply these details:

- Short CV
- Motivation letter
- Portrait photograph

The following [tutorial video](#) explains how to create a poll using the EARLI voting system.

### **3.2 EARLI Website:**

The [EARLI website](#) allows SIG coordinators to communicate easily and directly with their membership. SIG coordinators can **manage** their **own** [SIG webpage](#), add activities to the EARLI [event calendar](#) and monitor the discussion board that is linked to their SIG's webpage.

Please note that any change to a SIG's name or mission statement requires approval from the Board of Directors.

Each SIG and JURE coordinator can access a user manual explaining how to use the backend of the EARLI website via the "documents" section of their personal [EARLI account](#).

### **3.3 Mailchimp:**

EARLI has invested in the development of an **integrated mailing system** allowing SIGs to communicate in a **GDPR-compliant** way with their members and conference attendees.

Via the “documents” section of their personal [EARLI account](#), each SIG and JURE coordinator can access a manual and two tutorial videos that explain the key elements on how to work with Mailchimp.

For further assistance, please consult the [Mailchimp helpdesk](#) or contact the [EARLI Office](#).

### **3.4 Social Media:**

EARLI offers a set of [social media guidelines](#) that can guide a SIG in managing their social media accounts.

Besides sharing information via your own SIG's social media accounts, it is also possible to advertise your SIG's activities via the EARLI social media channels ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Bluesky](#) and [YouTube](#)).

In case you have something to share, please contact the [EARLI Office](#).