

Stay Grounded - Network Structure & Protocols

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This document is the common ground for our network. It explains the structures and is intended as an aid to decision-making and how we communicate with each other in order to prevent any future problems from manifesting. This is not a public document and is only to be circulated on an 'in confidence' basis between Stay Grounded members and potential members.

Table of Contents

1. Decision making.....	2
2. Members.....	2
2. 1. Participation by Individuals.....	3
2. 2. Needs based allowances pot for active members.....	3
3. The Turtles.....	4
3.1. Allowances for Turtles.....	4
4. Regional Stay Grounded Groups.....	5
5. The Campaigners.....	6
6. Working Groups.....	6
7. Acting on behalf of Stay Grounded.....	7
8. Email list and role of spokes / delegates.....	7
9. Mutual support and respect.....	8
10. Media and Public events.....	9
11. Website.....	9
12. Social media.....	9
13. Online library.....	9

1. Decision making

For decisions that concern the whole network, we strive for consensus based decisions, which means that there will not be a simple majority-vote to take decisions but rather discussion to resolve issues and reach a common conclusion. Decisions are taken if no veto is raised. Such decisions will be mostly taken at Network meetings. If this doesn't work out, we'll use email in combination with an online tool. Care needs to be taken on whether you are speaking for yourself, or as a Spokesperson for your Group/Organisation.

Feedback should be in the following form:

- Agree (I like the proposal or I don't have anything against it)
- Concerns (I have a concern but in general agree with the proposal. Or, I have a strong concern the group should discuss)
- Veto (I cannot live with this proposal, if it was implemented I would not like to remain part of the network. The veto has to be explained. Please use carefully!)
- Stand aside (I don't like the proposal and therefore won't take part in carrying it out, so I lodge my concerns and don't block the decision making)
- Abstain (I don't know or I don't care or I'm new to this group and shouldn't take this decision)

Consensus is a purer form of democracy than majority vote. It needs patience and careful use of opposition (vetoes), good feeling for the group etc. These are the grounds on which this can work:

People who are very new to the Network or not actively involved, should be careful to raise strong opinions and should probably not use a veto. Generally, it is more important that those whom the decision will concern most, like those who will continue working on the activity (working group, campaigners etc.) should agree with the decision.

If the meeting/group feels that a person is misusing a veto it could mean that a proposal & decision is made to override the veto or person (for example, the person uses vetoes excessively; is not constructive, does not explain him*herself; not on the grounds of the Position Paper; infiltration of the network). A veto is something that is often only used once in a lifetime.

If decisions are taken at meetings, we will ask for the above different forms of agreement/disagreement. If decisions are taken via an email list, a proposal should be made with a deadline for responses/answers (at least one week, if possible). No response means approval or abstention. If there are concerns, it should be stated whether they are minor or major objections, or a stand-aside position, and a reason should be given. In case a consensus is hard to achieve, the Turtles (see below) will be approached to propose a way forward. For urgent sign-ons, comments and other non-routine communication in line with the Stay Grounded position paper, decisions can be taken by the campaigners.

2. Members

Organisations and Groups can become Members of Stay Grounded if they support the Position Paper and if their day-to-day work and own positions match. We don't accept membership from the private sector or of political parties, in order to remain independent. The campaigners will be the ones in contact with new members and have the responsibility to reject member requests that do not fit with the network positions. In case of that being unclear, the whole network will be asked.

- The new group will submit 10-20 words as a description and (if available) a logo for inclusion on the “Member Groups” page of the website and allocate spokespeople for the email list and for meetings.
- If the new group has a website and social media, it makes its membership and the Position Paper visible.
- Members can or should actively participate in our consensus-based decision making and in our activities (Network meetings, actions, etc.)
- Members support the Network with financial contributions depending on their financial situation - this might be 20-100€ or more a year, or nothing. Contributions help cover the overhead costs of the network, such as network meetings and coordination. A yearly report of network activities for members informs members of the network's activities.
- Members are invited to give feedback to the Turtles and Campaigners. Only through constructive critique and support can the Network can grow stronger.

2. 1. Participation by Individuals

Interested individuals who are not part of an initiative or group may join as individual members if they support the Position Paper and if their day-to-day work and own positions match. In general, we don't accept membership by individuals whose main role/job is as a spokesperson for a party, membership of individuals who have a visible role in political parties will be decided on case-by-case basis.

2. 2. Needs based allowances pot for active members

Stay Grounded will, funding dependent, set aside a pot of about 3000 € / year for needs-based allowances for active members in the network. Often, individuals take on big tasks. The network cannot live without this voluntary engagement of its members. Some people might like to be more active but cannot afford doing so because they need to do paid work that leaves no time for these activities. In such cases where people would like to get active on a needed task, but would need money for it, they can apply to the volunteers-pot.

