

ACTIVITY REPORT

**of the Identification Committee tasked with the
identification of candidates for membership of the
Group of Chief Science Advisors of the European
Commission**

01 September 2020

Members of the Identification Committee:

**Rianne Letschert
Janez Potočnik
Henrik Wegener**

INTRODUCTION - Mandate

The Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, appointed Ms Rianne Letschert, Mr Janez Potočnik and Mr Henrik Wegener (see short CVs in Annex 1) to act as the Identification Committee to the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors to the European Commission. Commissioner Gabriel entrusted the Committee with the task to identify candidates for membership of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors ('the Group' or 'GCSA')¹. The Commissioner requested the Committee to establish a short list of candidates for future replacement of members of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors and to identify within that list candidates to fill upcoming vacancies in the Group.

The work of the committee was carried out in accordance with the Statement of Methodology (Annex 2).

This report summarises the process and outcome of the work of the Committee.

1. CONTEXT

The Group was established in 2015 to provide the Commission with high quality, timely and independent scientific advice for its policy-making activities. During the past five years, this contributed to improving the quality of EU legislation, supporting the Better Regulation agenda.

The tasks of the Group are:

- (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.

¹ Commission Decision of 16 October 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 amending Decision C(2015)6946 on the setting up of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors, see https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/-groups/sam/c_2018_1919_ec_decision_consolidated.pdf

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- (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.

The Group is composed of seven members who are appointed by the Commissioner responsible for research, science and innovation, for a term of up to three years, renewable once. The length of two consecutive terms shall not exceed five years. Members shall remain in office until they are replaced or their term expires. The members shall have an outstanding level of expertise and collectively cover a wide range of scientific fields and expertise.

The Commission published a call for nominations of candidates for membership of the Group on the Europa website² that was open from 27 March to 15 June 2020. The call specified the candidate's profile, as well as the factors and criteria for selection to be considered by the Identification Committee³. Science and research organisations were encouraged to submit high quality nominations using a dedicated template to state the qualifications of the candidates they elected to nominate⁴.

The Commission also provided a link from the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ("the Register") to the Europa website of that hosts the webpage of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors.

Moreover, the Director General of the Directorate General for Research and Innovation sent a letter to the presidents of fourteen representative organisations of the European research and scientific community (see Annex 3). In that letter, he informed them of the call for nominations and encouraged them to propose outstanding candidates for membership of the Group. The Director-General also asked the presidents to forward the invitation to other relevant organisations.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/invitation-european-scientific-and-research-community-organisations-nominate-outstanding-candidates-membership-group-chief-scientific-advisors-2020-mar-27_en

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/groups/sam/description_of_the_profile_of_candidates_0.pdf

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/groups/sam/template_for_a_statement.docx

The Commission also published a hyperlink to the call announced on the abovementioned Europa Website by means of so called “banner ads” on the internet platforms of major scientific publishers⁵ and on the RTD Twitter account.

In response to the call, 125 organisations, including research performing and funding bodies, universities, academies, and learned societies, made 163 valid nominations from across Europe and beyond. Some candidates were nominated by several organisations. The nominations received, encompassed a wide range of scientific disciplines. More than half of the nominees (53%) were women.

2. METHODOLOGY/TIMING

The Identification Committee started its work in June 2020 shortly after the deadline of submission of nominations, i.e. 15 June 2020.

The work of the Identification Committee followed the same methodology that it had developed for its activities when establishing the first and second shortlist for the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors in 2015 and in 2018 respectively (See Annex 2).

With the support of the secretariat of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, the Committee examined all 163 nominations against the selection criteria set out in the call, which correspond with the *factors and criteria for identification of candidates for membership of the group* set out in Article 3, paragraph 7 of Commission Decision setting up the Group⁶.

The Committee invited twenty-seven candidates to its meeting of 26 and August and 1 September 2020 for an interview. The interviews took place by audio and video link.

The candidates were interviewed in a structured way, i.e. a standard set of questions was asked in an identical order in all interviews. Each candidate was asked, *inter alia*, to describe his or her experience with providing science advice to public authorities and cooperating in a multi-disciplinary environment. In addition, each candidate explicitly confirmed that he or she was willing and able to invest at least 40 working days per year work for the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (60 working days when elected as Chair or Vice-Chair) if he or she would be appointed by the Commissioner.

