

CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF FINANCIAL SERVICES OMBUDSMAN SCHEMES

1. Name

- 1.1 The organisation shall be called the International Network of Financial Services Ombudsman Schemes (the 'INFO Network'), the members of which are specified in Appendix 1, as updated from time to time.

2. Philosophy

- 2.1 The INFO Network is founded on a philosophy that embraces co-operation, collaboration, sharing, respect, trust and diversity. A strong spirit of collegiality and mutual support enables members to raise, discuss and debate, openly and safely, the issues facing them and their schemes/offices. As our organisation evolves to meet future challenges and contribute on a broader stage, these are the characteristics we must be sure to carry with us.

3. Objectives

- 3.1 The overall objective of the INFO Network is to develop the expertise in dispute resolution of its members by exchanging experiences and ideas. More particularly, the INFO Network exists to facilitate the exchange of technical information and experiences in the following areas, among others:
- codes of conduct for financial services Ombudsman schemes/offices
 - financial services Ombudsman scheme/office structure, functions and governance
 - information technology applications
 - cross border referral of complaints
 - training and continuing education; and
 - rotational and developmental opportunities.
- 3.2 In addition, the objective of the INFO Network is to develop, to the extent possible, co-operation through the following means among others:
- conferences
 - workshops
 - training, education and instruction
 - consultation, technical information and documentation using various formal and informal channels of communication
 - joint research on subjects of mutual interest
 - internships
 - provision of a forum for the exchange of information and opinions on aspects of financial services Ombudsman scheme/office practices and procedures
 - provision of a forum within which financial services Ombudsman schemes/offices can discuss areas of interest and concern.

4. Categories of association

Member

- 4.1 Financial services ombudsman schemes/offices operating as out-of-court dispute resolution mechanisms in the financial sector shall be eligible to be admitted as members of the INFO Network.

Associate (organisation)

- 4.2 Representatives of regulatory or self-regulatory bodies, internal dispute resolution schemes/offices operating within financial services companies, and Ombudsman schemes/offices in other consumer sectors may be afforded associate status.

Associate (individual)

- 4.3 Individuals whose interests and activities are closely aligned with the objectives of the INFO Network may be afforded associate status.

Fellow

- 4.4 An individual who was previously part of the INFO Network, and who made a significant active contribution to the development of the INFO Network during that time, may be recognised with fellow status.

Benefits

- 4.5 Associates and fellows shall receive an official invitation to the INFO Conference and a copy of the monthly e-bulletin, but shall have none of the rights conferred on members under this Constitution.

Decisions

- 4.6 Conferring of membership, associate status and fellow status shall be at the discretion of the Committee.

5. Annual Subscription

- 5.1 The INFO Network shall have a three tier annual membership subscription structure based on scheme/office annual operating budgets.
- 5.2 The annual subscription shall be due on 1 January each year, except that a new member or associate joining on or after 1 October shall not be required to pay a subscription for the remainder of that year.
- 5.3 The amounts of the annual subscriptions shall be determined from time to time by the Committee and are currently:
- Member:
 - € 1,900 for a large scheme/office (i.e. operating budget over € 5,000,000)
 - € 1,300 for a medium scheme/office (i.e. operating budget € 1,500,000 to € 5,000,000)
 - € 320 for a small scheme/office (i.e. operating budget under € 1,500,000)
 - Associate:
 - € 150 for an organisation
 - € 50 for an individual
 - Fellow: waived

6. Resignation / non-renewal

- 6.1 A member may resign from the INFO Network at any time, by written notification to the Chair.
- 6.2 Where a member or associate does not pay the annual subscription, the Committee may withdraw membership or associate status and privileges.

7. Annual General Meeting

- 7.1 The INFO Network shall have an Annual General Meeting (AGM) of members coincident with the annual INFO Conference.
- 7.2 The business of the AGM shall include:
- a report from the Chair on the activities and finances of the INFO Network
 - election of Committee members
 - any other items for member decision, of which notice of at least four (4) weeks has been given to members
 - an open forum where members can raise matters for general discussion.

8. Committee

Role

- 8.1 The entire control and management of the INFO Network shall be vested in the Committee.
- 8.2 The Committee shall appoint a Co-ordinator/Secretariat upon such terms and conditions as the Committee determines.
- 8.3 The Co-ordinator/Secretariat shall also act as secretary to the Committee.
- 8.4 The Committee and the Co-ordinator/Secretariat shall, in consultation with members, develop an annual work plan and budget, which:
- considers co-operative activities
 - suggests specific tasks to be performed by the Committee, the Co-ordinator/Secretariat, members or other persons.