Criteria and decision: The money in this pot is meant to support activities that are relevant to and fit the strategy of the network such as: working groups: coordination, active participation/research, regional group coordination, giving workshops/talks as multipliers. An informal application with the description of planned activities needing financial support can be sent to info@stay-grounded.org. An honest assessment of personal needs will be necessary. The network coordination team of Stay Grounded will manage the pot and distribute the allowances according to the proclaimed needs and capacities of the pot. The claims should be made transparent in the respective working groups or with people with comparable activities. It will be mostly a "first-come-first-serve" principle, but half of the pot will remain untouched for the last half of the year, for urgent requests coming up at a later stage. To enable several people to make claims, there is a limit of max. 500€ per claim.

Who can apply? We especially encourage people from “Global South” countries to apply because this is where our network decided to put a focus on strengthening its work. Turtles

might also claim from this pot, for work that is not directly related to the Turtles activities (for allowances for Turtles activities see 3.1).

3. The Turtles

The Turtles are our coordination group, consisting of at least 4 spokespeople from our members or individual Stay Grounded members. They are “elected” (through asking for objections against Turtles candidates) at each Network meeting. Between network meetings, the Turtles have the power to add advisors to the Turtles group if they feel that this will improve the global diversity of the group or provide a valuable perspective. This person can stand for election at the next network meeting.

The Turtles have an online call about once a month and a separate coordinating email list. A minimum of a third of the Turtles members (not counting the campaigners) should be present in order to take decisions. The minutes are sent around right after the call, and Turtles that weren't present at a call have 3 days in order to question decisions that were taken at the call.

The functions of the Turtles are:

- Advisory board: The Turtles function as advisory board, in case the campaigners need feedback/advice. For example, if someone has a proposal for a new project, this can first be discussed by the Turtles. The Turtles decide if it makes sense to propose this to the whole network.
- Oversight: The Turtles guarantee that the process continues, that decisions are implemented and have an overview of what needs to be done. The Turtles have the opportunity and obligation to have an overview of the activities of Stay Grounded, in order to be able to intervene in case decisions from network meetings/email decisions are not being implemented, or implemented differently.
- Taking decisions: The Turtles take minor decisions where necessary for a process to start/continue, in case it would be annoying for the whole network to be consulted (e.g. how many logo proposals do we ask for!). Strategic and directional decisions that concern the whole network, must first be discussed with the Turtles, and then Turtles decide whether the whole network needs to be consulted (in case the decisions are major).

A new project is decided by the whole network > new project strategy is agreed by Turtles > but the detailed working on projects is done by the Campaigners or working groups. The Turtles are regularly informed about steps of projects. Turtles are particularly welcome from outside Europe.

3.1. Allowances for Turtles

Members of Turtles attend monthly calls and fulfil other obligations of their role (see 3. [Network Structure and Protocols](#)). They are volunteers. There is a limited pot of money available from which claims for an ‘Allowance’ can be made by Turtles members who are of limited income or need financial assistance.

There is a budget of 1000€ per year dedicated to these Allowances. This budget is contingent on general fundraising and will be reviewed at every annual network meeting.

Each Turtle can claim allowances after being elected for the amount they need or feel is appropriate (knowing that the budget is 1000€ and having discussed it between themselves) for their activity.

Where applications for funding are forecast to exceed the available budget, a solution will be sought through a transparent dialogue between campaigners and claimants. In cases where a consensus cannot be reached, the ultimate decision about allocation will be made by the Campaigners. The allowances shall be paid each calendar quarter in arrears.

Turtles sign-up to serve in their role for one year but can step down if unable to continue to fulfill it.

4. Regional Stay Grounded Groups

In regions that are within a country or that encompass more than one country, several Stay Grounded members have/may get connected and form their own email lists or even undertake joint activities that are backed by the Position Paper. They can name themselves Regional Stay Grounded Groups once the geographical scope has been defined and approved by the Turtles.

To guarantee the information flow and their integration into the network activities:

- Each regional group is allocated a campaigner whose responsibility is to follow the chapter's activities and keep them informed frequently of any SG activities/developments in their area.
- All Regional Groups are encouraged to designate one representative as member of the Turtles in a democratic process. They will have an advisory status until the next network meeting where they can be elected. (see point 3)
- Alternatively (in case Regional Stay Grounded Groups don't have the capacity to designate a Turtle) they must designate a delegate (and if wished, an alternate) to the Turtles+. The delegate has the obligation to participate in so-called Turtles+ calls (= call with the Turtles + regional Delegates, ideally taking place every two months directly before the regular Turtles call). The Turtles+ calls serve to exchange information about what is happening in the active regions, and in the Stay Grounded network. The delegate is responsible to feed relevant information from the Turtles+ Calls back to the Regional Group and vice versa. The delegates and the Turtles are on one email list where only information is exchanged concerning the calls & minutes.

