



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
Public Health and Risk Assessment
Risk assessment

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INFORMATION SHEET ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEES
AND
GUIDANCE FOR REGISTRATION IN THE DATABASE OF EXPERTS



This document is intended to inform and guide scientists and other professionals with relevant expertise on health, safety and environmental risk matters wishing to register as experts in a data base established by the Health and Consumers Directorate General of the European Commission to support the activities of the Commission risk assessment advisory structure.

1. MISSION AND PROFILE OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEES AND THE POOL OF ADVISORS

The European Commission has established three independent Scientific Committees (SC) that provide scientific advice on health and environmental risks in the non-food area. These Committees are supported by the Health and Consumers Directorate General (DG SANCO), unit C7 (Risk Assessment), and fulfil their tasks according to the Commission decisions 2008/721/EC and 2009/146/EC.^{1,2}

1. The Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety - SCCS
2. The Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks - SCHER
3. The Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risk - SCENIHR

Mission of the Commission Scientific Committees

The core element of the Commission's Scientific Committees work is the development and drafting of scientific opinions at the request of the Commission. In addition, the Commission may also on occasion request the Scientific Committees to provide rapid advice on the state of scientific knowledge concerning specific risks in cases of urgent need. The Scientific Committees may also be called upon to identify research needs and assess research results in relation to the subject areas covered by its fields of competence.

Furthermore, the Scientific Committees may decide to set up thematic workshops in order to review data and scientific knowledge on particular risks or on broad risk assessment issues.

Finally, on their own initiative, the Scientific Committees can draw the Commission's attention to a specific or emerging problem falling within their remit, which they consider may pose an actual or potential risk to consumer safety, public health or the environment, by adopting and addressing to the Commission memoranda or position statements.

Each Committee is composed of 17 members.

The **Scientific Committees on Consumer Services (SCCS)** provides opinions on questions concerning health and safety risks of non-food consumer products (for example: cosmetic products and their ingredients, toys, textiles, clothing, personal care and household products such as detergents, etc.) and services (for example: tattooing, artificial sun tanning, etc.).

¹ Commission Decision (2008/721/EC) please see:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:241:0021:0030:EN:PDF>
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:244:0034:0034:EN:PDF>

² Commission Decision 2009/146/EC of 19/02/09 on the appointment of the members and advisors of the Scientific Committees and the Pool set up by Decision 2008/721/EC

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:049:0033:0042:EN:PDF>

The **Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER)** provides opinions on health and environmental risks related to pollutants in the environment other biological and physical factors or changing physical conditions which may have a negative impact on health and the environment. It also addresses health and safety issues related to the toxicity and eco-toxicity of biocides.

In addition, the SCHER in collaboration with other European agencies and in particular the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) will address questions relating to the toxicity and eco-toxicity of chemical, biochemical and biological compounds and to broader methodological aspects of the assessment of health and environmental risks of chemicals, including mixtures of chemicals.

The Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks provides opinions on questions concerning emerging or newly identified health and environmental risks and on broad, complex or multidisciplinary issues requiring a comprehensive health assessment. Examples of potential areas of activity include potential risks associated with interaction of risk factors, synergistic effects, cumulative effects, antimicrobial resistance, new technologies such as nanotechnologies, physical hazards such as noise and electromagnetic fields (e.g. from mobile phones) and methodologies for assessing new risks. It may also be invited to address risks related to public health determinants and non-transmissible diseases.

2. POOL OF ADVISORS / DATABASE OF SPECIALISED EXPERTS

In addition, there is a Pool of Scientific Advisors. Members of the Committees and of the Pool of Scientific Advisors have been appointed by the Commission following a recent open call for expressions of interest³.

The Pool of scientific advisors consists of experts with similar profiles and expertise as the members of the Scientific Committees. The Scientific Committees can call up to 5 scientific advisors from the Pool as associate members to contribute to a committee's work on specific issues. The associated members participate in the activities and deliberations on a given subject and have the same functions, responsibilities and rights as the members of the Scientific Committee. Advisors may also replace members of the Scientific Committees who resign or whose membership is terminated on a permanent basis.

3. FUNCTIONING OF THE THREE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEES

Working of Scientific Committees

The drafting of a scientific opinion by one of the European Commission's Scientific Committees begins with the formation of the mandate (question) by the requesting European Commission service. The Scientific Committees examine the question and together with the requesting service may modify it to improve clarity and scope. In some instances, the mandate is also open to a public consultation as a draft working mandate via the internet to allow stakeholders to contribute to the development of the question.

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:245:0023:0025:EN:PDF>

In developing its opinion, a Scientific Committee must always aim to use the best and most recently available scientific data. The data and scientific information used by Scientific Committees comes from a variety of sources including: from the European Commission from other European institutions; from particular stakeholders (e.g. industry) in response to regulatory requirements; from member states; from other stakeholders (e.g. Non-Governmental Organisations); from international organisations or third countries; from the public domain. In addition, the Scientific Committees also gather data and information through public calls for information.

In the drafting phase of a given opinion, the Scientific Committees rely on a series of Working Groups comprising Committee members, associate members from the Pool and experts from the data base of experts. Opinions are developed and discussed during several meetings of the Working Group and once an opinion reaches the desired level of maturity, it is discussed and eventually adopted during one of the plenary sessions of the scientific committee.

