

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS to EU-wide organisations representing regional or local authorities in the EU CAP network Assembly

1. Background

By Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/1864 of 5 October 2022¹, the Commission set out the organisational structure and operation of the European CAP network. In accordance with Article 2 of the above-mentioned Decision, ('the Commission Decision'), the Assembly of the European CAP network ('the group'), is set up.

The group's tasks shall be to:

- (a) promote exchange and networking among public and private entities active in agriculture and rural development, in innovation related to specific objectives of the CAP and in monitoring and evaluation in agriculture and rural development;
- (b) ensure coordination between the thematic strands of the European CAP network;
- (c) provide the strategic framework and guidance for the activities of the European CAP network, including the thematic works;
- (d) ensure appropriate monitoring and assessment of the activities of the European CAP network with regard to the objectives set out in Article 126(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115² and the tasks listed in Article 126(4) of that Regulation;
- (e) to propose to the Director-General for Agriculture and Rural Development ('the Director-General') the members of the Steering Group.

The Commission is calling for applications with a view to selecting members of the group referred to in Article 4(1)(e) of the Commission Decision: Union-wide organisations representing regional or local authorities active in agriculture and rural development, including the connections between rural and urban areas.

2. Features of the Group

2.1. COMPOSITION

In accordance with Article 4(1)(e) of the Commission Decision the group shall be composed of the following members:

¹ Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/1864 of 5 October 2022 setting out the organisational structure and operation of the European CAP network and repealing Implementing Decision 2014/825/EU (OJ L 259, 6.10.2022, p. 189).

² Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013 (OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1).

- (a) national CAP networks referred to in Article 126(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 (one member from each Member State);
- (b) managing authorities referred to in Article 123 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 (one member from each Member State);
- (c) paying agencies referred to in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 of the European Parliament and of the Council³ (one member from each Member State);
- (d) Union-wide non-governmental organisations, registered in the Transparency Register, who have been appointed members of the civil dialogue groups on the common agricultural policy (CAP) pursuant to Decision 2013/767/EU⁴ and who have expressed their interest in participating in the group;
- (e) Union-wide organisations representing regional or local authorities active in agriculture and rural development, including the connections between rural and urban areas (maximum 3 members);
- (f) LEADER local action groups referred to in Article 33 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060⁵ (one member from each Member State);
- (g) farm advisory services active in innovation support services linked to EIP operational groups' projects referred to in Article 127(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 (one member from each Member State);
- (h) agricultural research institutes active in innovation activities linked to EIP operational groups' projects referred to in Article 127(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 (one member from each Member State).

Members referred to in points (a), (b), (c), (f), (g) and (h), shall be designated by the respective Member State.

Members referred to in point (e) shall be appointed by the Director-General on the basis of a call for applications.

Members States' authorities shall nominate the permanent representatives for each of the categories referred to points (a), (b), (c), (f), (g) and (h).

³ Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 (OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 187).

⁴ Commission Decision 2013/767/EU of 16 December 2013 setting up a framework for civil dialogue in matters covered by the common agricultural policy and repealing Decision 2004/391/EC (OJ L 338, 17.12.2013, p. 115), replaced by Commission Decision (EU) 2022/1368 of 3 August 2022 setting up Civil Dialogue Groups in matters covered by the common agricultural policy and repealing Decision 2013/767/EU (OJ L 205, 5.8.2022, p. 278).

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159).

The organisations referred to in points (d) and (e), shall nominate their permanent representatives.

Members shall be responsible for ensuring that their representatives provide a high level of expertise. The Directorate General Agriculture and Rural Development ('DG AGRI') 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 this call. In such case, the organisation concerned shall be asked to appoint another representative.

2.2. APPOINTMENT

Members referred to in Article 4(1)(e) of the Commission Decision and in point 2.1.(e) of this call shall be appointed by the Director-General from applicants complying with the requirements referred to in chapter 4 of this call.

Members shall be appointed for the duration of the group. They shall remain in office until the end of their term of office.

Registration in the Transparency Register is required in order for stakeholder organisations to be appointed as members.

2.3 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE GROUP

The group shall be chaired by a representative of DG AGRI. The chair shall convene a meeting at least once a year.

The group shall act at the request of DG AGRI.

The Chair shall convene a meeting at least once a year on Commission premises, unless the Chair decides otherwise.

DG AGRI shall provide secretarial services.

