

Special announcement for the setting-up of a High Level Group of Innovators to provide expert advice to the European Commission in designing and developing a European Innovation Council (EIC)

The European Commission attaches great importance to generating high impact from public investments in support of innovation at EU level. In the words of Commissioner Moedas, *"Europe does not yet have a world class scheme to support the very best innovations in the way the European Research Council is the global reference for supporting excellent science. So I would like us to take stock of the various schemes to support innovation and SMEs under Horizon 2020, to look at best practice internationally, and to design a new European Innovation Council."*

In order to ensure the Commission can benefit from high level advice from active innovators in taking forward this ambitious political initiative, the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) intends to establish a High Level Group of Innovators. This Group is expected to play a crucial role in providing a user perspective on EU innovation support and advise the Commission on potential reforms.

1. Background

Innovation is central to Europe's ability to generate new jobs and economic growth in the coming years and to tackle major challenges that society is facing. While Europe performs well on some measures of innovation (e.g. generation of scientific knowledge, leadership in some technology fields) a key weakness relates to the lack of 'market-creating innovation' and scale-ups. Recent decades have seen the emergence of major new markets based on ICT, biotechnology, consumer internet, and the collaborative economy. Despite early technology leads, the EU has created few companies that are global leaders in these new markets.¹ Moreover, while Europe compares relatively well in terms of new company formation, it falls well short on their subsequent growth and scaling up. This is manifested by the number of 'unicorns' (start-ups that have reached a market valuation of over €1 billion) and their relative size. Europe is home to only 19 unicorns, compared to over 100 in the US², and their combined value is less than half the current market value of Facebook.

The current generation of EU funding programmes have increased support for innovation. Horizon 2020 is the first EU programme to integrate research and innovation, with strengthened support for public private partnerships (PPPs), innovative SMEs, and use of financial instruments. However, in a recent 'Call for Ideas' on a possible European Innovation Council, most of the responses thought that gaps remain in innovation support, and in particular for market creating innovation and scale ups³. Many ideas were submitted for improvements and new approaches, e.g. improving the user interface, more "bottom up" support for projects at the intersection between different technologies and sectors, reforming and accelerating the project evaluation processes, introducing mentoring and non-financial support, etc.

¹ According to the 2016 WEF technology pioneer list only six out of the top 30 companies are European while 21 come from the US.

² Fortune (2016) 'The Unicorn List'

³ https://ec.europa.eu/research/eic/pdf/eic_call_for_ideas-overview.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none

The Commission, assisted by the Group, intends to introduce a first set of reforms to innovation support within the existing legal and financial framework of Horizon 2020, for the period 2018-2020, and to consider the case for more far reaching reforms in the preparations for the next EU Research and Innovation Framework Programmes post-2020.

2. High Level Group of Innovators - Terms of Reference

The High Level Group's main objective will be to provide strategic advice to the Commission on the design, implementation and follow up of a potential European Innovation Council. This will include:

- (i) the future design and delivery of EU level support for 'market-creating' innovation, in the context of preparations for the next Framework Programme ('FP9'); and
- (ii) the design and implementation of an EIC 'pilot' for the years 2018-20⁴, which will focus on
 - Adjustments to existing funding instruments in order to target support for and the scaling up of market-creating innovation; and
 - Modifications to existing business processes (applications, evaluations) to better fit the needs of market creating innovation and scale ups;
 - Upgrading non-funding support to innovators, such as mentoring and coaching.
 - Improvements to the marketing and information provided on EU innovation instruments under Horizon 2020 in order to improve their visibility and ease of access to innovators; and
 - Improve the data and analysis of supported projects in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in the innovation ecosystem.

The outputs of the High Level Group will feed into the Horizon 2020 Work Programme for the period 2018-20, as well as the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020 and preparations for the future EU research and innovation programme.

The High Level Group will benefit from interactions with ongoing initiatives, for example the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020, the Start Up Europe initiative⁵, the Start Up initiative⁶, the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT), the support to access risk finance managed by the EIB Group, EUREKA, as well as those at national and regional levels.

3. Duration

The High Level Group is expected to start its work by early 2017 with an initial duration of 24 months, which may be renewable.