Regional Groups can take positions on issues within their region (e.g. sign letters as a Stay Grounded Regional Group) as long as they are in line with the Stay Grounded position paper and if done in coordination with the assigned network campaigner. For potentially controversial cases, the campaigner should send the proposal for sign-on to the Turtles+ email list and ask for concerns.

The responsibility of conveying the information to the network and the Turtles+ lies with the regional network delegates (including updating [the network document for overview of letters/petitions etc. signed](#)).

5. The Campaigners

The current campaigners of Stay Grounded can be found on the team page: <https://stay-grounded.org/team/>. They are employed in Vienna at the small NGO Periskop. They are bound by the decisions taken by the network members (e.g. at network meetings) and are part of the Turtles team.

The employment decision for new campaigners is taken by the Turtles and the job application is shared within the network. When setting up the job commission which organises the application process and decision, members will be asked if one of them wants to also join the job commission. The goal is to allow greatest possible democratic involvement of members. In job advertisements, a ranking list is drawn up, in which, should the first person to be appointed drop out, the next person will be appointed. The list contains a maximum of 5 applicants. If all applicants drop out, a new advertisement will be made. Job applicants who are highly ranked (being in the list), but not chosen for SG employment can, with the agreement of Turtles and campaigners, be re-considered primarily and without a whole new process if there are new vacancies that match their skills. At the annual network meetings, there will be a slot where campaigners specifically ask for feedback and critique. This can also be raised throughout the year.

The campaigners are responsible for:

- fundraising (for the payment of the jobs and network activities)
- administration, network coordination and project management
- website, social media, Stay Grounded email accounts, online library and List(s) moderation
- answering or coordinating media / press requests
- Preparation of reports and other publications
- together with the Turtles, having an overview of what needs to be done.

6. Working Groups

- For each planned activity or special topic, a working group can be formed (e.g. preparation for a network meeting; drafting a petition; organising action weeks, linking similar struggles etc.).
- The working group can take decisions de-centrally. In certain cases activities need to be proposed formally to the whole network or to campaigners/Turtles (see 7).

Forming of working groups

- A new working group (WG) can be proposed at a network meeting
- Alternatively, between network meetings: submit a short proposal to the Turtles (via turtles@lists.riseup.net), answering the following questions: What will the working group work on? How does this fit with existing network plans, strategy and positions? Is the working group temporary or long-term? Who will do the coordination? > If there are no concerns by Turtles the WG can informally start its work and then get formal approval at next network meeting

Criteria for forming a working group

- Needs at least one nominated coordinator
- At least two members
- In line with SG position paper

Mode of operation

- Working groups are generally open to all members; they could be closed for certain important working periods where it would be complicated to integrate new people
- One staff campaigner will support the working group, will serve as the organizational point of contact, and may choose to be a participant in the working group. The working group and campaigner will have at least one call every three months to give updates, discuss and look for synergies etc.
- One WG member gets access to SG videocall software to book calls (these calls must be included into videocall software calendar beforehand to avoid double-booking)
- Activities requiring resources (eg. webdesign, social media support, press work, layout, printing or money for travel costs etc...) must be discussed and agreed on with campaigners in advance
- WG updates are brought to Turtles calls regularly. This should be arranged through the contact campaigner (who the WG coordinator should be keeping in the loop on all progress and meetings)
- WGs give updates and get feedback at network meetings

participation of non-members

- Working groups should be for members; but if people are only interested in the WG and are in line with the position paper, non-members could join if the WG members accept this

7. Acting on behalf of Stay Grounded

The following activities need to be proposed more formally to the email list, where everyone should be given a clear and reasonable deadline (a week should be seen as standard for non-urgent proposals) to consider the proposal and lodge potential objections/concerns/suggestions (if they then turn out to need more than a quick, uncontroversial sign-off they should be brought to the Turtles for more discussion):

- Signing-up Stay Grounded to open letters, political statements, as an official supporter of relevant actions etc.

The following activities are encouraged but need to be proposed to and approved by the Turtles:

- Attending events or actions as a representative of Stay Grounded
- Agreeing forms of support and collaboration of Stay Grounded with other groups
- Organising an action as Stay Grounded
- Fundraising for Stay Grounded
- Opening new media channels for Stay Grounded

8. Email list and role of spokes / delegates

- We have two global email lists:
 - stay-grounded@lists.riseup.net : Every Member organisation / group has between one and four spokes in the Stay Grounded Network (and therefore on this email list). Important information on the network's plans are being sent, and decisions are being taken here. We expect list members to share all significant information with and report back to their groups. The list is a moderated list: in case agreements on communication (see below) are not considered, emails will not be forwarded by the campaigners. Also, in case more than two mails a day come through the list, the campaigners may decide to accept an email a few days later.