Members and members' representatives should be prepared to attend meetings systematically, to contribute actively to discussions in the group, to be involved in preparatory work ahead of meetings, to examine and provide comments on documents under discussion, and to act, as appropriate, as 'rapporteurs' on *ad hoc* basis.

As a general rule, working documents will be drafted in English and meetings will be also conducted in English with interpretation provided according to available resources.

In principle, 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. The members that 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.

In agreement with the DG AGRI the group may, by simple majority of its members, decide that deliberations shall be public.

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

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) 2015/443⁶ and 2015/444⁷. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

On a proposal by and in agreement with DG AGRI the group shall adopt its rules of procedure.

DG AGRI 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.

Individuals, organisations and public entities other than Member States' authorities may be granted an observer status, by direct invitation. Organisations and public entities appointed as observers shall nominate their representatives. 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.

DG AGRI may set up sub-groups for the purpose of examining specific questions on the basis of terms of reference defined by DG AGRI. Sub-groups shall report to the group. They shall be dissolved as soon as their mandate is fulfilled. The members of sub-groups that are not members of the group shall be selected via a public call for applications.

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

⁷ 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).

2.4. TRANSPARENCY

DG AGRI shall make available all relevant documents, including the agendas, the minutes and the participants' submissions, on 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, DG AGRI shall ensure publication of 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 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° 1049/2001⁸.

Personal data shall be collected, processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 2018/1725.

3. Application procedure

Interested organisations are invited to submit their application to the European Commission, DG AGRI.

Applications must be completed in one of the official languages of the European Union. However, applications in English would facilitate the evaluation procedure. If another language is used, it would be helpful to include a summary of the application in English.

Organisations shall indicate the name of their representative(s) in the group.

An application will be deemed admissible only if it is sent by the deadline and includes the documents referred to below. All documents submitted by applicants should be duly filled in, legible, signed and numbered sequentially.

Supporting documents

Each application shall include the following documents:

- a cover letter explaining the applicant's motivation for answering this call and stating what contribution the applicant could make to the group;
- a classification form duly filled in specifying the member category for which the application is made (Annex I);
- a selection criteria form duly filled in documenting how the applicant fulfills the selection criteria listed in chapter 4 of this call (Annex II).

Additional supporting documents (e.g. publications) may be requested at a later stage.

Deadline for application

The duly signed applications must be sent by 17th of August 2023 at the latest by email only to AGRI-EUCAPNETWORK@ec.europa.eu.

⁸ 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.

The date of the e-mail will be the date of sending.

4. Selection criteria

DG AGRI will take the following criteria into account when assessing applications:

- Organisations should demonstrate relevant competence and experience at Union level in representing EU regional or local authorities and their activities in agriculture and rural development, including the connections between rural and urban areas. To demonstrate their activities, organisations should describe their recent work done through one or several of the following tools: publications, website and different electronic means, meetings held with member organisations and seminars and other events organised. The degree of these activities will be assessed in the selection process;
- Organisations should demonstrate their activities in several Member States to vouch for their representativeness and significance at Union level. The degree of this representativeness, both at Union level and in the Member States where the applicant declares to be active, will be assessed in the selection process;
- Organisations must have sufficient administrative capacity to coordinate activities with all their members, to cooperate with the EU CAP network and participate in the activities of the group. To allow the assessment of the applicant's administrative capacity, organisations should provide the following:
 - the number of staff in the organisation's headquarter and/or, if relevant, in the member organisations it represents, and
 - the Internet website of the organisation which applies.
- Organisations should have experience and be willing to work with electronic methods for the management and exchange of documents and interactive meetings (videoconferencing).

5. Selection procedure

The selection procedure shall consist of an assessment of the applications performed by DG AGRI against the selection criteria listed in chapter 4 of this call, followed by the establishment of a list of the most suitable applicants, and concluded by the appointment of the members of the group referred to in Article 4(1)(e) of the Commission Decision and in point 2.1.(e) of this call.

When defining the composition of the members of the group referred to in Article 4(1)(e) of the Commission Decision and in point 2.1.(e) of this call, DG AGRI shall aim at ensuring, as far as possible, a high level of expertise, as well as a balanced representation of relevant know-how and areas of interest, while taking into account the specific tasks of the group, the type of expertise required, as well as the relevance of the applications received.

For any further information please contact, e-mail: AGRI-EUCAPNETWORK@ec.europa.eu.

ANNEXES:

- Annex I: Classification form
- Annex II: Selection criteria form
- Annex III: Privacy statement