



More transparent and balanced interest representation: Commission adopts new expert group rules

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Today, the Commission has adopted new rules on how it selects the advisory expert groups which provide external expertise to help inform the policy-making process.

Today, the Commission has adopted new rules on the creation and functioning of the advisory expert groups which provide external expertise to help inform the policy-making process. The Decision provides a single set of rules and principles aimed at increasing transparency, avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring a balanced representation of interests. The new rules are binding on all Commission departments.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"When we design rules and policies we need the help of outside expertise to help us get it right. Citizens rightly expect this to be done in a transparent and balanced way. Thanks to the measures we are taking today, the Commission will benefit from high quality expertise while avoiding possible conflicts of interest, and the public will be able to hold us to account. Today's decision follows fruitful consultations with Members of the European Parliament, the European Ombudsman and representatives of civil society organisations, who are key partners in delivering a transparent approach to EU policy-making. This is another step forward in changing the way 'Brussels' works."*

Under the new rules, it becomes mandatory for Commission departments to select all expert group members through **public calls for applications** - except those representing Member States, third countries, and EU and international bodies. These calls must be published on the Register of Expert Groups and must clearly outline the selection criteria, including the required expertise and interest groups targeted. All possible efforts will be made to **ensure balanced representation**, taking into account areas of expertise and interest, gender and geographical origin, and the mandate of the expert group concerned. The enhanced transparency in the selection process is an important factor in achieving balanced composition.

The revised rules further **increase transparency of the groups' work** by explicitly requiring Commission departments to make available relevant documents including agendas, complete and meaningful minutes and expert submissions. In case of adoption of an expert group position through a vote, minority opinions expressed by experts can also be made public if they so wish.

The revised rules significantly improve **conflict of interest management in relation to individuals** appointed in a personal capacity, who are expected to act independently and in the public interest. Commission departments will have to carry out specific conflict of interest assessments for these experts, on the basis of a Standard Declaration of Interest that they will submit. These Declarations will subsequently be published on the Register of Expert Groups for public scrutiny.

A **revised Register of Expert Groups** will go online today, reflecting the new transparency requirements and ensuring **synergies with the Transparency Register**. Experts who apply to represent specific interests or organisations will only be selected as expert group members if they are registered in the Transparency Register. This condition will be applied retroactively to all current expert group members by the end of 2016. The Expert Group Register will also be organised better, with a **new classification** of expert group members to bring more clarity and transparency. The new categorisation will separate organisations such as companies, NGOs and trade unions from public entities which previously fell under the same heading. Further subcategories will also be created to allow increased public scrutiny of the balance of interests.

Background

Around 800 expert groups currently advise the Commission across all policy areas. Expert group members can be appointed in an individual capacity or can represent Member States, third countries, EU and international bodies, business, trade unions, civil society, academia or other interests.

Expert groups are used in the preparation of new legislation or delegated and implementing acts, in the implementation of existing laws, or in developing strategic policy orientations more generally. These groups do not take any decisions - their role is purely advisory - but they may formulate opinions or

recommendations and submit reports to the Commission. The Commission and its officials remain fully independent regarding the way they take into account the expertise and views gathered from these expert groups. The Commission's decisions are always taken in the general interest of the European Union.

The Juncker Commission is committed to enhanced transparency in all areas of its work. Working with expert groups is one of many ways in which the Commission gathers outside opinions and expertise to support its work. Public consultations, targeted stakeholder consultations, public hearings, conferences and studies are among the other valuable tools which complement the institutional dialogue with the European Parliament and Council.

A horizontal institutional framework for expert groups was first introduced in 2005, and last revised in 2010. Today's Decision represents a positive response to many of the recommendations put forward by the European Ombudsman as a result of her own-initiative inquiry, and to the suggestions of Members of the European Parliament and representatives of civil society organisations.

For more information

[Commission Decision](#)

[Annexes to the Decision](#)

[Expert Groups Register](#)

[Transparency Register](#)

[Public consultation on the revision of the Transparency Register](#)

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