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**COMMISSION DECISION**

**of 12.4.2023**

**amending Decision C(2015) 6946 on the setting up of the High Level Group of Scientific  
Advisors**

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## amending Decision C(2015) 6946 on the setting up of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

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

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046<sup>1</sup> 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) 2021/695<sup>2</sup> 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,

Whereas:

- (1) Commission Decision C(2015)6946 of 16 October 2015 established the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors ('group').
- (2) Article 3 of Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishes the general objective of Horizon Europe as to deliver scientific, technological, economic and societal impact from the Union's investments in Research & Innovation so as to strengthen the scientific and technological bases of the Union, to deliver on the Union strategic priorities and to contribute to the realisation of Union objectives and policies, to tackle global challenges, including the Sustainable Development Goals by following the principles of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, and to strengthen the European Research Area.
- (3) Furthermore, the specific objectives of Horizon Europe include developing, promoting, and advancing scientific excellence, generating knowledge, and strengthening the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting, and implementing Union policies.
- (4) The achievement of those objectives requires that policy decisions take into account scientific evidence.
- (5) The expenses related to the function of the group should be covered by the budget of the administrative expenditure of the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.
- (6) Policy making requires robust evidence, impact assessment and adequate monitoring and evaluation. Scientific evidence is one of the cornerstones of better regulation, to

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1.

establish an accurate description and understanding of the problem, and of the intervention logic, as well as to evaluate impacts. To ensure the timely availability of evidence for policymaking, policy needs must be anticipated, and the scientific community must be engaged in the regulatory process from the start<sup>3</sup>. By providing high-quality, timely and independent scientific advice, the Scientific Advice Mechanism, established by Decision C(2015) 6946, contributes to the improvement of the quality of Union legislation and continues to contribute directly to the implementation of the better regulation agenda.

- (7) Building on the experience gained since 2015, the improvement of interaction between policy demand and the supply of scientific advice, the strengthening of the role of scientific advice in policymaking, and the independence, scientific integrity and transparency of the advice provided should be further pursued to the highest standard<sup>4</sup>.
- (8) In order to enable the group to continue to provide high-quality, independent science advice to policy in a fast changing world, and to foster the group's place in the science advice for policy ecosystem, the operation of the group should be adapted.
- (9) 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.
- (10) The group should seek as much as possible to establish synergies with and add value to existing scientific advisory bodies within and outside the Commission.
- (11) 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.
- (12) 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.
- (13) 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 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.
- (14) 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<sup>5</sup> the responsible Commission department should be able to convene meetings of the group in person and/or online.

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<sup>3</sup> Commission Communication COM(2021) 219 final, of 29 April 2021, p. 2 on Better regulation: Joining forces to make better laws <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021-DC0219&from=DA>

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, p.6 e.s.

<sup>5</sup> Communication to the Commission C(2022) 2230 final of 5 April 2022, p.10 e.s. on Greening the Commission [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-04/c\\_2022\\_2230\\_2\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v11.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-04/c_2022_2230_2_en_act_part1_v11.pdf)

- (15) Personal data should be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council<sup>6</sup>.
- (16) Decision C(2015) 6946 should therefore be amended accordingly,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

*Sole Article*

Decision C(2015) 6946 is amended as follows:

- (1) Article 2a is amended as follows:

(a) paragraphs 1 and 2 are replaced by the following:

‘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.’;

(b) the following paragraph 3 is added:

‘3. The Commission may consult the group on issues considered to be of major importance by the European Parliament and the Council.’;

- (2) Article 3 is amended as follows:

(a) paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 are replaced by the following:

‘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.’;

(b) in paragraph 4, the following sentence is added:

‘The deadline for nominations shall be of at least four weeks.’;

(c) paragraph 6 is replaced by the following:

‘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.’;

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<sup>6</sup> 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)

(d) paragraphs 7 to 12 are replaced by the following:

‘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 Council<sup>7</sup>.’;

(3) Article 4 is amended as follows:

‘Article 4

### **Operation**

(a) paragraphs 1 to 4 are replaced by the following:

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.

(b) paragraph 7 is replaced by the following:

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.

(4) Article 5 is amended as follows:

‘Article 5

### **Meeting expenses and compensation of the members**

(a) paragraph 2 is replaced by the following:

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).

(b) paragraph 4 is replaced by the following:

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<sup>7</sup> 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).

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.’

Done at Brussels, 12.4.2023

*For the Commission  
Mariya GABRIEL  
Member of the Commission*