- sg-discussion@lists.riseup.net : A facultative discussion list for all members and interested people. It is not moderated. The Stay Grounded email list should therefore be used for information and proposals that are of interest to all. In order not to spam the list, answers should in most cases not be sent to the whole network. In many cases, it might be enough to address a particular person, or the Turtles or campaigners.
- Individuals (individual members, active at Stay Grounded, who are not part of an organization) are allowed to be on the email lists.
- On the email lists and at Network meetings, we assume that everyone is giving their ideas/input/analysis as individuals unless they specifically state that they are representing the opinion of their group.
- For particularly complex/contentious decisions, the spokes can request to consult with their Group/ organisation; Group members themselves can also ask for further consultation if they see decisions being made by their spokes that they believe should have been taken out for wider discussion. Any Member can request extra consideration time for decisions that require internal consultation within their Group or Network and other Members should be respectful of this within the time frame available.
- If spokes need to get in contact with each other and do not have email/phone, they can ask the campaigners for their contacts and they are allowed to pass them on.
- We will not use the email lists to share opinions or criticism about other Stay Grounded Member Groups or spokes. We will never use the list to talk about the conduct of individuals in our network or to publicly challenge or criticise people's behaviour. If you perceive a problem please raise it with the Turtles/campaigners.
- Try to use clear email subject titles.

9. Mutual support and respect

We expect all Members to behave respectfully to each other and to not take any action that would undermine the work of Stay Grounded or its Members. By joining, Members agree to the following:

- To treat all members fairly, being mindful of the differences in size, organisation, power, communication processes and resources, between the different Member Groups/ Networks
- To use a respectful tone in communications
- We expect all Groups to be responsible for the conduct and behaviour of their spokes and to ensure that they follow these Protocols above. If any Members believe there is a problem with the behaviour of a particular spoke, they should, if possible, approach the problematic spoke privately and ask them to change their behaviour. Having done that, if no improvement occurs then it should be raised with the campaigners who will then approach other people from that spoke's group and ask them to resolve the issue internally. An issue with a particular individual should not be raised with the wider List until these and all other avenues have been exhausted. As a last resort, if the rest of the list believes it is necessary (after serious discussion involving as many Members as possible), a group might be asked to find a new person to act as group spoke; or the whole group might be asked to temporarily step back from the coalition until the problem is resolved; or (in extreme cases) a group might be asked to permanently leave the coalition. These discussions should always happen in face-to-face meetings or on phone/Skype calls, not on the email list, although the list should be informed if such discussions are going to happen.

10. Media and Public events

- Ideally, people should speak to the media or at public events as representatives of their individual groups; saying that they are part of the Stay Grounded Network.
- In the case of someone speaking as Stay Grounded (because for some reason it really makes sense) they should stick to the content of the Position Paper and other Stay Grounded policy papers.
- Media enquiries or media articles about Stay Grounded should be shared with the campaigners, so that they are fully aware and can inform the Members if necessary.

11. Website

The campaigners update the website. When anyone wants to make a change, post an article, translate something etc., that's great - then please contact them.

12. Social media

A team consisting of a campaigners and volunteers have access to the Facebook, Instagram, Mastodon and Twitter channels. If you want something to be posted, that's great, then please contact them (via manuel@stay-grounded.org). If you want to participate in the Social Media Working Group please also contact them.

- We only post information that fits with our position paper and other policy papers or criticises views that are contrary to ours.
- On Facebook, we may also share content from our members and Position Paper signatories. We may "like" and share other people's contributions if those posts are in line with our own views.
- Normally we don't do more than two posts on Facebook a day, maybe except during action weeks or special events.
- We need to bear in mind not to only "preach to the converted" and not to amplify the voice of the industry uncritically.

13. Online library

Stay Grounded has an online library, where members can share documents, articles, research papers etc. on aviation, airports, policy and resistance. Currently, the library is a shared nextcloud. If you want to have access, please write to the campaigners and they will invite you.

This document aims to give the Network greater transparency, of both our structure and how we agree to organise.

We believe and expect that if we all follow these Protocol guidelines then Stay Grounded will become a stronger force for change.

The document will be sent to all members - their membership means that they agree with these guidelines.

In case there is a need for change in this document, the Turtles are responsible for making any decisions on whether the changes are too minor to inform all members, or whether a new consensus needs to be found for the amendments.