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COMMISSION DECISION

of 30.1.2018

setting up the Strategic Forum for Important Projects of Common European Interest

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Whereas:

- (1) Article 173 of the Treaty assigned the Union and the Member States the task of ensuring that the conditions necessary for the competitiveness of the Union's industry exist.
- (2) Article 107(3)(b) of the Treaty stipulates that aid to promote the execution of an important project of common European interest may be considered to be compatible with the internal market.
- (3) A successful industrial strategy should build on Europe's strengths and assets in strategic value chains in new technologies, which often requires joint, well-coordinated efforts and investments by public authorities and industries from several Member States;
- (4) A more proactive approach with Member States and industry is necessary to foster new Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI)¹, which can play a vital role in promoting policies and actions in key areas for economic growth;
- (5) The Communication from the Commission entitled 'Investing in a smart, innovative and sustainable Industry, A renewed EU Industrial Policy Strategy'² calls for the establishment of a strategic forum involving key stakeholders to identify key value chains and investment projects and monitor progress achieved;
- (6) With a view to the above, the Commission needs to call upon the expertise of specialists in an advisory body.
- (7) It is therefore necessary to set up a group of experts in the field of strategic value chains and investment projects, in particular in relation to Important Projects of Common European Interest, and to define its tasks, objectives and structure.
- (8) The group should provide the Commission with advice and expertise, with a view to helping to build a common Union vision on the key value chains for Europe and facilitate agreements to design and take forward new investment projects in key value chains in Europe through cooperation and coordination between public authorities and key stakeholders from several Member States;

¹ The Commission provides State aid rules (Official Journal C 188 of 20 June 2014) specifically designed to guide Member States how to channel public funding towards integrated IPCEI which must have clear spill-over effects for a wider part of the Union economy and society, such as on Key Enabling Technologies (KETs). KETs are knowledge intensive and associated with high R&D intensity, rapid innovation cycles, high capital expenditure and highly-skilled employment – COM/2012/0341.

² COM(2017) 479 final.

- (9) The group should be composed of high-level officials from Member States' competent authorities, high-level representatives of other public entities, such as Union bodies and international organisations (operating in areas like technology and innovation, energy, transport, investment, economic analysis, security and defence), high-level representatives of organisations representing the interests of academia and research, finance, industry, SMEs, and employees and workers; and individuals appointed in a personal capacity.
- (10) Rules on disclosure of information by members of the group should be laid down.
- (11) Personal data should be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council³.
- (12) It is appropriate to fix a period for the application of this Decision. The Commission will in due time consider the advisability of an extension.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

Subject matter

The Strategic Forum for Important Projects of Common European Interest ("the group") is set up.

Article 2

Mandate and tasks

The mandate of the group shall be to facilitate agreements between public authorities and key stakeholders from several Member States for taking forward new Important Projects of Common European Interest and build a common vision at Union level for joint, well-coordinated efforts and investments in key value chains.

The group's tasks shall be in particular:

- (a) to advise the Commission on the key value chains for Europe, defined as the value chains of strategic importance for Europe which require joint, well-coordinated actions and investments by public authorities and industries from several Member States to ensure Europe stays or becomes a world industrial leader in key areas;
- (b) to help the Commission build a common European vision for these key value chains, shared among Member States and key stakeholders;
- (c) to advise the Commission on the Important Projects of Common European Interest needed within key value chains;
- (d) to help the Commission establish cooperation and coordination between public authorities and key stakeholders from several Member States to facilitate agreements to take forward new Important Projects of Common European Interest;

³ Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 8, 12.1.2001, p. 1).

- (e) to help the Commission monitor progress achieved; report on bottlenecks or obstacles encountered when designing and taking forward Important Projects of Common European Interest; and propose solutions to overcome these obstacles or bottlenecks;
- (f) to advise the Commission on the accompanying measures necessary to ensure the successful implementation of new Important Projects of Common European Interest;
- (g) to advise the Commission on alternative solutions for fostering joint, well-coordinated investments in key value chains where an Important Project of Common European Interest is not feasible

Article 3

Consultation

The Commission may consult the group on any matter relating to industrial value chains of strategic importance for Europe and related investments.

