



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 16.10.2015
C(2015) 6946 final

CONSOLIDATED TEXT

COMMISSION DECISION

of 16.10.2015

on the setting up of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors

as amended by Commission Decision C(2018)1919 of 5 April 2018 and by Commission Decision C(2023)2306 of 12 April 2023 amending Decision C(2015)6946 on the setting up of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors¹

*this text was compiled by the Secretariat of the Scientific Advice Mechanism
for the convenience of the reader only - the Commission Decisions mentioned prevail*

¹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/d1db0ae3-3aca-4293-ab40-f05071ccbcf7_en?filename=C_2018_1919_COMMISSION_DECISION_EN_new-link.pdf

Consolidated text

COMMISSION DECISION

of 16.10.2015

on the setting up of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/10461 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, and in particular Article 237 thereof,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/6952 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013, and in particular Articles 3 and 12 (6) thereof,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

WHEREAS:

- (1) Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 1291/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council² establishes the general objective of Horizon 2020 as contributing towards building a society and an economy based on knowledge and innovation across the Union. The achievement of that objective requires that policy decisions take into account scientific evidence.
- (2) Article 6 of Regulation (EU) 1291/2013 provides that the financial envelope of Horizon 2020 may cover expenses pertaining to preparatory, monitoring, control, audit and evaluation activities which are required for the management of Horizon 2020 and the achievement of its objectives, in particular studies and meetings of experts.

² Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) and repealing Decision N° 1982/2006/EC (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p.104).

- (3) Policy making requires robust evidence, impact assessment and adequate monitoring and evaluation. High quality scientific advice, provided at the right time, greatly improves the quality of EU legislation, and therefore contributes directly to the better regulation agenda³. In view of obtaining the best possible scientific evidence and advice, a new Scientific Advice Mechanism has been put in place to provide the Commission with high quality, timely and independent scientific advice. In order to improve the interaction between policy demand and the supply of scientific advice and to ensure the independence, scientific integrity and transparency of the advice provided, the Commission may need to call upon the expertise of high level scientific advisors.
- (4) It is therefore necessary to set up a high level expert group of scientific advisors and to define its tasks and its structure.
- (5) This group should provide independent scientific advice on specific policy issues where such advice is critical to the development of Union policies or legislation. The advice provided by the group should identify the most important and relevant evidence and empirical findings from any scientific field that can support decision making on the specified policy issues. In the light of those specific tasks, adequate financial support should be provided in the form of a special allowance for the group's members and invited experts, beyond reimbursement of expenses.
- (6) The group should be composed of highly qualified, specialised, independent experts, appointed in their personal capacity and who act independently and in the public interest. For their selection the Commission should be assisted by an independent Identification Committee. Selection should take place on the basis of objective criteria, following an open call for expressions of nominations.
- (7) As part of the Scientific Advice Mechanism, the group should be able to respond to requests for science advice from the College on any specific policy issue, including on those that the European Parliament and the Council consider to be of major importance.
- (8) The group should as much as possible seek to establish synergies with and add value to existing scientific advisory bodies within the Commission or other bodies, offices, or agencies, including those of the Joint Research Centre.
- (9) To ensure continuing operations whilst maintaining a solid constituency, the group should be composed of seven members and should be able to continue operating if one or two members step down until they are replaced. The group should have no less than five members.
- (10) The appointment of new members should be done following an independent and transparent selection process. The short list of candidates should serve as reserve list of suitable candidates to replace members.
- (11) To ensure continuity and building of experience, the group should be able to designate a chair and deputy for a duration of up to their term of office. Moreover, the Commission

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on better regulation for better results - An EU agenda (COM (2015) 215 final).

should be able to extend their mandate for a second term to a maximum of seven years. To remain within the threshold for remunerated experts established by Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, the maximum number of working days of the chair and the deputy-chair should be 60 working days per year.

- (12) Taking into account the new working arrangements in the Commission introduced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in step with the Commission policy on Greening the Commission the responsible Commission department should be able to convene meetings of the group in person and/or online.
- (13) Rules on disclosure of information by members of the group should be laid down.
- (14) Personal data should be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁴.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

Subject matter

The Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, hereinafter referred to as “the group”, is hereby set up.

Article 2

Task

The group's task shall be:

- (a) To provide the Commission with independent scientific advice on specific policy issues where such advice is critical to the development of EU policies or legislation and does not duplicate advice being provided by existing bodies. The advice provided by the group shall identify the most important and relevant evidence and empirical findings that can support decision making on the specified policy issues, including an assessment of the robustness and limitations of the evidence and empirical findings.
- (b) To support the Commission in identifying specific policy issues where independent scientific advice is needed.
- (c) To provide recommendations for improving the overall interaction between Commission policy making processes and independent scientific advice concerning any field of Union policy making.

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 1)

Article 2a
Consultation

1. The Commission may consult the group at any time on any policy field, defining the timespan in which advice is needed. After consultation of the thematically responsible member of the College, the Commissioner responsible for Research, Science and Innovation shall formulate the request for advice to the group and shall transmit advice from the group to the Commission.
2. The chair of the group may advise the Commission to consult the group on a specific policy issue.
3. The Commission may consult the group on issues considered to be of major importance by the European Parliament and the Council.

