



High-Level Reflection Group on the Future of the European Commission's Civil Service

Terms of Reference

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, assigned the Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public administration in his mission letter¹, with the task of carrying out a large-scale review of the Commission's organisation and operations, together with an external benchmarking exercise. His mission letter specifies that he will be supported in this work by a High-Level Reflection Group ("the group") on the future of the Commission's civil service.

This document provides the Terms of Reference for the group, detailing its objectives, composition, governance, responsibilities and other relevant issues.

1. Objectives

The group will support the Commission by offering expert insight, sharing best practices, and providing external perspectives on issues related to the future of the Commission's civil service and the large-scale review. Their objectives include:

1. To provide **'outside-in' guidance** and advise on the scoping of the work and the more detailed lines of work as the review progresses (i.e. the different organisational and operational aspects under review) in light of the future challenges faced by the civil service.
2. To act as a **'sounding board' for the development of options and recommendations** as they emerge (feasibility and implementation challenges, expected impact and outcomes).
3. **To assist with external benchmarking efforts**, which will be led by the large-scale review inception team. This may involve providing expertise on how to conduct benchmarking as well as aiding in the identification of comparable organisations or appropriate experts to support the review.
4. To help identify **good practices** to support the delivery of the review, such as sharing experience from similar reform initiatives or ideas on how to support their successful implementation.

2. Composition

The group should consist of 7-9 members and will be well-balanced in terms of gender, geography, and experience. It will include highly qualified experts with relevant expertise, drawn from mostly from senior public (or semi-public) organisations (either current or former) with expertise in fields such as civil service reform, organisational development, human resources, public administration, digitalisation or other relevant areas.

3. Governance

¹ [db369caa-19e7-4560-96e0-37dc2556f676_en](#)

Piotr Serafin, the Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration, is responsible for the political leadership of the review while the operational work will be led by the Director-General for Human Resources and Security (DG HR). A large-scale review team has been set up and managed from the office of the Director-General for DG HR who will be responsible for the technical preparation and overall orchestration of the review.

The group is expected to operate over a period of 16 months, starting from October 2025 to December 2026 (with some flexibility on timing if necessary for the completion of the group's mandate and tasks).

The secretariat will convene meetings:

- Quarterly, with additional *ad-hoc* meetings as required.
- Virtually or in-person, depending on circumstances.

4. Roles and responsibilities of the group members, secretariat and the chairperson

The members of the group will:

- Provide expertise and insights in their respective fields, both in the meetings or through written contributions based on input provided by the secretariat.
- Attend all scheduled meetings, while remaining flexible for ad-hoc meetings if necessary.
- Facilitate contact opportunities with relevant experts where appropriate.
- Issue a final report in Q4 2026 to be prepared with the assistance of the secretariat in order to inform the recommendations of the large-scale review.

The secretariat of the group will be provided by the large-scale review team in DG HR. The secretariat will:

- Prepare, coordinate and disseminate discussion papers and background documents to facilitate meeting discussions, in close cooperation with relevant Commission services.
- Coordinate with the chairperson on agenda setting and send background papers to members in advance of meetings.
- Organise meeting logistics.
- Draft meeting minutes under the responsibility of the chairperson and share with group members.
- Act as a contact point between the Commission and all group members.
- Prepare the final report, in close collaboration with relevant Commission services, to be agreed by the group.

The chairperson of the group will be appointed by the Commissioner of Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration. The Chairperson will be supported in their role by the secretariat.

The Chairperson will:

- Chair group meetings.
- Provide leadership and support a collaborative team environment among the group.

- Set the agenda of the meetings in close collaboration with the secretariat, including the invitation of external experts.
- Approve the meeting minutes prepared by the secretariat.
- Guide the members to establish a consensus on important issues when needed.

5. Other relevant issues

Invited experts: DG HR or the members may invite experts with specific expertise relevant to the large-scale review to take part in the work of the group on an ad-hoc basis.

Transparency: The Secretariat will make relevant documents available on a dedicated external website.

This terms of reference document will serve as a 'living document' and is subject to changes and amendments if necessary.