

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

Directorate C - Innovation, Digital Education and International Cooperation***INFORMAL COMMISSION EXPERT GROUP******STEAM EXECUTIVE PANEL*****TERMS OF REFERENCE****1. BACKGROUND**

As part of the Union of Skills, in March 2025 the European Commission launched a STEM Education Strategic Plan¹: an initiative aimed at reclaiming Europe's competitive edge in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) through education and training. These sectors are not just economic drivers; they are the foundation of our strategic autonomy in a world where technological advancements dictate geopolitical power.

The EU is suffering a shortage of certain qualified STEM graduates from vocational education and training (VET) and tertiary education, particularly in fields such as information and communication technology (ICT) where demand is projected to increase considerably.

By prioritizing STEM education and making it more inclusive, especially for girls and women, Europe's workforce will be equipped to thrive in a rapidly evolving labour market. Part and parcel of this challenge will be bringing education and businesses closer together: on the one hand, by making STEM education more attractive, anchored in the real-world and relevant to labour market needs; and on the other, by involving businesses in education strategies, listening to their needs and bringing the labour market realities closer to the classroom.

The STEM Education Strategic Plan announced the creation of a 'STEM Executive Panel' to contribute to intelligence-making on strategic issues in STEM education, such as how to make it more attractive, strategic and relevant to the labour market.

In light of the above, the Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture ('DG EAC') has taken the initiative to set up the informal expert group 'STEAM Executive Panel' (hereafter 'The Panel').² The focus of the Panel has been broadened from 'STEM' to 'STEAM' in response to feedback received by stakeholders on the need to integrate the Arts to cater foster critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving skills.

¹ COM(2025) 89 final

² In line with the horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups (C(2016) 3301 final), 'Expert groups shall be set up either by Decision of the Commission ('formal expert group') or by a Commission department after having obtained the agreement of the responsible Commissioner and Vice-President and the Secretariat-General ('informal expert group')'. The STEAM Executive Panel is setup as an 'informal' expert group' in consideration of the anticipated political impact of its work and the specific circumstances in which it will operate.

The primary objective of the Panel will be to provide the Commission with expertise and advice on the current skills needs in STEM sectors and on innovative STEAM pedagogical approaches that can support skills development. The Panel will also contribute to delivering on the work and the objectives of the High-level Skills Board, including by providing the High-level Skills Board with its informed views on the current and future needs concerning STEM skills and STEAM education provision.

2. SUBJECT MATTER

The STEAM Executive Panel ('the Panel') is set up for a duration of two years.

3. TASKS

The Panel's tasks shall be:

1. to provide the Commission with expertise and practical recommendations on how to improve collaboration between education and training institutions and businesses, with a view to better align skills supply and labour market needs.
2. to advise the Commission on education and training policies that can effectively support the talent development of adaptable STEM graduates for a rapidly evolving society.
3. to identify effective strategies for increasing participation in STEM/STEAM studies at all education levels, particularly by strengthening education-business cooperation.
4. to reflect on the impact of the STEM Education Strategic Plan at EU and national level and share strategic insights with the High-level Skills Board on the most pressing skills gaps observed across different STEM business sectors, as well as the challenges and obstacles faced by STEAM education providers.
5. to contribute to the preparation of an annual 'STEAM Education Outlook', which will translate the policy objectives of the STEM Education Strategic Plan into practical, actionable strategies and recommendations that can lead to effective change on the ground.

4. CONSULTATION

1. DG EAC may consult the Panel on any matter relating to its tasks as referred to in Point 3.
2. The Chair of the Panel may ask DG EAC to consult the Panel on any matter relating to its tasks defined in point 3.

5. MEMBERSHIP

1. The Panel shall be composed of approximately 20 members.
2. Members shall be:
 - a) Individuals appointed in a personal capacity ('Type A members');³

³ C(2016) 3301, art. 7.2 a

- b) Stakeholder organisations: companies, education and training providers, and social partners ('Type C members');⁴
3. Individuals appointed in a personal capacity shall act independently and in the public interest.
 4. Stakeholder organisations shall only be appointed if they are registered in the Transparency Register.
 5. Stakeholder organisations shall nominate their representatives and shall be responsible for ensuring that their representatives provide a high level of expertise. DG EAC may refuse the nomination of a representative by an organisation if it considers this nomination inappropriate in light of the requirements specified in chapter 4 of the call for applications. In such case, the organisation concerned shall be asked to appoint another representative.
 6. Members who are no longer capable of contributing effectively to the Panel's deliberations, who, in the opinion of DG EAC, 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 Panel and may be replaced for the remainder of their term of office.

