

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General Environment

Directorate C – Zero Pollution, Water Resilience &amp; Green Urban Transition

***INFORMAL COMMISSION EXPERT GROUP ‘WATER RESILIENCE STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM’*****TERMS OF REFERENCE****1. BACKGROUND**

The European Water Resilience Strategy, adopted by the Commission on 4 June 2025<sup>1</sup>, stressed the importance of engaging with relevant stakeholders on implementation to achieve water resilience by 2050. In line with this goal, and as outlined in the Commission's 2026 work programme, the Commission's Directorate-General for Environment ('DG ENV') has taken the initiative to establish a Stakeholder Platform on water resilience, with a view to following up and facilitating the implementation of the different actions announced in the Strategy.

The Platform will convene a broad range of stakeholders to benefit from their expertise, engagement and enthusiasm to help deliver the ambitions of the European Water Resilience Strategy in compliance with the rules.

**2. SUBJECT MATTER**

The group of experts 'Water Resilience Stakeholder Platform' ('the group') is established.

**3. TASKS**

The group's overall mission is to assist the European Commission in the implementation of the actions set out in the European Water Resilience Strategy through engagement with relevant stakeholders.

The group will focus on selected areas relating to boosting water resilience, as well as the Strategy's key enablers: governance and implementation; finance, investments and infrastructure; digitalisation; research, innovation, industry and skills; and security and preparedness.

The group's focus on the implementation of the actions from the Strategy will complement, but not duplicate, ongoing policy and technical work on the implementation of the EU freshwater and marine *acquis*.

The work of the group is in addition to the Commission's high-level stakeholder engagement at the biennial Water Resilience Forum. The outputs and insights generated by the group may be presented and discussed during the Forum.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2025) 280 final

In particular, through regular exchanges of experience and sharing of information and best practices, the group shall:

- (a) assist the Commission in preparing and implementing select flagship actions from the Strategy.
- (b) identify challenges and barriers to implementing these actions and achieving the Strategy's objectives.
- (c) identifying ways to address these challenges and barriers.
- (d) assist the Commission in integrating water resilience into the relevant budgetary and policy actions, taking into consideration territorial disparities and challenges and ensuring that no community is left behind.

In order to perform the above-mentioned tasks, the group shall prepare a three year work-programme, to be reviewed annually, which the group shall adopt by consensus, in agreement with DG ENV, taking into account specific flagships actions in the Water Resilience Strategy. DG ENV shall regularly monitor the implementation of the work programme by the group.

#### 4. MEMBERSHIP

1. The group shall be composed of up to 87 members.
2. Competent Member States' authorities shall be members of the group.
3. Up to 60 members shall be organisations that operate across intra-EU borders, preferably with EU-wide coverage and/or membership. The following organisations shall be represented:
  - a. **civil society** actively pursuing at least one of the three objectives outlined in the Water Resilience Strategy<sup>2</sup>. These organisations should be influential in shaping public and policy discussions on water issues. [up to 15]
  - b. **youth organisations** that are active on a cross-border and/or pan-European level, that are involved with shaping public and policy discussions on water and environmental issues. [Up to 3]
  - c. **trade and business associations**, with strong experience in reducing and/or cleaning up water pollution, enhancing water efficiency, and/or innovative water management practices. These organisations should encompass primary, secondary, and tertiary sector businesses, including SMEs, representing water utilities and key industries such as energy, food, industrial production, transport, and digital sectors. [up to 18]
  - d. **financial institutions**, including banks, providing financial services and intermediation in support of water resilience projects. [up to 8]

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<sup>2</sup> Restoring the broken water cycle; building a water-smart economy; ensuring safe and affordable access to water and sanitation

- e. **scientific organisations, academic institutions, and research institutes**, offering a balanced expertise in fundamental and applied research, including on water technologies, nature-based solutions, digitalisation and remote sensing, hydro-morphology, and chemistry, along with training and education in water-related disciplines. [up to 8]
- f. **organisations representing local, regional, and transboundary authorities** committed to implementing policies aimed at reducing water pollution, enhancing water efficiency, promoting nature restoration and the use of nature-based solutions, and boosting urban resilience against water-related climate challenges such as droughts and floods. [up to 8]

Each member shall nominate one main representative and one back-up representative and be responsible for ensuring that their representatives provide a high level of expertise and a strategic overview of water resilience aspects across topics and media. DG ENV may refuse the nomination by a member of a representative if it considers this nomination inappropriate in the light of the requirements specified in the call for applications. In such case, the organisation concerned shall be asked to appoint another representative.

