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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
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Directorate G – Common Policy Centre
G.4 – Common Missions & Partnerships Service

Commission Expert Group on Design and Selection of Directional Initiatives under the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation - SG Register code E03996

24 June 2026

Hybrid meeting

Key points

Participants

Expert group: Emily WISE; Amber GEURTS, Michael DOOMS, Anja HASLINGER, Krzysztof GULDA.

European Commission

Key points

Welcome

- The Chair welcomed participants and outlined the objectives of the meeting. The main focus was to further develop the methodology for designing a future portfolio of European Partnerships, discuss the emerging partnership criteria, agree on summer work arrangements, and consider the structure of the Expert Group's final report.

Portfolio design challenge

- Methodological approach: The Expert Group discussed a structured methodology for translating consultation input into a coherent future partnership portfolio. The proposed approach consists of:
    - screening consultation results, with particular emphasis on identifying strategic gaps;
    - harmonising and consolidating similar thematic inputs;
    - clustering themes into broader portfolio building blocks;
    - prioritising clusters and individual topics according to their relevance for competitiveness and societal challenges; and
    - aligning identified strengths with strategic gaps to derive potential partnership areas.

  Members broadly supported the overall methodology and agreed that moving from bottom-up consultation results towards a strategically designed portfolio represents an appropriate approach.

- Harmonisation and clustering: The discussion highlighted the importance of:
  - consolidating synonymous or overlapping topics;
  - ensuring a consistent level of thematic granularity;
  - allowing themes to be associated with more than one cluster where justified;
  - recognising cross-cutting topics without unnecessarily duplicating partnership areas.

  It was noted that themes spanning multiple clusters may indicate particularly strategic areas deserving attention.
- Interpretation of consultation results: The Group discussed the distinction between:
  - areas where Europe already demonstrates leadership through collaboration; and
  - areas where collaboration is needed to address strategic gaps.

  Members noted that some consultation responses appeared to blur these concepts, and that additional interpretation would therefore be required during the analytical phase.
- Portfolio configuration options: Several alternative portfolio configurations were presented and discussed, ranging from broader platform-based portfolios to more focused competitiveness-oriented configurations.
  The comparative assessment suggested that:
  - a balanced portfolio broadly reflecting around twenty platforms would provide the greatest continuity and facilitate transition;
  - a more focused portfolio centred on approximately ten transformation platforms would strengthen competitiveness and private-sector mobilisation but would entail greater disruption;
  - an intermediate configuration appeared to provide the best overall balance between competitiveness, public value, manageability and feasibility of implementation.

  Members generally agreed that the preferred architecture should balance strategic focus with sufficient flexibility to accommodate diverse policy objectives and existing communities.
- Cross-cutting issues: The Group identified a number of cross-cutting themes requiring further reflection, including societal acceptance of emerging technologies, resilience and security considerations, renewable energy, and other transversal issues that should be reflected consistently across the future portfolio rather than treated as stand-alone areas.

Mock-up assessment of thematic areas

- A draft analytical framework for assessing proposed thematic areas was presented.

  The proposed methodology combines:
  - assessment of the necessity for a partnership approach;
  - analysis of portfolio coverage across policy windows and challenge areas;

- assessment of interdependencies between thematic areas to support grouping decisions.

Members considered the framework a useful basis for further refinement, while noting that the weighting and causal relationships between individual criteria would require additional work before being finalised

Partnership criteria

- The Expert Group reviewed the developing partnership criteria framework.

  The discussion confirmed support for:
  - distinguishing mandatory ("must") criteria from prioritisation ("should") criteria;
  - ensuring comparability across different partnership types;
  - assessing proposals from both an individual partnership and overall portfolio perspective;
  - incorporating governance, impact, financing, ecosystem mobilisation and strategic coherence into the assessment framework.
- Members agreed that the criteria should support both portfolio selection and future monitoring of partnerships.

Summer tasks and working arrangements

- The Commission presented the proposed organisation of the summer work programme.
- Experts agreed to continue developing their respective workstreams over the summer, with further refinement of the portfolio methodology, thematic assessment framework and partnership criteria before the next meeting.

Structure of the final report

- The Group discussed the proposed structure of the final report.
- Members agreed that the report should clearly distinguish between:
  - the overall methodology;
  - the proposed portfolio design approach;
  - partnership selection criteria;
  - illustrative portfolio configurations; and
  - recommendations for implementation.
- The report should provide a coherent narrative explaining both the rationale behind the proposed methodology and its practical application.

Next steps

- consolidate comments received during the meeting;
- further refine the portfolio design methodology and assessment framework;
- integrate expert contributions received during the summer;
- prepare updated material for discussion at the next Expert Group meeting.