



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN A EUROPEAN COMMISSION HIGH LEVEL ADVISORY GROUP ON RETAIL COMPETITIVENESS

1. BACKGROUND

The Commission is hereby calling for applications with a view to selecting members of the High Level Group on Retail Competitiveness (HLG).

The Commission's Retail Market Monitoring Report identified in 2010 a number of barriers to the Single Market in Retail. The importance of those barriers has been confirmed in 2011 in the European Parliament's Report "Towards a more efficient and fair retail sector". This report referred to a yearly "Retail Market Roundtable"¹ to be organised by the European Parliament where progress on measures to strengthen the EU's retail market could be discussed.

To address the key obstacles identified in both reports and to unleash the full potential of the retail sector in Europe by improving its competitiveness and enhancing its economic, environmental and social performance, the Commission has adopted on 31 January 2013 a European Retail Action Plan².

The actions in the European Retail Action Plan relate to five key priorities:

- Empowering consumers through better information
- Improving accessibility to retail services by promoting an exchange of good practices between Member States on commercial and spatial planning
- Fairer and more sustainable trading relationships along the food and non-food supply chain
- Ensuring a better link between retail and innovation
- Creating a better work environment, for example through better matching the needs of employers and staff skills.

¹ See paragraph 42 of the European Parliament's Report on a more efficient and fairer retail market (2010/2109(INI)) - Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection - Rapporteur: Anna Maria Corazza Bildt.

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European and Economic Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions setting up a *European Retail Action Plan* (COM(2013) 036 final of 31 January 2013).

In its European Retail Action Plan, the Commission announced the establishment of a Group on Retail Competitiveness to help trigger a “retail reflex” in the political agenda to increase awareness of retail issues and concerns.

The work of this HLG would therefore be complementary to the work to be undertaken by the Retail Market Roundtable organised by the European Parliament’s Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection.

2. OBJECTIVE

The HLG should assist the Commission in developing policies to improve the long-term competitiveness of the EU retail sector. For this purpose, the tasks of the HLG include:

- to help the Commission to monitor progress achieved for the actions identified in the European Retail Action Plan by providing insight concerning the practical implementation of these policies and make recommendations on the implementation, if needed;
- to exchange views and highlight best practices in order to advise the Commission on measures to enhance the competitiveness of the retail sector, and
- to advise the Commission on the development of further new actions which could be proposed, if necessary.

3. FEATURES OF THE GROUP

3.1. Composition

The members of the HLG shall be selected among:

- (a) Large companies active in the retail industry;
- (b) Small and medium size companies and/or cooperatives active in the retail industry;
- (c) Social partners/trade unions in the retail industry;
- (d) Associations representing consumers;
- (e) Large companies active as suppliers;
- (f) Small and medium sized companies and/or cooperatives active as suppliers.

Members shall appoint high level representatives, preferably at CEO or executive level. The HLG will be of a small format, ideally of 15, but not more than 20 members. The group shall be chaired by a representative of the Commission.

3.2. Terms of Appointment

Members shall be appointed for two years. Their term of office may be renewed. If a member leaves the HLG, he/she may be replaced by a new member appointed by the Commission.

3.3. Confidentiality

Members of expert groups and their representatives, as well as invited experts and observers, shall comply with the obligations of professional secrecy laid down by the Treaties and their implementing rules, as well as with the Commission's rules on security regarding the protection of EU classified information, laid down in the Annex to Commission Decision 2001/844/EC, ECSC, Euratom³. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

3.4. Transparency

The members' names will be collected, processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

The names of members shall be published on the Internet site of the Directorate-General for the Internal Market as well as in the Register of Commission Expert Groups and other similar entities.

All relevant documents (such as agendas, minutes and participants' submissions) will be made available, either in the Register itself or *via* a link from the Register to a dedicated website, where information can be found. Exceptions to systematic publication are justified where disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) N° 1049/2001⁴.