6. SELECTION PROCESS

1. The selection of the Panel's members shall be carried out via a public call for applications, to be published on the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups'). In addition, the call for applications may be published through other means, including on dedicated websites. The call for applications shall define the selection criteria, including the required expertise and the interests to be represented in relation to the work to be performed. The minimum deadline for applications shall be four weeks.
2. Individuals applying to be appointed as members of the Panel in a personal capacity shall disclose any circumstances that could give rise to a conflict of interest. In particular, the Commission shall require those individuals to submit a declaration of interests ('DOI') form on the basis of the standard DOI form for expert groups⁵, together with an updated *curriculum vitae* (CV), as part of their application. Submission of a duly completed DOI form shall be necessary in order to be eligible to be appointed as a member in a personal capacity. DOI forms of individuals appointed as members shall be made publicly available on the Register of expert groups. The conflict of interest assessment shall be performed in compliance with the Commission's horizontal rules on expert groups ('the horizontal rules')⁶.
3. Registration in the Transparency Register is required in order for stakeholder organisations to be appointed.
4. The members of the Panel shall be appointed by the Director-General of DG EAC from applicants with competence in the areas referred to in point 3 and who have responded to the call for applications.

⁴ C(2016) 3301, art. 7.2 c

⁵ C(2016), Article 11 and Annex 4.

⁶ Idem.

5. Members shall be appointed for two years. They shall remain in office until the end of their term of office or until replaced. Their term of office may be renewed.
6. As regards individuals appointed as members in a personal capacity, DG EAC shall appoint alternate members, in accordance with the same conditions as for members, who shall automatically replace any members who are absent or indisposed.
7. DG EAC shall establish a reserve list of suitable candidates that may be used to appoint members' replacements. DG EAC shall ask applicants for their consent before including their names on the reserve list.

7. CHAIR

DG EAC shall appoint the Chair of the Panel for a mandate of one year (renewable).

8. OPERATION

1. The Panel shall act at the request of its Chair with the agreement of DG EAC, in compliance with the horizontal rules⁷.
2. Meetings of the Panel shall, in principle, be held on Commission premises or virtually, depending on the circumstances.
3. DG EAC shall provide secretarial services. Commission officials from other departments with an interest in the proceedings may attend meetings of the Panel.
4. In agreement with DG EAC the Panel may, by simple majority of its members, decide that deliberations shall be public.
5. Minutes on the discussion on each point on the agenda and on the opinions delivered by the Panel shall be meaningful and complete. Minutes shall be drafted by the secretariat under the responsibility of the Chair.
6. As far as possible, the Panel shall adopt its opinions, recommendations or reports by consensus. In the event of a vote, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by simple majority of the members. Members who 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.

9. INVITED EXPERTS

DG EAC may invite experts with specific expertise with respect to a subject matter on the agenda to take part in the work of the Panel on an *ad hoc* basis.

10. OBSERVERS

Individuals and stakeholder organisations may be granted an observer status, in compliance with the horizontal rules, by direct invitation. Organisations appointed as observers shall nominate their representatives. Observers and observers' representatives may be permitted by the Chair to take part in the discussions of the Panel and provide expertise. However, they shall not have voting rights and shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the Panel.

⁷ C(2016) 3301, Article 13.1.

11. RULES OF PROCEDURE

On a proposal by and in agreement with DG EAC the Panel shall adopt its rules of procedure by simple majority of its members, on the basis of the standard rules of procedure for expert groups, in compliance with the horizontal rules⁸.

12. PROFESSIONAL SECRECY AND HANDLING OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

The members of the Panel 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, laid down in Commission Decisions (EU, Euratom) 2015/443⁹ and 2015/444¹⁰. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

13. TRANSPARENCY

1. The Panel shall be registered in the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups').
2. As regards the Panel composition, the following data shall be published on the Register of expert groups:
 - (a) the name of individuals appointed in a personal capacity;
 - (b) the name of member organisations; the interest represented shall be disclosed;
 - (c) the name of observers.
3. All relevant documents, including the agendas, the minutes and the participants' submissions, shall be made available on the Register of expert groups. In particular, DG EAC 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° 1049/2001¹¹.

14. MEETING EXPENSES

1. Members of the Panel shall not be remunerated for the services they offer.
2. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the Panel 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

⁸ See Article 17 of the horizontal rules.

⁹ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41).

¹⁰ 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).

¹¹ 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.

available appropriations allocated to the Commission departments under the annual procedure for the allocation of resources.

Done in Brussels, on 28 May 2026.