⁴ Note that any changes proposed by the HLG to the operation of Horizon 2020 must be in full compliance with the existing legal and budgetary framework

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/startup-europe>

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=8723

The High Level Group will meet up to 4 times a year in plenary with all its members to discuss the general orientations and the documents that will be provided by the Commission based on input received from the wider European innovation community.

Members should be prepared to attend meetings systematically, to examine and provide comments on documents under discussion, to contribute actively to discussions in the group, to prepare working documents, and to act, as appropriate, as advocates for a putative EIC.

4. Selection procedure

Applications are invited from individuals acting in a personal capacity, who are already active in different parts of the innovation ecosystem, notably:

- Entrepreneurs who have started up and scaled up innovative enterprises at European/global level;
- Investor and start-up communities (including banks, Venture Capitalists, Business Angels, crowdfunders etc.);
- Those involved in the wider innovation ecosystem (knowledge transfer, business schools, innovation hubs, accelerators, etc.)

Members of the High Level Group should have appropriate language skills for the tasks to be carried out. They will be nominated in accordance with the Commission rules on expert groups⁷.

The Commission will assess applicants against the following factors and criteria:

- Track record in the start-up and/or scale up of innovative firm(s) at EU/international level (e.g. as entrepreneur, provider of risk finance);
- Commitment and passion for innovation;
- Major contributions to the development of the broader innovation ecosystem at EU/national/regional level (e.g. through involvement in the design and delivery of public support for innovation);
- Recognition of authority and/or achievements, for example in the form of prizes and awards obtained at national, European or international level;
- The need to strike a balance within the members of the group in terms of skills, experience, gender, age and geographical origin.

5. Appointment

The Director-General of DG Research and Innovation will appoint candidates complying with these requirements. The Members of the HLG shall be remunerated for the work they will perform and will be entitled to a payment of a maximum of EUR 450 per working day. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred will be reimbursed in accordance with the Commission provisions in force.

⁷ C(2016) 3301 final, 30.05.2016

6. Logistical and operational aspects

The High Level Group shall meet in Brussels in Commission premises or in another place announced in accordance with the procedures and schedule established by the Commission.

The activities of the High Level Group will be supported by DG RTD.

7. Rules of engagement

The High Level Group, including the name of its members, will be registered in the *Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities*⁸. The Commission will make available all relevant documents, including the agendas, the minutes and the participants' submissions, either on the Register of expert groups or *via* a link from the Register to a dedicated website, where this information can be found. Exceptions to publication shall only be foreseen where it is deemed that disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001⁹¹⁰. The Personal data will be collected, processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001.

If you are interested in participating in this High Level Group, please complete the following 3 steps:

1. Register as an Expert through the following website:
<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal4/desktop/en/experts/index.html>;
2. Send an e-mail to RTD-EIC-HIGH-LEVEL-GROUP@ec.europa.eu confirming your interest with your Name, Surname, Expert ID (starting with EX...)¹⁰; and
3. Complete this web-based application form:
<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/EIC-High-level-group-on-innovation>

The deadline for receipt of applications is **27 October 2016**.

DG Research and Innovation (unit RTD.B.1.) will then contact you to request some documents that will be necessary to complete your application¹¹.

Please note that this announcement does not constitute any commitment from the Commission.

⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/>

⁹ These exceptions are intended to protect public security, military affairs, international relations, financial, monetary or economic policy, privacy and integrity of the individual, commercial interests, court proceedings and legal advice, inspections/investigations/audits and the institution's decision-making process.

¹⁰ Candidates meeting the profile above will be asked to register in a list that is continually updated by an open-ended call for applications (call addressed to individuals for the establishment of a database of prospective independent experts to assist Commission services with tasks in connection with Horizon 2020 — the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (OJ C342 of 22 November 2013):
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/h2020_call-individual_experts_oj_c342_03.pdf

¹¹ Individuals applying to be appointed as members of the group in a personal capacity must disclose any circumstances that could give rise to a conflict of interest by submitting the basis of the standard Declaration of Interests (DOI) form. Submission of a duly completed DOI form is necessary in order to be eligible to be appointed in a personal capacity. DG Research and Innovation departments will perform the conflict of interest assessment in compliance with Commission rules.