⁵ Oxford University Press OUP (<https://elt.oup.com/>), Springer Nature (<https://www.springernature.com/gp>), and New Engineer (<https://newengineer.com/>)

⁶ See footnote 1

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

After having conducted the interviews, the Committee reached consensus on a confidential reserve list of candidates for membership of the group, as well as on the smaller short list of candidates to fill vacancies that were upcoming in the near future (see Annex 4). The lists were submitted to the Commissioner responsible for research, science and innovation.

The lists will remain valid as a pool of candidates. If further vacancies in the membership of the Group will occur, the Commissioner responsible for research, science and innovation will appoint members from these lists.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In line with the Statement of Methodology, the Identification Committee recommended candidates with different and complementary expertise to ensure a good coverage of scientific disciplines relevant for EU policy making. It paid attention to achieving an appropriate gender balance as well as a high degree of diversity in terms of age and scientific disciplines.

For the Identification Committee,

Brussels, 1 September 2020

Rianne LETSCHERT

Janez POTOČNIK

Henrik WEGENER

Members of the SAM Identification Committee

Professor Dr Rianne Letschert

Professor Letschert is rector of the University of Maastricht since 1 September 2016. Previously she was professor of victimology and international law at the International Victimology Institute Tilburg (INTERVICT), where she was also director. Her work combines legal analysis with social sciences methodology.

In 2011 Letschert was appointed as professor to the new chair of victimology and international law at Tilburg University. Her research focused on the impact of international tribunals on societies and individuals that have been confronted with human rights violations and international crimes. Letschert joined the De Jonge Akademie (Young Academy) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2012. From April 2015 until June 2016 she serves a chairperson.

She is a member of the Board of Governance of the Dutch Victim Support Organization, and was expert consultant for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon on victim issues. She is member of the Advisory Committee Lifelong Convicts which advises the Dutch Minister of Justice.

Professor Letschert was member of the Identification Committee of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors in 2015 and 2018.

Dr Janez Potočnik

Dr Janez Potočnik graduated from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana and obtained there his PhD in 1994. He was appointed Director of the Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development of the Republic of Slovenia. In April 1998, he was appointed Head of Negotiating Team for Accession of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union. In 2002, Dr Potočnik became Minister without portfolio responsible for European Affairs.

Dr Potočnik became a Member of the European Commission in May 2004, sharing half of the year with the Enlargement portfolio with Günther Verheugen. Subsequently, until 2010 he was Commissioner responsible for Science and Research. In 2010, he took on a second mandate as Member of the European Commission responsible for Environment. The mandate ended November 2014 in which year he was appointed as a Co-Chair of International resource Panel hosted by United Nations Environment Programme as well as Chairman of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture and chair of the RISE foundation. He is also a Member of the European Policy Centre's Advisory Council. From April 2016 onwards, he is a Partner in SYSTEMIQ.

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Dr Potočník holds several honorary degrees (2008, Imperial College of London; 2009, Ghent University (Belgium), 2016, Aalto University, Finland). In September 2013, he received the United Nations' 2013 Champions of the Earth Award for the Efforts to Promote Resource Efficiency and Reduce Food Waste in European Union.

Professor Dr Henrik Wegener

Professor Henrik Wegener is rector of the University of Copenhagen (since 2017) and former chair of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (2015-2016).

He graduated in 1988 in food science and technology at the predecessor of the University of Copenhagen and received there his PhD in 1992. His primary research area is the study of the sources of infection and the routes of infection for infectious diseases (epidemiology and zoonoses). In 1999 and 2000, he was seconded expert to the WHO, Zoonotic Diseases and from 1999 to 2004 Professor at the Danish Zoonosis Centre. Professor Wegener was director of the National Food institute at the Technical University of Denmark from 2007-2001, and its Executive Vice-President from 2011-2017, the year where he became Rector of the University of Copenhagen.

Professor Wegener received several honorary distinctions (2015 Knight of the Order of Dannebrog and Chevalier in the FR ordre des Palmes académiques in 2016) and held and holds numerous advisory functions in Denmark, Europe and beyond.

Identification Committee of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors**Statement of methodology****1. INTRODUCTION**

The members of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors ('Group') of the Scientific Advice Mechanism ('SAM') are appointed by the Commissioner responsible for research, science and innovation based on a search process carried out by an independent Identification Committee. The Identification Committee carries out its work independently and transparently.

