

Call for Bids: ECIR 2024

The European Conference on Information Retrieval (ECIR) is Europe's premier conference on Information Retrieval.

ECIR originates from the BCS-IRSG Colloquium for Information Retrieval, which the BCS Information Retrieval Specialist Group (referred to as BCS-IRSG) began running in 1979. This became a successful annual conference for young researchers in Information Retrieval, and then developed into a European conference to reflect the increased popularity, importance and international reach of the event. Since 2018 ECIR has been ranked as a CORE A conference.

The BCS-IRSG Committee (referred to here as IRSG) is interested to hear from bidders who wish to organize the European Conference on Information Retrieval 2024 (ECIR 2024) in a European country. This will be the 46th edition of the conference.

ECIR 2022 is to be held in Stavanger, Norway and ECIR 2023 is to be held in Dublin, Ireland. Recent ECIR events have been held in Lucca, Italy, 2021 (online), Lisbon, Portugal, 2020 (online); Cologne, Germany, 2019; Grenoble, France, 2018; Aberdeen, UK, 2017; Padua, Italy, 2016, Vienna, Austria, 2015; Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2014; Moscow, Russia, 2013; and Barcelona, Spain, 2012.

Interested parties should submit their proposal by email to the IRSG Chair, Udo Kruschwitz (Udo.Kruschwitz@ur.de) with a copy to the IRSG Secretary Steven Zimmerman (stevenedwardzimmerman@gmail.com).

Deadline for ECIR 2024 proposals: Midnight UTC Friday 27th August 2021.

Guidelines and Conditions of Bids to Host the BCS-IRSG European Conference on Information Retrieval (ECIR)

IRSG will evaluate all bids in terms of their quality, including suitability of the conference site, the track record of the organisers, potential of the bid to build and strengthen the IR community, soundness of budgets, support from the host institution, availability of a range of suitable accommodation and other relevant criteria. More details of the items which must be covered are given below. In addition, the Committee will also assess the professionalism of the bid documentation and the proposers' compliance with IRSG and ECIR philosophy and vision.

In order to make submission and evaluation more consistent bids must not to exceed 12 pages in length, excluding appendices and supporting documentation.

The committee may at its discretion disregard any pages exceeding the twelve page maximum, or bids where the use of small typefaces (less than 10 point) renders it difficult to read at a normal zoom level. All the primary criteria for award of the conference should be covered within the 12 pages, but appendices (which may not be read by all committee members) may be used to provide additional detail where appropriate.

The IRSG may wish to discuss aspects of the bid with the proposers prior to making a decision on the success of the bid, and so the principal contact should be clearly nominated. Anyone interested in bidding is welcome to communicate informally to the Chair or Secretary prior to the deadline date for bids. Any such discussion will be reported back to the IRSG Committee.

The IRSG will normally meet to review proposals and make its decision within six weeks of the submission date. BCS-IRSG Committee members whose institutions are among the candidates and other members with conflicts of interest will not participate in the decision-making process. The IRSG will vote to decide between competing bids and IRSG's decision is final.

The following points should be addressed in the bid to host ECIR.

(1) Location, venue, timing, etc

1.1 Location

The location should be easily accessible for people attending from across Europe and elsewhere. Good air, rail and road links are essential. The bid should include a short description of the locality and any remarkable or outstanding features that would make it particularly attractive for potential delegates.

1.2 Venue

Proposers should demonstrate that their proposed venue has appropriate conference facilities for the different sessions during ECIR. Specifically, addressing the following points (where appropriate):

- Single Track Sessions (including conference opening/closing, keynotes, panels, etc): Lecture Theatre to accommodate at least 250 delegates
- Parallel Sessions: Lecture Theatres/Rooms to accommodate 85-125 delegates for 2 or 3 streams (depending on the programme).
- Poster Sessions: Suitable and conducive area for display and interaction for approximately 30-50 posters. (It is very easy to underestimate the space needed, in particular when 50 concurrent discussions raise the background noise to a level that everyone has to raise their voice in turn leading to an unpleasant atmosphere.)
- Workshops/Tutorials: Class rooms to accommodate up to 30-50 delegates, and up to four rooms (depending on programme)
- Breaks and Lunch: An adjacent area for coffee breaks and a separate dining area nearby are also desirable.

- Sponsors Display: An area for sponsors to display and promote their organization.
- Accessibility for those with a physical disability, for example in wheelchairs.