Article 4

Membership

1. The group shall be composed of up to 50 members.
2. Members shall be
 - (a) individuals appointed in a personal capacity;
 - (b) organisations representing the interests of academia and research, finance, Industry, SMEs and employees and workers;
 - (c) Member States' authorities;
 - (d) other public entities.
3. Members appointed in a personal capacity shall act independently and in the public interest.
4. Member States' authorities, organisations and other public entities shall nominate their representatives and shall be responsible for ensuring that their representatives provide a high level of expertise. The Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs ("DG GROW") 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 referred to in Article 5. In such case, the organisation concerned shall be asked to appoint another representative.
5. Members who are no longer capable of contributing effectively to the expert group's deliberations, who, in the opinion of the Commission department concerned, 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 group and may be replaced for the remainder of their term of office.

Article 5

Selection process

1. The selection of the group's members referred to in article 4.2 (a) and (b) 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.
2. Individuals applying to be appointed as members of the group 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 groups, 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. The conflict of interest assessment shall be performed in compliance with the Commission's horizontal rules on expert groups ('the horizontal rules').
3. Registration in the Transparency Register is required in order for organisations to be appointed.
4. The members of the group shall be appointed by the Director General of DG GROW from specialists with competence in the areas referred to in Article 2 and Article 3 and who have responded to the call for applications.
5. Members shall be appointed for 2 years. They shall remain in office until replaced or until the end of their term of office. Their term of office may be renewed.
6. DG GROW shall establish a reserve list of suitable candidates that may be used to appoint members' replacements. DG GROW shall ask applicants for their consent before including their names on the reserve list.

Article 6

Chair

The group shall be chaired by the Director General of DG GROW.

Article 7

Operation

1. The group shall act at the request of DG GROW in compliance with the horizontal rules.
2. Meetings of the group shall, in principle, be held on Commission premises in Brussels.
3. DG GROW shall provide secretarial services. Commission officials from other departments with an interest in the proceedings may attend meetings of the group and its sub-groups.

4. In agreement with DG GROW, the group 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 group shall be meaningful and complete. Minutes shall be drafted by the secretariat under the responsibility of the Chair.
6. The group 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 shall have the right to have a document summarising the reasons for their position annexed to the opinions, recommendations or reports.

Article 8

Sub-groups

1. DG GROW may set up sub-groups for the purpose of examining specific questions on the basis of terms of reference defined by DG GROW. 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 Article 5 and the horizontal rules.
3. Individual Members may be appointed as rapporteurs on a specific topic. In between the meetings the work shall be carried out via electronic means.

Article 9

Invited experts

DG GROW may invite experts 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.

Article 10

Observers

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

Article 11

Rules of procedure

On a proposal by and in agreement with DG GROW 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.

Article 12

Professional secrecy and handling of classified information

The members of the group and sub-groups 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) 2015/443⁴ and 2015/444⁵. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

Article 13

Transparency

1. The group and sub-groups shall be registered in 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 individuals appointed in a personal capacity;
 - (b) the name of member organisations; the interest represented shall be disclosed;
 - (c) the name of other public entities;
 - (d) the name of observers;
 - (e) the name of Member States' authorities.
3. All relevant documents, including the agendas, the minutes and the participants' submissions, shall be made available either 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 submitted to user registration or any other restriction. In particular, the agenda and other relevant background documents shall be published in due time ahead of the meeting, followed by timely publication of minutes. 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) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁶.

Article 14

Meeting expenses

1. Participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall not be remunerated for the services they offer.

⁴ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41).

⁵ 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).

⁶ 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.

2. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the group and 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.

Article 15

Applicability

This Decision shall apply until 31.05.2020.

Done at Brussels, 30.1.2018

For the Commission

Elżbieta BIENKOWSKA

Member of the Commission