The 2020 identification process concerned the establishment of a short list of candidates to replace members of the Group in the future as well as the identification, within that list, of candidates to fill vacancies that are upcoming in the near future. The identification was preceded by a consultation of the research and science community of Europe.

The methodology set out in this statement is similar to the one that was used for the consultation and identification in 2015 and 2018. It draws on the approach followed by the Identification Committee of the Scientific Council of the European Research Council ('ERC').

2. CONSULTATION OF THE RESEARCH AND SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY OF EUROPE

The mandate given to the Committee by the Commissioner responsible for research, science and innovation was to create a pool of suitable candidates for membership of the Group and to identify among those, candidates that are particularly suitable to fill upcoming vacancies. The candidates which the Committee examined were those that were nominated by research and science organisations in Europe in response to an open call for nominations. The call was launched by the European Commission on 27 March 2020 and was open until 15 June 2020.

The current process is the second update of the pool since the Group was created in 2015. The previous reserve list was depleted because of replacements of members who retired from the Group.

Contrary to the 2015 process where the Committee itself actively reached out to the main organisations representing the various segments of the research and scientific policy community at European level, the current consultation was, like the 2018 process, initiated and managed by the European Commission.

The Director-General of DG RTD sent a letter to the presidents of fourteen European science and research organisations on 27 March 2020. He invited them to put forward high-level nominations to be assessed by the Identification Committee based on the criteria set out in Article 3, paragraph 7 of Commission Decision C(2015)6946 of 16 October 2015 on the setting

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up of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors as amended by Commission Decision
C(2018)1919 of 5 April 2018⁷.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/groups/sam/c_2018_1919_ec-decision_consolidated.pdf

Moreover, the call for nominations was published on the SAM website⁸ to allow other interested representative organisations of the research and scientific policy community to suggest apposite candidates.

The call was also published as a *banner ad* on the internet platforms of major scientific publishers⁹ and on the RTD Twitter account.

Self-nominations were not allowed. All candidates, regardless of the source of nomination were assessed by the Committee following the process described in Section 4 (see below).

3. FACTORS AND CRITERIA TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

The factors and criteria for identification of the members are those that are set out in Article 3, paragraph 7 of the abovementioned Commission Decision.

The composition of the Group should allow demonstrating that the scientific advice that the Group is requested to provide at the request of the College of Commissioners is authoritative and undeniably independent. The Group should combine wisdom and experience with vision and imagination. The credibility of the Group is built on the balance of qualities amongst the men and women who make it up, and they should collectively reflect the breadth of the research community across Europe. Members of the Group must individually have an undisputed reputation as research leaders and for their independence and commitment to research. Generally, they must be current or recent research practitioners, and have exercised scientific and policy leadership at European or global level. Consideration should also be given to younger next-generation leaders.

Members must 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 should not identify themselves as representatives of a discipline or of a particular line of research and should not perceive themselves as such; they should 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.

Beyond their proven reputation as scientists and researchers, the membership should collectively bring experience in providing scientific advice to policy makers, acquired across a broad range of EU Member States, and at European and international levels. This should include skills in the public communication of science, as well as experience in areas such as data analytics and visualisation, involvement in legislative processes, studies of scientific advisory systems, and the wider political context in which the Group is situated.

⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/research/sam/index.cfm?pg=home>

⁹ Oxford University Press OUP (<https://elt.oup.com/>), Springer Nature (<https://www.springernature.com/gp>), and New Engineer (<https://newengineer.com/>)

The membership should reflect the range of scientific institutions, which provide policy relevant advice; it should include those with experience in advisory councils and committees, government scientific advisors, academies of science and learned societies, universities and research institutes, for example. Members who have gained experience in more than one country could be valuable to the Group, and some members may be drawn from outside Europe. A balance between men and women shall be sought.

4. METHODOLOGY

To draw up the list of candidates, the organisations consulted and other organisations that wished to nominate experts, were asked to suggest names of persons who in their opinion:

- Have the highest eminence as scientific leaders and the qualifications and experience reflecting the criteria set out above;
- Are available and willing to work as a member of the SAM HLG independently of any other interest, and
- Are deemed to have the trust and confidence of the scientific community and of policy makers.