1.3 Length

The conference should be run over a course of three days. One additional day is encouraged for running workshop/tutorials and possibly a further day for IR related events (such as a separate Industry Day, as done at ECIR 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019; although other years featured an Industry Day run in parallel with the main conference). Consideration should be given to including a Doctoral Consortium, which was included for the first time in 2017.

1.4 Timing

Traditionally, ECIR is held in the Spring, near to the Easter weekend. It is also important that the timing does not conflict with other important meetings. In particular, proposers should check to make sure that the proposed dates for the conference do not clash with other major information retrieval events.

1.5 Social Events

A range of social events is a feature of ECIR, including a more formal Conference Dinner. Proposers should include a plan for such events including pricing (e.g. sightseeing visits, unusual venues for evening meals, cultural events). A brief contingency plan should be included, in case, for example, registration numbers are fewer than expected. The cost of these activities should be reasonable and should not unduly affect the overall conference fee. It is encouraged to arrange drink receptions and such like using corporate sponsorships.

1.6 Registrations

Proposals putting forward registration systems operating over the internet with payments processed online (via debit or credit cards, etc.) will be preferred. Where this is not possible registration arrangements must be clearly explained.

1.7 Catering

To ensure that delegates can interact as much as possible during the conference it is important to ensure that lunches for delegates can be provided on site or near by the conference venue. If this is not possible, the average cost of meals should be provided along with a list of establishments (takeaways, diners, restaurants) nearby where delegates can go for lunch. It is also desirable to be able to cater for delegates with particular dietary requirements (providing options for vegetarians, vegans, etc).

1.8 Additional Workshops/Tutorials

Proposers are expected to organize an extra day to run ECIR Workshops/Tutorials and consider organising an Industry Day.

For workshops, we strongly encourage the call for workshops to be designed to attract workshops that are interactive and aim to produce an outcome based on this interaction (for example, a report or paper based on the work done at the workshop). Also, to ensure that the workshop organizers have sufficient time, it is advisable to set the acceptance/notification date to be mid-October.

1.9 Accommodation for Delegates

Proposers should demonstrate that they have suitable accommodation for delegates (e.g. en-suite rooms in student halls and/or local hotels), for a meeting of normally three to five days duration. IRSG is keen to encourage the participation of students and new researchers in information retrieval (IR) to the Conference. Thus potential hosts must also demonstrate access to low-budget accommodation, such as youth hostels or inexpensive student halls, and consider the needs of those with physical disabilities, for example wheel chair users.

(2) Proposers

The bid should include details on how the proposers intend to organize the conference and nominate who will be responsible for each of the main roles: General Chair(s), Programme Chair(s), Local Organization Chair(s). Other roles: Short Paper Chair, Workshop Chair, and other organizers and PC members may be specified where known. It must be made clear who has agreed to participate if the bid is successful as opposed to those who will be approached once the fate of the bid is known.

2.1 Motivation

The bid should also include a short statement about why the proposers would like to organize ECIR.

2.2 Track record of proposers

Since 2018, ECIR has been ranked as a CORE A conference. It is important to IRSG that the prestige of the conference is maintained. Metrics used by CORE include citation record of the General Chairs and the PC Chairs. Bids should clearly state the citation rates of the General Chairs and the PC Chairs according to Google Scholar. Statistics for several editions of ECIR can be found in http://portal.core.edu.au/core/media/justification/CORE2018/Data_UpdateRank_156.pdf

Normally we would expect proposers to have some prior experience of organizing conferences or other major events, although these do not have to be connected with information retrieval. Evidence of such activity should be provided.

In addition, it is normally expected that proposers should have some connection with the IR community in general, including the BCS-IRSG such as being a member of the BCS or BCS-IRSG, or regularly attending IRSG events, such as ECIR, Search Solutions, FDIA, etc. Continuity is particularly important for ECIR; and proposers that have participated in previous conferences are favoured.

2.3 Support from host institution

A letter of support from the host institution(s) should accompany the bid including where relevant a commitment to underwrite the financial risk of hosting the conference. Where this cannot be provided an explanation of how the financial risks will be underwritten should be provided. Letters of support should include in what capacity the signatories are providing support for the bid.