Article 3
Membership – Appointment

1. The group shall be composed of up to seven, but no less than five members, with an outstanding level of expertise and collectively covering a wide range of scientific fields and expertise.
2. Members shall be individuals appointed in their personal capacity and shall act independently and in the public interest. They shall inform the Commission in due time of any circumstance that could give rise to a conflict of interest.
3. Members shall be appointed by the Commissioner responsible for Research, Science and Innovation, following a selection process overseen by an Identification Committee. The Committee shall follow an independent and transparent procedure for the selection of the members and consultations shall take place in accordance with paragraph 8.
4. The Commission services shall publish an open call for nominations on the Europa website; a link from the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ("the Register") to the Europa website will also be ensured. This call shall invite the European research and scientific policy community to put forward high level nominations and specify the modalities for submitting those nominations. The deadline for nominations shall be of at least four weeks.
5. Once the nominations have been received, the Identification Committee shall help the Commission services in evaluating the nominations and identifying a short list of candidates covering all fields of science relevant for Union policy making.
6. The short-list will also serve as a reserve list of suitable candidates to replace members whose mandate expire or who have to step down.
7. The Identification Committee shall consider the following factors and criteria for identification of candidates for membership of the group:
 - (a) The composition of the group shall ensure that authoritative and absolutely independent scientific advice can be provided, combining wisdom and

experience with vision and imagination. The credibility of the group shall be built on the balance of qualities amongst the women and men who make it up, and they shall collectively reflect the breadth of the research community across Europe. Consideration shall also be given to younger next-generation leaders.

- (b) Members of the group shall individually have an undisputed reputation as research leaders and for their independence and commitment to research. They shall both have a track record of research practice and experience of scientific or policy leadership at the European or global level.
 - (c) Members shall reflect the broad disciplinary scope of research, embracing the natural sciences, medicine, and engineering, as well as the social sciences, economics, and the humanities. However, they shall not perceive themselves as representatives of a discipline or of a particular line of research; they shall have a broad vision which collectively reflects an understanding of important developments in research, including inter- and multi-disciplinary research, and the needs for scientific advice for policy at European level.
 - (d) Beyond their proven reputation as scientists and researchers, the membership shall collectively bring experience in providing scientific advice to policy makers, acquired across a broad range of Member States, and at European and international levels. That shall include experience in areas such as the public communication of science, data analytics and visualisation, involvement in legislative processes, studies of scientific advisory systems, and the wider political context in which the group is situated.
 - (e) The group shall include members with experience in bodies such as advisory councils and committees, government scientific advisors, academies of science and learned societies, universities, and research institutes. It may be valuable to the group to include members who have gained experience in more than one country and members from outside the European Union.
8. The Commissioner responsible for Research, Science and Innovation may ask the group for advice on the appropriate profile for a candidate. The Commissioner may furthermore ask the Identification Committee to ascertain itself of the suitability and willingness of specific candidates to serve as members of the group.
 9. Members shall be appointed for a term of office of up to three years, renewable once. The length of two consecutive terms shall not exceed five years. The term of the chair and deputy-chair can be renewed twice and shall not exceed seven years.
 10. Members who are no longer capable of contributing effectively to the group's deliberations, resign, have to step down or do not comply with the conditions set out in paragraph 2 of this Article or Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, shall no longer be invited to participate in any meetings of the group and may be replaced.
 11. The names of the members of the group shall be published on the Register.

12. Personal data shall be collected, processed, and published in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁵.

Article 4 **Operation**

1. The group shall meet between four and six times a year. The Commission may convene the group for additional meetings when urgent advice is needed. The Commission shall provide secretarial services.
2. The group will designate a chairperson (the chair) and a deputy chairperson (the deputy-chair) for a duration of up to their term of office.
3. The group shall operate in a collegial way, seeking consensus among its members and shall adopt its rules of procedures that shall seek to ensure, inter alia, that all members take an active role in all the activities of the group.
4. The Commissioner responsible for Research, Science and Innovation, or his/her representative, may attend the meetings and hold exchanges with the group, as may other Commissioners, or their representatives, as appropriate.
5. The members of the group and invited experts shall comply with the obligations of professional secrecy laid down by the Treaties and the rules implementing them as well as with the Commission's rules on security regarding the protection of EU classified information, laid down in Commission Decisions (EU, Euratom) 2015/443⁶ and 2015/444⁷. Should they fail to comply with those obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.
6. The Commission's representative may invite experts with specific competence in a subject on the agenda to take part in the work of the group.
7. All relevant documents (such as agendas and minutes) shall be made available either in the Register or via a link from the Register to a dedicated website on Europa, where information can be found. Access to dedicated websites shall not be submitted to user registration or any other restriction. Exceptions to publication are possible where disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

Article 5

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39).

⁶ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41).

⁷ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

Meeting expenses and compensation of the members

1. The members of the group shall be paid EUR 450 for each day of full attendance at a plenary meeting, EUR 225 for partial attendance and EUR 225/450 for each half/full day of remote work. They shall not have an employment relationship with the European Commission.
2. The members of the group can be asked by the Commission to devote up to forty (40) working days (including meetings and remote work) per year to these tasks. In the case of the chair and deputy-chair, the maximum number of working days is sixty (60).
3. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the group shall be reimbursed by the Commission in accordance with the provisions in force within the Commission.
4. All expenses related to the function of the group and of the Identification Committee shall be covered by the budget of the administrative expenditure of the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Those expenses shall be reimbursed within the limits of the available appropriations allocated under the annual procedure for the allocation of resources.

For the Commission

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Member of the Commission