

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE SELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON TRADE AGREEMENTS

1. Background

By decision of 13 of September 2017¹, the Commission has set up a group of experts on EU trade agreements (“the group”).

The group’s tasks shall be to provide expert advice that can assist the Commission in the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements by:

- (a) providing technical expertise and practical experience relevant to negotiations in bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade agreements;
- (b) shedding light on the different perspectives the stakeholders they represent may take on certain issues, by engaging in open and constructive exchanges with other members of the group;
- (c) providing input related to the overall implementation of trade agreements;
- (d) providing feedback on the perception and public debate on trade agreements across EU Member States and issues that may require particular attention on the basis of their contacts with their respective European networks.

The Commission is calling for applications with a view to selecting members of the group and also to establish a reserve list of suitable candidates.

2. Features of the Group

2.1. COMPOSITION

In accordance with Article 4 of the above Decision the group shall consist of between 20 and 30 members.

Members shall be European-level non-governmental organisations, which may include employers organisations, trade unions, representative associations, socio-economic interest groups like consumer associations and other civil society organisations-

Organisations shall nominate two representatives and shall be responsible for ensuring that their representatives provide a high level of expertise. The Director-General of the Commission's Directorate-General for Trade ('DG Trade') may refuse the nomination of a representative by a selected organisation if he/she considers this nomination inappropriate in light of the requirements specified in section 4 of this call. In such case, the organisation concerned shall be asked to appoint another representative.

2.2. APPOINTMENT

Members shall be appointed by the Director-General of DG Trade from applicants complying with the requirements specified in section 4 of this call.

Members shall be appointed until the end of 2019. They shall remain in office until replaced or until the end of their term of office. Their term of office may be renewed.

¹ COMMISSION DECISION of 13.9.2017 setting up the Group of Experts on EU Trade Agreements C(2017) 6113 final

Registration in the Transparency Register is required in order for organisations to be appointed.

In order to ensure continuity and the smooth functioning of the group, DG Trade shall establish a reserve list of suitable organisations that may be used to appoint replacements. DG Trade shall ask applicants for their consent before including their names on the reserve list.

Members who are no longer capable of contributing effectively to the group's deliberations, who in the opinion of DG Trade do not comply with the conditions set out in Article 339 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union or who resign, shall no longer be invited to participate in any meetings of the group and may be replaced for the remainder of their term of office.

2.3 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE GROUP

The group shall be chaired by a representative of DG Trade.

The group shall act at the request of the DG Trade, in compliance with the Commission's horizontal rules on expert groups ('the horizontal rules')².

In principle, the group shall meet three to four times per year on Commission premises in order to discuss the various matters under its remit. Commission officials from other departments with an interest in the proceedings may upon invitation of the Chair attend meetings of the group and its sub-groups. DG Trade shall provide the secretariat for the group.

Each member shall be represented by one representative in the meeting. Members' representatives should be prepared to attend meetings systematically, to contribute actively to discussions in the group, to be involved in preparatory work ahead of meetings, to examine and provide comments on documents under discussion, and to act, as appropriate, as 'rapporteurs' on ad hoc basis.

As a general rule, working documents will be drafted in English and meetings will be also conducted in English.

The group shall adopt its opinions, recommendations or reports by consensus.

In agreement with DG Trade, the group may, by simple majority of its members, decide that deliberations shall be public. Information obtained by participating in the group's deliberations may not be divulged if DG Trade considers that this information relates to confidential matters.

Participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall not be remunerated for the services they offer. Travel expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall be reimbursed by the Commission. Reimbursement shall be made in accordance with the provisions in force within the Commission and within the limits of the available appropriations allocated to the Commission departments under the annual procedure for the allocation of resources.

The members of the group and their representatives, as well as invited experts and observers, are subject to the obligation of professional secrecy, which by virtue of the Treaties and the rules implementing them applies to all members of the institutions and their staff, as well as to the Commission's rules on security regarding the protection of Union classified information,

² See Article 13.1 of the horizontal rules.

laid down in Commission Decisions (EU, Euratom) 2015/443³ and 2015/444⁴. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

On a proposal by and in agreement with DG Trade the group shall adopt its rules of procedure on the basis of the standard rules of procedure for expert groups.