(3) Budget preparation and costings

Proposers must produce a budget for the conference (using the excel template provided). A list of expected costs (fixed and per head) should be included along with expected income and sponsorship and provision for student grants. The budget should include necessary provisions for the costs of organizers and volunteers, and invited speakers. Normally the conference budget includes provision for the full cost of attendance (travel, accommodation, and registration including the conference dinner) of two invited speakers. The costs of the Karen Spärck Jones Award recipient will be covered by BCS through Microsoft sponsorship.

Registration fees for students should be kept as low as possible in order to encourage young researchers to participate. Incentives for early registration are advisable.

Please note, that it is expected that the conference should, at the least, break even; but should aim to make a surplus (where this could be used to provide additional student grants, accommodate any unexpected costs, and to generate a small profit). Usually conference organisers commit themselves to making part or all of any profit available to support future ECIRs.

In 2019, Cologne, there were 270 registrations of which 65 were students. The numbers for 2018, Grenoble, were 248 and 59, 2017 (Aberdeen) were 160 and 60, and for 2016 (Padua) 220 and just over 50, respectively.

3.1 Discounts

Members of BCS/BCS-IRSG and other supporting bodies normally receive a 10-15% discount on the registration. The BCS-IRSG has a reciprocal arrangement with ACM SIGIR through which we are obliged to offer the same discount to SIGIR members. It is reasonable to assume that most delegates will be members of an affiliated body.

3.2 Sponsorship

The proposers should provide details of potential sponsors and how sponsorship is going to be managed. The proposal should include a justification for what sponsors of ECIR 2024 can expect from sponsoring the event outlining benefits for the different levels of sponsorship available to choose from (such as the provision of a booth in a prominent area, through which attendees pass as they walk in or out of the conference hall).

3.3 Student Support

ECIR organisers should provide support for students to attend the conference via student travel awards. Some of this support has typically come from IRSG, and although no guarantee can be given it is expected that this will also be the case for ECIR 2024. The proposers should provide a plan as to how such a scheme will be implemented.

(4) Promotion, publicity and schedule of activities

Proposers should provide a draft programme for the conference; a schedule of activities, indicating key dates; and their plans for publicizing the conference.

Key dates that should be included (suggested dates are provided in brackets):

- Website Launch (asap after notification)
- Full Paper Submission Deadline (early October) and notification (late November)
- Short Paper and Demonstration Submission Deadline (mid-October) and notification (late November)
- Workshop/Tutorial Submission Deadlines (early September) and notification (late October)
- Open Registration (early January)
- Author Registration (late January)
- Revised Budget (early February)
- Conference Dates (late March/early April)

(5) Conference Programme

Proposers should specify arrangements for the Conference Programme Committee's operation, anonymous reviewing process, and the mechanism for producing a final list of accepted papers, including whether or not a face-to-face programme committee will be organized, or some other means of resolving reviewing conflicts and moderating reviewing scores. It is also essential for all chairs to keep in mind that the event they are organising has traditionally had a strong student focus and this should be preserved in future. In this light, it is important that the programme be topical and interesting; the publicity chair ought to encourage submission from leading international researchers and their students; programme chairs ought to elicit constructive and substantive feedback during the review process.

An agreement between The Information Retrieval Journal (IRJ) and IRSG stipulates that top-ranked full papers from ECIR will be published in IRJ and that a minimum of 4 IRJ articles be presented at ECIR. This necessitates the ECIR PC chairs to agree to act as guest editors of a special issue, select the papers and run the review process for the selected papers; and that ECIR chairs make at least 4 presentation slots available for IRJ papers. Details of this agreement can be found on the IRSG website or will be provided by the IRSG Secretary on request.

Generally:

- All papers are to be refereed through a double-blind peer review.
- Accepted papers and e.g. demo and workshop descriptions are normally published in the Springer Lecture Notes in Computer Science series. Additionally, in recent years, the proceedings have been distributed to all delegates at the Conference in electronic form. However, the committee are happy to consider alternative publication arrangements for the proceedings, for example using Open Access Models, provided there is a clear mechanism for the long-term archival availability to the proceedings.
- Submissions must be in English, ECIR's official language.
- The paper submission deadline should be set to early October and notification around late November.
- By 1 December liaise with the IRJ editors to agree the arrangements for producing the ECIR Special Issue of IRJ
- Usually two or three keynote speakers are invited and one of them should be the BCS-IRSG Karen Spärck Jones (KSJ) Award recipient of the previous year (e.g. 2023 for 2024).