During the course of their work on a particular subject, the Scientific Committees may organise and conduct closed or open expert hearings, request additional information or organise small workshops. In addition, on some occasions, draft final opinions are also put on the internet for public consultation or presented and discussed with stakeholders in public hearings in order to allow other scientific bodies and stakeholders to comment on the document before it is adopted in its final form.

Each scientific committee meets in plenary sessions between five and ten times per year. In addition, at the request of the European Commission the members of the Scientific Committees may develop joint opinions on subjects of broad interest and collaborate with other scientific bodies (European Union, national or international) for the development of joint opinions or to address possible divergences of opinions.

Examples of opinions of the Commission Scientific Committees

Some examples of recent opinions include: the safety of hydrogen peroxide in tooth whitening products, the safety of hair dyes, of artificial tanning devices, the assessment of the possible health risks of chemicals (phthalates) used in children's toys and childcare articles, the biodegradation of surfactants used in detergents, the health effects of electromagnetic fields, of mobile telephones and of personal music players.

Principles of operation of the Commission Scientific Committees

Independence

The European Commission Scientific Committees comprise 17 members. These members are independent scientists who are selected on their personal capacity and not as representatives of their academic institution, their national government or their employer. Procedurally the selection is conducted following an open call for the expression of interest and application of interested scientists. This is followed by a rigorous selection procedure by Commission officials with experience in the field and with assistance from outside experts. There are clear conditions for the declaration of personal and professional interests.

Excellence

Proven scientific excellence in the field of speciality and extensive international and multidisciplinary experience in scientific advice and risk assessment are essential requirements for the members of the European Commission Scientific Committees. The intent is to ensure that only high calibre scientists are recruited to deliver robust, high quality opinions that not only provide a solid basis for policy making but also become the reference scientific views on a given subject.

Transparency

The principle of transparency permeates all aspects of the European Commission Scientific Committees functioning. The activities, including the names, curriculum vitae and declarations of interest of the members, the meeting agendas and minutes, the mandates, (questions), opinions and position statements/memoranda are all published on the Scientific Committee internet site (http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/committees_en.htm).

Confidentiality

There are also clear and strict rules requiring the members, advisors and external experts of the Scientific Committees to keep information that they have acquired during their work on a particular subject confidential if they have been informed to that effect by the European Commission.

Stakeholder relations

The European Commission Scientific Committees strive to maintain an open two way dialogue with their stakeholders. This is in recognition of the fact that risk governance, public accountability and addressing the concerns of European citizens are key parameters for a system of scientific advice in the European Union. . This dialogue takes the form of organised events; person to person encounters; communication activities that aim to reach a wider more diverse public audience.

The opinions of the European Commission Scientific Committees have been used and will continue to be used in current and future policy making so that European citizens can enjoy a high level of protection on consumer safety, public health, food and the environment.

4. ROLE AND COMPOSITION OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Members of the Pool and external experts may be included in the activities of different working groups, in the provision of rapid advice requested by the Commission, or in thematic workshops/scientific meetings.

Establishment and role of Working Groups

The Scientific Committees may establish the Working Groups to undertake tasks which are clearly defined and directly linked to the question submitted by the Commission. In particular, the Working

Group may be asked to undertake all necessary preparatory tasks in relation to a draft opinion. The Scientific Committees can require that these tasks be completed within a set period.

Working Groups comprise at least one member of the Scientific Committee that convened them and may include Advisors and external experts, as well as experts from other Community bodies. Working Groups shall be chaired by a member of the Scientific Committee that convened it, or an Advisor associated to the Committee.

Members, advisors and external experts of a Working Group are designated by its Chair in agreement with the Chair of the Scientific Committee and in collaboration with the Secretariat. They shall be invited to meetings by the Secretariat.

A Working Group endeavours to reach a consensus. In the absence of a consensus, the position of the Working Group shall be that approved by a simple majority of its members.

The Working Group reports to the Scientific Committee to whose work it contributes, providing it with such reports or draft opinions as the Committee has requested.

The list of participants in the Working Groups is attached to the opinion to which they have contributed.

5. THE DATABASE OF SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS


In order to support the work of the Committees, the European Commission has set up and manages a Database of Experts. This Database is permanently open to scientists who wish to contribute to the work of the Scientific Committees on an ad hoc basis, on specific issues, as members of working groups or on the occasion of scientific hearings and workshops. Members of the working groups actively contribute to scientific discussions, examine documents, make comments during meetings, and may act as "rapporteurs" for the preparation of opinions. Meetings usually take place in Brussels.

Registration in the database will remain permanently open.

6. HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE DATABASE

Interested scientists are invited to fill out the online application form which is available in Microsoft Word format only. The form together with their full list of publications is to be submitted as an attachment via e-mail to [**Sanco-call-experts-2008@ec.europa.eu**](mailto:Sanco-call-experts-2008@ec.europa.eu). The attachment may be either a Microsoft Word document or an Adobe Acrobat pdf file.

The application form is available at the following internet link: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/call_expression_en.htm

All individuals with a good command of the English language and with a university degree in a relevant scientific area, preferably at postgraduate level, are welcome to join the Database of Experts. Interested scientists should consult the EC Decision [**2008/721/EC**](#)  establishing the Advisory Structure and in particular its annexes. Those annexes contain more details about the fields of competence and the applicable indemnities, which are to be re-assessed in 2009 in accordance with the price indexes.

7. HOW TO MONITOR THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEES AND GET MORE INFORMATION

Information on the work of the Scientific Committees can be found at our website http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/committees_en.htm