



## **Call for applications for non-governmental organisations' membership in the civil dialogue group on *rural development***

### **1. Background**

Pursuant to the [Commission Decision of 16 December 2013 setting up a framework for civil dialogue](#)<sup>1</sup>, the Director-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission invites eligible non-governmental organisations to apply for membership of the **civil dialogue group on rural development**.

In accordance with Article 11(2) of the Treaty on European Union, the institutions are to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.

### **2. Tasks of the group**

The civil dialogue groups' general tasks pursuant to the Commission decision will be:

- (a) to maintain a regular dialogue on all matters relating to the common agricultural policy, including its implementation and new measures the Commission may be called on to take;
- (b) to exchange relevant experience and good practice;
- (c) to advise the Commission on relevant policy;
- (d) to deliver relevant opinions on request of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development or on their own initiative;
- (e) to monitor relevant policy developments.

---

<sup>1</sup> Commission Decision 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).

The role of this civil dialogue group will be to assist the Commission in maintaining a regular dialogue on all matters related to the policy on rural development. For details on the subject matters you can consult the respective agendas, working materials and summary notes of the mentioned matters on the advisory groups' website under the previous system under Commission decision (2004/391/EC) of 23.4.2004:

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/consultations/advisory-groups/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/consultations/advisory-groups/index_en.htm)

### **3. Membership**

3.1. Membership of the civil dialogue groups is open to EU-wide non-governmental organisations, registered in the joint [European Transparency Register](#).

3.1.1. For the purpose of this call, applicants must be organisations such as representative organisations, socio-economic interest groups, civil society organisations and trade unions. This is not an exhaustive list and should therefore be interpreted loosely. Therefore, the following could be also considered eligible: networks, platforms or other forms of collective with or without legal status or legal personality.

However, it excludes physical persons ('experts' or (self-employed) consultants), universities, companies & groups, research and academic institutions, political parties, think tanks, law firms, professional consultancies and the like.

3.1.2. The organisations must not be governmental. For selection purposes, the term 'governmental' includes Member States and any lower levels of government (regions, provinces, *Länder*, *départements*, municipal authorities, or a combination or association of these, irrespective of whether these organisations are subject to public or private law), non-EU governments, international intergovernmental organisations, diplomatic missions or regional representations to the EU institutions, and agencies.

3.1.3. The NGOs must be at least European-level. As a rule, any applicant must have *full* members in at least seven Member States. Exceptions can be made for specific groups, or with regard to specific cases duly justified by the selection panel.

3.1.4. All applicants must be registered in the Transparency Register and furnish proof of registration. There will be no exception to that rule.

3.2. The organisations fulfilling the criteria mentioned under point 3.1. may be admitted on condition that they:

3.2.1. Are not represented by a (higher-level) EU-wide umbrella organisation. There must be an inability to participate via a higher European-level NGO ('umbrella organisation').

(Lower-level) members of (higher-level) applying European-wide umbrella organisations should refrain from applying themselves. If they have the possibility to participate via the higher-level umbrella organisations their application will be disregarded. Priority will be given to higher-level umbrella organisations. If such (lower-level) members apply, please note that the impossibility to participate via their (higher-level) European-wide umbrella organisations will be subject to special scrutiny. This impossibility will need to be explicitly proven.

Eligible NGOs that have, so far, participated in the advisory groups via an umbrella organisation should in principle continue to do so, unless they can furnish clear proof that this is impossible (e.g. because the umbrella organisation is not participating in the call for applications).

The simple fact that the NGO applicant has left the umbrella organisation will not be considered clear proof. Even NGOs which have left an umbrella organisation have often been allowed to continue to participate in the advisory groups (their experts continued to be appointed and registered by the umbrella organisation). Therefore, written proof signed by the umbrella organisation stating that it is no longer able to allow the applicant to participate in the advisory groups via its structure appears to be mandatory, and sufficient. That information will of course influence the number of seats allocated to the umbrella organisation, if it participates in the call.