It is also expected that the Programme Chair will liaise with IRSG to ensure general consistency in approach and procedures from year to year, in accordance with the overall vision of the ECIR conferences. For example, it is usual to offer prizes for Best Papers in various categories with the support of sponsors, and the IRSG may enter into multi-year agreements concerning this prize support.

5.1 Call for Papers

A draft call for papers with envisaged deadlines should be appended; where any particular themes or special topics should be highlighted.

Please consult recent ECIR Calls for Papers.

5.2 Reviewing Forms

Proposers should include a draft of the questions paper reviewers will be asked and what factors will play a part in the ranking and selection of papers.

Notes and Conditions on Organization

Philosophy

ECIR should strive to:

- Deliver high quality scientific works that present cutting edge information retrieval research;
- Promote and encourage student and post-doctoral research.

Responsibilities of Organizers

The organizers are appointed to organize ECIR on behalf of the IRSG. The main roles in the organization of the conference are assigned to the General Chair(s) and the Programme Chair(s) and consequently the main responsibility of the organization of conference lie with these organizers.

The main duties performed by the chairs are listed below, but are not limited to the following.

In particular General chair(s) will usually be responsible for:

- local arrangements, by appointing if needed local chair(s) to deal with them;
- business plans including registrations;
- publicity and visibility by maintaining an up-to-date event web site;
- soliciting sponsorships;
- arranging student grants;
- coordinating organizers.

Programme chair(s) will be expected to deal with the following essential steps:

- recruiting the programme committee;
- preparation of the call for papers/demos etc.;
- management of paper/demos submissions and reviewing;
- running the program committee meeting and selecting the list of accepted papers (in conjunction with the Programme Committee);
- liaise with IRJ for the IRJ-paper slots at ECIR and act as guest editors for extended versions of top-ranked ECIR papers in an IRJ special issue;
- finalising of presentation schedule;
- publishing arrangements;
- selecting and arranging awards including best paper and best student paper;
- selecting keynote speakers (in conjunction with the General Chair).

The General Chair will become a member of the BCS-IRSG committee for the year to act as the primary point of contact between the conference organisers and the IRSG. The General Chair will normally remain a member of the IRSG for one subsequent year, and will be expected to attend committee meetings via teleconference or video conference. Alternatively the General Chair may nominate a deputy to undertake this role, but the deputy should be specified in the bid.

It has been the practice of the IRSG to provide the greatest freedom to General and Programme chairs. In the past, this has proved the best solution in terms of effort and creativity the organizers of ECIR have devoted to the organisation. However, in the event of a serious breakdown in the organization of the conference the IRSG reserves the right to intervene and resolve any issues. Further, in the event of serious breakdown in communication between organizers, the IRSG reserves the right to appoint new chairs, if necessary or take such other steps as they deem necessary to ensure a successful conference.

Budget

It is expected that the initial budget will be adhered to in principle. Organizers will be asked to produce a revised budget, once authors have registered (probably by late January). After the conference the organizers will be asked for a final financial account after the conference. The IRSG should be notified if there are any major changes to the budget during the organization, such as substantial increases in costs or large increases in registration fees.

Reporting

During the organization of the conference there will be times when the IRSG will ask you to provide an update to the committee (such as submission of papers, number of registrations, accepted papers, etc). The committee usually meets four times per year (normally in January, May, September and November) and the General Chair or their nominated deputy are expected to report at these. At the end of the conference, the organizers should write (or arrange to have written) a report of the conference for the BCS-IRSG newsletter *Informer* (see <http://irsg.bcs.org/informer/>).

A final report will need to be provided after hosting the conference which will need to include information about the budget (with income and expenditure).

Types of Support for the Conference

IRSG/ECIR collaborates with various external organizations (such as Universities, Companies, and Charities) and this support is provided in a number of different ways. In order to properly acknowledge the different types of contribution from the different organizations, the following reference should be used:

- “in cooperation with”: denotes the collaboration between the IRSG and the host institution(s) which are financially responsible for the event.
- “is supported by”: denotes a collaboration between specialist groups and the like. A reciprocal agreement between the groups is in place, where IRSG members received discounts to event(s) organized by another SG, and vice versa. There is no financial link between organizations.
- “sponsored by”: denotes when a company, institute etc. donates resources (such as grants, cash or 'in kind' donations) or purchases marketing services (such as logo branding or advertising) from the conference.