

RULES OF PROCEDURE

OF THE COMMISSION INFORMAL EXPERT GROUP “ERA FORUM”

THE Commission expert group ERA FORUM,

Having regard to the creation of the group by DG Research and Innovation (‘DG RTD’),

Having regard to the standard rules of procedure of expert groups¹,

HAS ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING RULES OF PROCEDURE:

Point 1

Operation of the group

The group shall act at the request of its co-chairs with the agreement of DG RTD, in compliance with the Commission’s horizontal rules on expert groups² (‘the horizontal rules’).

Point 2

Convening a meeting

1. Meetings of the group are convened by the co-chairs, with the agreement of DG RTD either on its own initiative, or at the request of a simple majority of members after DG RTD has given its agreement.
2. Joint meetings of the group with other groups may be convened to discuss matters falling within their respective areas of responsibility.
3. In principle, meetings of the group shall be held on Commission premises or virtually, depending on the circumstances.

Point 3

Agenda

1. The secretariat shall draw up the agenda under the responsibility of the co-chairs and send it to the members of the group.
2. The agenda shall be adopted by the group at the start of the meeting.

Point 4

Documentation to be sent to group members

1. The secretariat shall send the invitation to the meeting and the draft agenda to the group members no later than ten calendar days before the date of the meeting.

¹ C(2016) 3301, Annex 3.

² C(2016) 3301.

2. The secretariat shall send documents on which the group is consulted to the group members no later than seven calendar days before the date of the meeting.
3. In urgent or exceptional cases, the time limits for sending the documentation mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2 may be reduced to five calendar days before the date of the meeting.

Point 5

Opinions of the group

1. As far as possible, the group shall adopt its opinions, recommendations or reports by consensus.
2. In the event of a vote, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by simple majority of the members. The members that have voted against or abstained shall have the right to have a document summarising the reasons for their position annexed to the opinions, recommendations or reports.

Point 6

Sub-groups

DG RTD may set up sub-groups for the purpose of examining specific questions on the basis of the terms of reference defined by DG RTD. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the the horizontal rules and shall report to the group. They shall be dissolved as soon as their mandate is fulfilled.

Point 7

Invited experts

DG RTD may invite experts – in particular representatives from third countries – 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.

Point 8

Observers

1. Public entities of countries associated to the Framework Programme ('associated countries') shall be granted an observer status by direct invitation, in compliance with the horizontal rules.
2. The Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee shall be granted an observer status by direct invitation, in compliance with the horizontal rules.
3. Organisations, such as EU-level umbrella organisations and the following types of stakeholders: (i) universities and other higher education institutions, (ii) research and technology performing organisations, (iii) R&I-intensive businesses, including SMEs, (iv) individual researchers and innovators, including at early and middle stages of their careers, (v) research infrastructures, (vi) R&I-funding organisations and (vii) academies of sciences shall be granted an observer status by direct invitation, in compliance with the horizontal rules.

4. Organisations and public entities appointed as observers shall nominate their representatives.
5. Observers and their representatives may be permitted by the co-chairs to take part in the discussions of the group and sub-groups and provide expertise. However, they shall not have voting rights and shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group or sub-groups.

Point 9

Written procedure

1. If necessary, the group's opinion or recommendation on a specific question may be delivered via a written procedure. To this end, the secretariat shall send the group members the document(s) on which the group is being consulted.
2. However, if a simple majority of group members asks for the question to be examined at a meeting of the group, the written procedure shall be terminated without result and the co-chairs shall convene a meeting of the group as soon as possible.

Point 10

Secretariat

DG RTD shall provide secretarial support for the group and any sub-groups.

Point 11

Minutes of the meetings

Minutes on the discussion on each point on the agenda and on the opinions delivered by the group shall be meaningful and complete. Minutes shall be drafted by the secretariat under the responsibility of the co-chairs.

Point 12

Attendance list

At each meeting, the secretariat shall draw up, under the responsibility of the co-chairs, an attendance list also specifying, where appropriate, the organisations, Member States' authorities or other public entities to which the participants belong³.

³ The names of the representatives of organisations, Member States' authorities or other public entities may be included only subject to their prior freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous consent, in compliance with Article 3(15) and Article 7 of Regulation 2018/1725.

Point 13

Correspondence

1. Correspondence relating to the group shall be addressed to DG RTD, for the attention of the co-chairs.
2. Correspondence for group members shall be sent to the e-mail address which they provide for that purpose.

Point 14

Transparency

1. The group and its sub-groups shall be registered on the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups').
2. As concerns the group composition, the following data shall be published on the Register of expert groups:
 - (a) the name of Member States' authorities;
 - (b) the name of observers.
3. DG RTD shall make available all relevant documents, including the agendas, the minutes and the participants' submissions, on the Register of expert groups. In particular, DG RTD shall publish 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 possible 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° 1049/2001⁴.

Point 15

Access to documents

Applications for access to documents held by the group shall be handled in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001⁵.

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.

⁵ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43).

Point 16

Deliberations

In agreement with DG RTD, the group may, by simple majority of its members, decide that deliberations shall be public.