- 3.2.2. Have sufficient capacity to coordinate activities with the Commission and all their members. There are two key criteria for proving sufficient administrative capacity for vertical and horizontal coordination:

First, the number of permanent full-time staff (or equivalent) in the NGO's headquarters should be sufficient to coordinate the activities on site with all its members and with the Commission departments.

Second, there must be appropriate infrastructure (e.g. for holding meetings, telephone or video conferences with its members), and an appropriate headquarters' website.

- 3.2.3. Are well-established and stable.

To prevent bogus NGOs from applying (i.e. NGOs created for the purpose of the call), the date of establishment should be given. As a rule, the NGO should have been in place on 1 January 2012. In exceptional cases, for which the selection panel must give reasons, NGOs created after that date may qualify.

- 3.2.4. Are active and have shown interest in the relevant field.

Applicants that belong to and have regularly participated as experts in the advisory groups under decision (EC) 2004/319 may be considered *ex officio* as

having shown sufficient interest. In these cases, no material proof of interest is needed.

New applicants (i.e. applicants that have never participated in the advisory groups, or applicants that have in the past participated in advisory groups that cannot be compared to the CDG they are applying to join) will be considered as showing sufficient interest, if they:

- i. have submitted the application form, and furnished any required additional proof in time, if so requested by the selection panel, and
- ii. have shown a number of *publications* in the applicant's name in relation to the CDG applied for that is deemed sufficient by the selection panel, or
- iii. have shown a number of *submissions* to EU-level consultations and the like in the applicant's name in relation to the CDG applied for that is deemed sufficient by the selection panel.

3.2.5. Have sufficient expertise in the relevant field. The capability of NGOs to mobilise technical expertise relevant to the subjects of the dialogue is indispensable.

The purpose of this exercise is to select NGOs, and not experts. Experts will be nominated by the selected NGOs depending on the agenda items, and are hence unknown at this stage of the procedure. Therefore, in this phase the only criterion for assessing whether the NGO can mobilise appropriate expertise appears to be capability to mobilise any kind of appropriate expertise for the relevant CDG.

The indicators of whether an NGO is capable of mobilising experts with appropriate expertise are the same as those given under point 3.2.4. para (1) and para (2) ii and iii here-above. Reference is thus made to those points. Hence, already participating members of the advisory group system are exempt from proving their capability to mobilise the required expertise in the conditions set out in point 3.2.4.

Pursuant to Art 4(3) of the Commission Decision, the Commission will ensure a balanced membership of the groups. Subject to this legal requirement, the selection panel will bear in mind that there are sectors where, in order to have a fruitful civil dialogue, the participation of NGOs capable of mobilising technical expertise relevant to the subjects of the dialogue appears as indispensable.

#### **4. Terms of the Appointment**

Member organisations will be appointed for seven years. They may be replaced before the end of the mandate for justified reasons, for instance if they repeatedly fail to attend meetings or no longer comply with the above conditions.

While the Commission will not remunerate members or their representatives, it will reimburse travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with applicable rules.

#### **5. Application procedure**

Interested organisations may apply online **only** using this form:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/Survey-CDG-Rural-Development>

The calls will open on 01.04.2014 and close on **30.04.2014 at 24:00 hrs**. Supporting documentation may be submitted no later than **30.04.2014 at 24:00 hrs only** by e-mail to:

[AGRI-R4-CIVILDIALOGUE@ec.europa.eu](mailto:AGRI-R4-CIVILDIALOGUE@ec.europa.eu)

Late submissions or submissions in other formats than required may be refused.

For further information please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/calls-for-applications/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/calls-for-applications/index_en.htm)

or contact the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, unit R.4, at the above e-mail address.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with [Regulation \(EC\) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council](#).<sup>2</sup>

#### **6. Results of the selection process**

After the selection process has been completed, the results will be published at

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/index_en.htm)

and the successful applicants will be listed in the [Register of Commission Expert Groups](#).

---

<sup>2</sup> 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).

There will be no exchange of correspondence on the selection process or its outcome. Applicants attempting to contact the selection panels or any of their members risk being disqualified.