DG Trade may invite experts with specific expertise with respect to a subject matter on the agenda to take part in the work of the group or sub-groups on an ad hoc basis.

Individuals, organisations and public entities may be granted an observer status, in compliance with the horizontal rules, by direct invitation. Organisations and public entities appointed as observers shall nominate their representatives.

Observers and their representatives may be permitted by the Chair to take part in the discussions of the group and provide expertise. However, they shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group.

DG Trade may set up sub-groups for the purpose of examining specific questions on the basis of terms of reference defined by DG Trade. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the horizontal rules and shall report to the group. They shall be dissolved as soon as their mandate is fulfilled. The members of sub-groups that are not members of the group shall be selected via a public call for applications.

2.4. TRANSPARENCY

The group shall be registered in the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups').

As concerns the group composition, DG Trade shall publish the following data on the Register of expert groups:

- the name of member organisations; the interest represented shall be disclosed;
- the name of observers;

DG Trade shall 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. Access to dedicated websites shall not be submitted to user registration or any other restriction. In particular, DG Trade shall ensure publication of the agenda and other relevant background documents in due time ahead of the meeting, followed by timely publication of minutes. 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) N° 1049/2001⁵.

³ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41).

⁴ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

⁵ 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.

Personal data shall be collected, processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001.

3. Application procedure

Interested organisations are invited to submit their application to the European Commission, DG Trade.

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

Organisations shall indicate the name of up to a maximum of two representatives in the group.

An application will be deemed admissible only if it is sent by the deadline and includes the documents referred to below. All documents submitted by applicants should be duly filled in, legible, signed and numbered sequentially.

Supporting documents

Each application shall include the following documents:

- a cover letter explaining the applicant's motivation for answering this call and stating what contribution the applicant could make to the group,
- a classification form duly filled in specifying the member category for which the application is made (Annex I),
- a selection criteria form duly filled in documenting how the applicant fulfills the selection criteria listed in section 4 of this call (Annex II).

For individuals indicated by organisations as their representatives, a *curriculum vitae* (CV) shall also be provided, preferably not exceeding three pages. All CVs shall be submitted in the European format (<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae/templates-instructions>).

Additional supporting documents (e.g. publications) may be requested at a later stage.

Deadline for application

The duly signed applications must be sent by 31 October 2017 at the latest. The date of sending will be established as follows:

- Where applications are sent by e-mail to the following e-mail address: TRADE-EXPERT-GROUP@ec.europa.eu, the date of the e-mail will be the date of sending.
- Where applications are sent by post to the following address: European Commission, DG Trade, Unit A3 – Information, Communication and Civil Society secretariat – 170, Rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels, the postmark will be considered the date of sending.
- Where applications are hand-delivered to the following address: European Commission, DG Trade, Unit A3 – Information, communication and civil society secretariat –170, Rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels, the date on the receipt given upon delivery will be considered the date of sending.

4. Selection criteria

In selecting the European level non governmental organisations that will be members of the group, DG Trade will take the following criteria into account when assessing applications:

- Proven and relevant knowledge, competence and experience related to economic, social, ethical and/or environmental aspects of EU bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade agreements;
- Relevance of the interests represented for the EU trade negotiating agenda and the degree to which the applicant's interests are affected by EU trade agreements; ability to represent the perspective of stakeholders across the European Union; representativeness of the organisation and ability to provide feedback on issues that are prominent in the debate around trade in different EU Member States and may require specific attention;
- Competence, experience and level of representation of the proposed representatives;
- Good knowledge of the English language of the proposed representatives allowing active participation in the discussions.

5. Selection procedure

The selection procedure shall consist of an assessment of the applications performed by DG Trade against the selection criteria listed in section 4 of this call, followed by the establishment of a list of the most suitable applicants, and concluded by the appointment of the members of the group.

When defining the composition of the group, DG Trade shall aim at ensuring, as far as possible, a high level of expertise, as well as a balanced representation of relevant know how and areas of interest, while taking into account the specific tasks of the group, the type of expertise required, as well as the relevance of the applications received.

For any further information please contact Ms Adeline Hinderer, Telephone: (32-229 63847) , e-mail: Adeline.HINDERER@ec.europa.eu

ANNEXES:

- Classification form (Annex I)
- Selection criteria form (Annex II)
- Privacy statement