3.5. Attendance at meetings

The HLG shall hold its meetings at Commission premises in Brussels. The representative of the Commission may invite experts from outside the group with specific competence in a subject on the agenda to participate in the work of the group. In addition, the Commission's representative may give observer status to individuals, organisations as defined in Rule 8(3) of the horizontal rules on expert groups and candidate countries.

³ Commission Decision 2001/844/EC, ECSC, Euratom of 29 November 2001 amending its internal Rules of Procedure (OJ L 317, 3.12.2001, p. 1).

⁴ 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.

Applicants should be prepared to attend meetings, contribute actively to discussions in the group, examine and provide comments on documents under discussion and act, as appropriate, as ‘rapporteurs’ on *ad hoc* basis.

Applicants should take into account that meetings generally involve preparatory work.

4. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

4.1. Application Requirements

Interested applicants are required to submit their application to the European Commission.

An application will be deemed admissible only if it includes the documents referred to in Section 5.2 below, sent at the latest by the deadline per Section 4.2 below. All required documents should be duly filled in, legible, signed and numbered sequentially. All these documents will be used in the selection procedure.

Each application must be completed in one of the official language of the European Union. However, applications in English would facilitate the evaluation procedure. If another language is used, it would be desirable to include a summary in English.

The application must clearly specify the stakeholder category (large companies active in the retail industry, small and medium size companies and/or cooperatives active in the retail industry, social partners/trade union in the retail industry, consumers associations, large companies active in the suppliers’ industry, small and medium sized companies and/or cooperatives active in the suppliers’ industry) for which the application is made.

The application must clearly indicate the country where the organisation is based or the country which the organisation represents, if applicable, in order to ensure a geographically balanced group.

Supporting documents may be requested at a later stage.

4.2. Application Deadline and Delivery Address

Applications must be sent no later than **23 JULY 2013** (date of the email) to the following e-mail address: MARKT-RETAIL@ec.europa.eu.

5. REQUIREMENTS

5.1. Selection Criteria

The Commission will take the following criteria into account when assessing representatives of applying organisations:

- The representative of the respective organisation holds a CEO or an executive level position in the organisation.
- Relevant demonstrable knowledge and competence in different issues relating to the retail sector.

- Recent practical expertise and experience, including at European and/or international level.
- Proficiency in English to a level which allows the representative to participate in discussions and the drafting of reports, if required.

In addition, applicants must be organisations established in a Member State of the European Union or, if appropriate, of an acceding country or a European Economic Area country or a state which has signed an association agreement.

In the selection process, the Commission will also endeavour to strike a balance within the group of experts in terms of representativeness of applicants, as well as gender and geographical origin of the representatives⁵.

The Commission will in particular ensure that all relevant interests are represented.

5.2. Supporting evidence

Each application shall include the following supporting documents:

- A cover letter explaining the applicant's motivation for answering this call, briefly stating (i) what contribution the applying organisation could bring to the HLG; and (ii) which are, in the applying organisation's view, the biggest issues that the retail sector faces.
- Information on the applying organisation and its importance and knowledge in the area of retail services.
- A curriculum vitae (CV) of the representative proposed by the applying organisation, preferably not exceeding three pages in English. The CV should include relevant documentation for the selection criteria listed in Section 5.1.

6. SELECTION PROCEDURE

The selection procedure will consist of an assessment of the applications against the above-mentioned criteria, followed by the establishment of a list of most suitable applicants and concluded by the appointment of the members of the HLG.

Information on the results of the call for applications will be published on the Internet site of the Directorate-General for the Internal Market and Services.

7. OPERATION OF THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON RETAIL COMPETITIVENESS

Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the HLG shall be reimbursed by the Commission in accordance with the provisions in force at the

⁵ Commission Decision 2000/407/EC of 19 June 2000 relating to gender balance within the committees and expert groups established by it (OJ L 154 of 27.6.2000, p. 34).

Commission within the limits of the available budgetary appropriations. Members will receive no remuneration for their duties.

The working language for documents and meetings will be English.

For any further information please contact MARKT-RETAIL@ec.europa.eu