The Identification Committee was instructed to treat the names and personal details of candidates as confidential. It should only consider nominations that were accompanied by a statement signed by the nominating organisation regarding the qualifications and broader profile of each candidate, to allow it to make an informed judgement of the qualifications of the candidate.

The information to be provided by the statement should include:

- A synopsis of the candidate's background and curriculum vitae;
- Relevant professional experience (e.g. universities, scientific institutions, business, government, etc., indicating also any experience with regard to administrative or scientific advice to policy);
- Major publications and other significant works and prizes;
- Broader aspects of the candidate as appropriate (e.g. country of residence, experience abroad, nationalities).

The aforementioned letter that was sent to the presidents of the main European research and science organisations as well as the call for nominations that was published on the SAM website (see section 2) contained in annex a template for a Statement on Qualifications to prompt respondents to provide the aforementioned information about their nominees. The aforementioned *banner ad* on the internet platforms of major scientific publishers and the Twitter message, contained a hyperlink to the SAM website.

The Committee was requested to pay particular attention to the stated availability of nominees to participate in the activities of the Group. The Group usually meets six times per year for one to two days in Brussels. Sometimes meetings take place in other European cities, or online to respond to travel restrictions in the wake of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The working language is English. The maximum number of days that members are expected to

devote to the activities of the Group is up to 40 working days, which includes meetings and remote work. The chair and deputy chair are expected to dedicate up to 60 working days to their activities per year.

The call for nominations mentioned that while the nomination of candidates does not guarantee selection, the nominating organisations were expected to establish the willingness and availability of their candidates before they forwarded their name.

5. MAIN REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

The organisations that were consulted are listed in Annex 3.

These organisations were invited to submit nominations. At the same time, they were asked to invite their respective national affiliates to submit their nominations directly in order to speed up and simplify the process.

As stated above, other interested representative organisations of the scientific community were encouraged to put forward high-level nominations during the period that the call for nomination was open. As mentioned before, the consultation was announced on the webpage of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (Europa website). A hyperlink to that webpage was included in banner ads that were published on the platforms of main scientific publishers as well as in dedicated Twitter messages.

6. TIMETABLE OF THE WORK OF THE IDENTIFICATION COMMITTEE

The schedule of the identification process was as follows:

- March-April 2020 – publication of the call for nominations on the Webpage of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (Europa Website), consultation letters sent to representative organisations, and a hyperlink to the aforementioned Webpage published via online platforms of main scientific publishers;
- 15 June 2020 – Deadline for the reception of nominations;
- June-July 2020 – examination of the profiles of candidates by the members of the Identification Committee, and agreement on the candidates to be interviewed;
- 26 August and 1 September 2020 – meeting of the Identification Committee, interviews of candidates by videoconference, and drawing up of the confidential reserve list (containing a short list of candidates for upcoming vacancies);
- September 2020 adoption of the activity report of the Identification Committee.

ANNEX 3

List of consulted organisations that provided nominations for members of the Scientific Advice Mechanism Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

The following organisations were consulted (in alphabetical order):

1. EASAC (European Academies' Science Advisory Council)
2. EUROCASE (The European Council of Applied Sciences and Engineering)
3. ALLEA (All European Academies)
4. FEAM (Federation of the European Academies of Medicines)
5. Academia Europaea (organisation representing individual scientists and scholars)
6. Business Europe
7. EARTO (European Association of Research and Technology Organisations)
8. EASC (European Academy of Sciences)
9. EIRMA (European Industrial Research Management Association).
10. ESF (European Science Foundation)
11. EUA (European University Association)
12. LERU (League of European Research Universities)
13. SCIENCE EUROPE (Association of European Research Funding Organisations and Research Performing Organisations)
14. Young academy of Europe

On top of the nominations provided by the above-mentioned organisations and their affiliated organisations such as national academies and universities, also other organisations sent in their nominations, in response to the call for nominations on the SAM website.

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LIST OF CANDIDATES SHORTLISTED BY THE
IDENTIFICATION COMMITTEE OF THE GROUP OF CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISORS

In comments section: Short List for replacement of upcoming vacancies (November 2020 and May 2021) and reserve list for future replacements

Withheld

¹⁰ Not directly available because of involvement in COVID response

¹¹ Not directly available because of involvement in COVID response