Member organisations who are no longer capable of contributing effectively to the expert group's deliberations, and/or who, in the opinion of DG ENV, do not comply with the conditions set out in Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and/or who resign, shall no longer be invited to participate in any meetings of the group.

## **5. SELECTION PROCESS**

1. Competent Member States' authorities shall be appointed by direct invitation.
2. The selection of the group's member organisations 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 clearly outline 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.
3. Registration in the Transparency Register is required for organisations to be appointed..
4. Member organisations shall be appointed by the Director-General of DG ENV, from applicants with competence in the areas referred to in point 3 and who have responded to the call for applications.
5. Member organisations shall be appointed for 5 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. DG ENV shall establish a reserve list of suitable candidates that may be used to appoint organisations' replacements. DG ENV shall ask applicants for their consent before including their names on the reserve list.

## **6. CHAIR**

The group shall be chaired by a senior representative of DG ENV, as well as a representative of the Committee of the Regions and a representative of the European Economic and Social Committee.

## **7. OPERATION**

- 1) The group shall act at the request of DG ENV, in compliance with the Commission's horizontal rules on expert groups ('the horizontal rules')<sup>3</sup>.
- 2) The group will convene twice a year. However, in years when the Water Resilience Forum is scheduled, the group will meet once, to streamline stakeholder consultation processes and avoid redundant engagements.
- 3) Meetings of the group shall be held on Commission premises or the premises of the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic Committee of the Regions or online, depending on the circumstances.
- 4) DG ENV shall provide secretarial services supported, in a consultative role, by the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee. Commission officials from other departments with an interest in the proceedings may attend meetings of the group and its sub-groups.
- 5) In agreement with DG ENV, the group may, by simple majority of its members, decide that deliberations shall be public.
- 6) 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 Chair.
- 7) As far as possible, the group shall adopt its opinions 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.

## **8. SUB-GROUPS**

- 1) DG ENV may set up sub-groups for the purpose of examining specific questions based on terms of reference defined by DG ENV. 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.
- 2) The members of sub-groups that are not members of the group shall be selected via a public call for applications, in compliance with point 5 and the horizontal rules<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> C(2016) 3301, Article 13.1.

<sup>4</sup> C(2016), Articles 10 and 14.2.

## **9. INVITED EXPERTS**

DG ENV may invite experts with specific expertise on subject matter on the agenda to take part in the work of the group or sub-groups on an ad hoc basis. These experts may include companies' or associations' representatives and individual experts.

## **10. OBSERVERS**

1. The European Environment Agency (EEA), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Central Bank (ECB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Association of European Public Authorities with economic responsibilities in the drinking water and wastewater sector, the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL), the European Network of the Heads of Environment Protection Agencies (EPA Network), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN-Water, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shall be granted an observer status, by direct invitation.
2. Upon request, additional public entities other than Member States' authorities, such as third country authorities, including candidate authorities, Union bodies, offices or agencies and international organisations may be granted an observer status.
3. Observers shall nominate their representatives and back-up representatives.
4. Observers' representatives may be permitted by the Chair to take part in the group and sub-group discussions, and to provide expertise. However, they shall not have voting rights and shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group and sub-groups.

## **11. RULES OF PROCEDURE**

On a proposal by, and in agreement with, DG ENV the group 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 rules<sup>5</sup>. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the group's rules of procedure.

## **12. PROFESSIONAL SECRECY AND HANDLING OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION**

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, laid down in Commission Decisions (EU, Euratom) 2015/443<sup>6</sup> and 2015/444<sup>7</sup>. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

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<sup>5</sup> See Article 17 of the horizontal rules.

<sup>6</sup> Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41).

### **13. TRANSPARENCY**

1. The group and sub-groups shall be registered in the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups').
2. As regards the group and sub-groups composition, the following data shall be published on the Register of expert groups:
  - the name of Member States;
  - the name of member organisations, the interest represented shall be disclosed;
  - 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 or via a link from the Register to a dedicated website, where this information can be found. Access to dedicated websites shall not be subject to user registration or any other restriction. DG ENV shall publish the agenda and other relevant background documents in due course 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° 1049/2001<sup>8</sup>.

### **14. MEETING EXPENSES**

- 1) Participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall not be remunerated for the services they offer.
- 2) Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the group and its 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.

Done in Brussels, on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

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<sup>7</sup> 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).

<sup>8</sup> 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.