Principles

- 8.5 The following principles shall guide the Committee's operations:
- Committee members serve as leaders of the INFO Network, acting in the interests of all members.
 - Committee members are sufficiently senior to bring credibility and experience to the role.
 - The Committee functions effectively, with experienced leadership and fully committed active Committee members.
 - The Committee fosters collaboration among INFO Network members, within and across regions and schemes.
 - The Committee operates on consensus basis to the maximum extent possible.
 - The Committee composition fairly represents the INFO Network membership, across regions, scheme size, scheme maturity and industry sectors.
 - The Committee's nomination and election processes are easy to administer and balance continuity with renewal.
 - The Committee meets at least four (4) times a year, including in-person adjacent to the INFO Conference.
 - Support arrangements for the Committee and the INFO Network continue to be cost effective and efficient.

Composition

- 8.6 The Committee shall consist of up to 10 members:
- up to eight (8) General Committee members
 - the host for the current INFO Conference
 - the host for the immediate past INFO Conference.
- 8.7 The Committee shall consist of at least one (1) member from each of the INFO Network's four (4) designated regions (Eurasia, Africa, Americas and Asia-Pacific), unless there is no nominee from one of the designated regions.

Nomination

- 8.8 Member nominees for Committee positions shall be the Ombudsman (or equivalent) or Deputy Ombudsman (or equivalent).
- 8.9 The Committee shall nominate:
- a Chair from among the existing Committee members
 - the two (2) INFO Conference Host members.
- 8.10 At least one (1) month prior to the AGM, INFO Network members shall be invited to nominate for the available General Committee positions for the next year.

Election

- 8.11 All Committee members shall be elected by INFO Network members at the AGM, and shall take up their positions from the first Committee meeting after the AGM.
- 8.12 If the number of nominations for General Committee positions exceeds the number of available positions, a formal ballot of members shall be held during the AGM.
- 8.13 To implement a schedule of Committee turnover, at the first election after the introduction of this amended Constitution, four (4) of the eight (8) General Committee members will be elected for one (1) year and four (4) will be elected for two (2) years.

Terms

- 8.14 The Chair shall be elected for a term of two (2) years. The term as Chair may be in addition to any term as a General Committee member or an INFO Host Committee member.
- 8.15 Each General Committee member shall be elected for a term of two (2) years.
- 8.16 Each INFO Conference Host Committee member shall be elected to the Committee for the year of their conference and the year immediately after their conference. They shall then move off the Committee, unless elected in their own right.
- 8.17 The Committee shall, from time to time, appoint one of the Committee members to serve as the Treasurer.
- 8.18 Where a Committee member resigns or ceases to work for their scheme/office during their term, the Committee shall decide whether and how to fill the vacancy.

9. Conferences

- 9.1 Members of the INFO Network, individually or as a group, may be appointed by the Committee to host conferences, including the annual INFO Conference.
- 9.2 The Committee shall adopt a tendering process to identify a host for the annual INFO Conference.
- 9.3 In appointing a host for the annual INFO Conference, the Committee shall have regard to the established convention of rotating the conference through the four (4) regions of the INFO Network.
- 9.4 In accepting an appointment to host the annual INFO Conference, a member/s shall agree to follow the guidelines in the INFO Network's *INFO Conferences – Guide for Organisers*.
- 9.5 The hosting appointment shall include the right to circulate members, associates and other contacts for the purpose of promoting the conference.
- 9.6 The decision to make an appointment shall be vested in the Committee.
- 9.7 The terms of the appointment shall normally provide that the operation and financial risk of hosting a conference shall fall exclusively on the hosting member/s.

10. Funds

- 10.1 The funds of the INFO Network shall be held exclusively for the purposes of the Network.
- 10.2 On dissolution of the INFO Network, any remaining funds shall be donated for charitable or educational purposes.

11. Constitution amendment and review

- 11.1 This Constitution may be amended by a majority of members at a meeting of members called by the Chair from time to time. The Chair shall call such a meeting on his own initiative or at the request of not less than five members.
- 11.2 This Constitution shall be formally reviewed every three (3) years, by the Committee in consultation with INFO Network members.

12. Dissolution of the INFO Network

- 12.1 Following the passing of a resolution by at least two-thirds of INFO Network members to dissolve the Network, any remaining funds shall be donated for charitable or educational purposes, consistent with the principles and aims of the Network.
- 12.2 The distribution of the remaining funds shall be determined by the Committee, having consulted with the Network members.

The current version of **Appendix 1** is available from the Secretariat