



EU SCIENTIFIC ADVICE PLATFORM ON COVID-19

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND

The idea to create the EU Scientific Platform on COVID-19 ('Platform') was presented on 29 October 2020 to EU Leaders as there is a need for a co-ordinated scientific advice across the EU.

The aim of the Platform is to provide a forum for peer exchange and coordination among scientific advisors to national governments, offering a space for sharing good practices and mutual learning. It complements the President's COVID-19 advisory panel and the work of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

The Platform will be chaired by the EU Commissioner responsible for Health and Food Safety.

The Platform should be set up for 6 months from the date of its first meeting. The first meeting of the Platform took place on 13 November 2020.

Given the long lasting nature of the pandemic and the concerning epidemiological situation, it was decided in April 2021 that the Platform is prolonged for another 6 months, i.e. until 13.11.2021.

2. TASKS

The group's tasks shall be to:

- (a) Outline the national approach to seek coordination and mutual learning in order to reach a consensus on key issues and response measures in line with the different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in the EU as a whole and taking into account particular Member State contexts;
- (b) Identify priorities in public health, health care, civil protection and other areas as well as supporting measures to be organised or coordinated at EU level;
- (c) Share best practices and data in order to better use and target EU support where it is most needed;
- (d) Through sharing of experiences and common challenges faced, help the Commission to determine mitigation measures with EU added-value to help contain and manage the spread of COVID19, including in clinical management and treatment;
- (e) Assist the Commission in framing measures for addressing and mitigating medium and long-term health consequences of COVID-19.

3. MEMBERS

Members of the Platform shall be the top national COVID-19 advisers providing scientific advice to EU Heads of State or Government on the COVID-19 pandemic, from areas such as epidemiology, virology, clinical practice, public health, behavioural science, crisis management, civil protection and communication.

Members shall be appointed by their respective Member State's government.

Members should act in the Union interest and should declare their absence of conflicts of interests by filling in a specific declaration of interests (DoI) form.

4. CHAIR

The Panel shall be chaired by the EU Commissioner responsible for Health and Food Safety. The Special Advisor to the President of the Commission responsible for the COVID-19 shall support the Chair.

5. OPERATION

1. The Platform shall convene upon invitation of its Chair.
2. Meetings of the Platform shall, in principle, be held virtually or in Commission premises.
3. Meetings agendas are set by the Chair, with support from the Special Advisor to the President. Topics to be included on the agenda can be suggested by any of the members in writing to the secretariat and the Chair.
3. The group should meet on a regular basis and in a way that helps support or follow up on discussions held on COVID-19 between EU Leaders.
4. DG SANTE shall provide secretarial services. Commission officials from other departments with an interest in the proceedings may attend meetings of the Platform.
5. The Chair can task ECDC and the secretariat to prepare background documents to inform discussions between the members of the platform.
6. In agreement with DG SANTE and the Chair, the Platform may, by simple majority of its members, decide that deliberations shall be public.
7. Reports of the meetings of the Platform shall be prepared by the Secretariat under the responsibility of the Chair and will be published online on the European Commission's dedicated website.
8. A report of the meeting shall be shared with the Council.

6. INVITED EXPERTS

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

7. OBSERVERS

1. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is invited as observer to all meetings and shall provide scientific advice on key issues.
2. ECDC shall nominate its representative.
3. The representative of the observer may be permitted by the Chair to take part in the discussions of the group and provide expertise.

8. PROFESSIONAL SECRECY AND HANDLING OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

The members of the Platform 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) 2015/443¹ and 2015/444². Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

9. TRANSPARENCY

1. Information about the Platform shall be provided on a dedicated website.
2. As concerns the group composition, the following data shall be published on that website:
 - (a) the name of the members;
 - (b) the name of the observer;
3. All relevant documents, including the agendas and the minutes, shall be made available on a dedicated website. Access to dedicated websites shall not be submitted to user registration or any other restriction. Exceptions to publication shall only be foreseen 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° 1049/2001³.

10. MEETING EXPENSES

1. Participants in the activities of the platform shall not be remunerated for the services they offer.
2. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the Platform shall be reimbursed by the Commission. Reimbursement shall be made in accordance with the provisions in force within the Commission and within the limits

¹ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41).

² 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).

³ 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.

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

Done in Brussels, on 27 November 2020.

Revision of 21.04.2021.