



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Directorate B – Jobs and Skills

INFORMAL COMMISSION SPECIAL GROUP

EUROPEAN SKILLS HIGH LEVEL BOARD

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND

The Commission Communication on the Union of Skills¹ called for the creation of the European Skills High Level Board, which will have an advisory role, providing the Commission with comprehensive, cross-sectoral insights and guidance on skills as well as action to strengthen the EU's human capital.

The Board shall support the work of the Commission with strategic guidance on the EU-27 Recommendation on human capital and on the country-specific recommendations in the context of the European Semester. In its work, the Board will be supported by analyses provided by the European Skills Intelligence Observatory hosted by the Joint Research Centre. It will also receive inputs from the STEAM² Executive Panel, maintained by DG EAC.

The Board will have a dynamic and agile structure, to respond quickly to the evolving situation on the EU sectoral skills landscape. Members shall include a balanced representation from businesses and education, including business leaders on strategic sectors for the EU's competitiveness, education and training providers and social partners, with proven expertise on 'real time' developments in labour market skills needs and education and training provision.

The European Skills High Level Board is expected to operate during the mandate of the current Commission, from 2026 to 2029.

2. SUBJECT MATTER

The European Skills High Level Board ('the group') is set up.

3. TASKS

The group's tasks shall be:

¹ COM(2025) 90 final, 5.3.2025

² Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics

1. to advise or alert the Commission on possible priority actions and solutions to address existing and emerging skills challenges.
2. to advise the Commission on its work on strengthening human capital within the European Semester, including an EU-27 Recommendation on human capital and the country-specific recommendations.

4. CONSULTATION

1. The Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion ('DG EMPL') in coordination with the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture ('DG EAC') may consult the group on any matter relating to its tasks as referred to in point 3.
2. The Chair of the group may ask DG EMPL in coordination with DG EAC to consult the group on any matter relating to its tasks defined in point 3.

5. MEMBERSHIP

1. The group shall consist of approximately 16 members.
2. Members shall be companies, education and training providers and social partners. Each organisation shall appoint a representative.
3. Members who are no longer capable of contributing effectively to the group's deliberations, who, in the opinion of DG EMPL in coordination with DG EAC, 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 as referred to in point 6 (5).

6. SELECTION PROCESS

1. The selection of the group's members shall be carried on the basis of the following selection criteria:
 - proven first hand experience and track record of the organisation:
 - in the implementation of impactful, innovative and targeted human capital development strategies at organisational level and in strategic sectors³; OR
 - in the provision of education, training and up- and reskilling in line with evolving trends and needs of the labour market, including first-hand experience in the provision of basic, digital and STE(A)M skills or in collaboration with labour market actors.
 - hierarchical level of the proposed representatives: the highest level responsible for relevant strategic decisions in the organisation.

³ Sectors of strategic importance include digital and clean technology, circular economy and industrial decarbonisation, health and biotech, agriculture and fisheries-aquaculture, bioeconomy, defence industry and space.

2. Registration in the Transparency Register is required in order for organisations to be appointed.
3. The members of the group shall be appointed by the Director-General of DG EMPL after the agreement of the Director-General of DG EAC.
4. The Director-General of DG EMPL after the agreement of the Director-General of DG EAC may appoint new members to swiftly respond to the evolving economic context and sectoral skills shortages.
5. Members shall be appointed for the period from 2026 to 2029. They shall remain in office until the end of their term of office or until replaced.

7. CHAIR

The group will be chaired by Ms Ylva Johansson in her function as a Special Adviser reporting to Executive Vice-President MÎNZATU.

8. INVITED EXPERTS

The Chair may invite experts with specific expertise with respect to a subject matter on the agenda to be present during a meeting of the Board, or at the discussion of a specific items in the agenda, on an *ad hoc* basis.

9. RULES OF PROCEDURE

On a proposal by and in agreement with the Secretariat of the Board, the group shall adopt its rules of procedure by simple majority of its members.

10. PROFESSIONAL SECRECY AND HANDLING OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

The members of the group as well as invited experts 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.

11. TRANSPARENCY

1. The transparency rules governing the group shall ensure an equivalent level of transparency as for Commission expert groups and other similar entities. The information referred to in points 2 and 3 below will be publicly available on the corporate website of DG EMPL. The access to the website shall not be submitted to user registration or any other restriction.

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).

2. As regards the group composition, the name of organisations shall be published on the corporate website of DG EMPL.
3. All relevant documents, including the Terms of Reference, the Rules of Procedure, the agendas, minutes and conclusions of the Board's meetings, shall be made available on the corporate website of DG EMPL. In particular, DG EMPL in coordination with DG EAC shall publish the agenda ahead of the meeting, followed by timely publication of minutes. Exceptions to publication shall only be possible 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° 1049/2001⁶.

12. MEETING EXPENSES

1. Participants in the activities of the group shall not be remunerated for their contributions in the context of the Board and its meetings.
2. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the group may be reimbursed by the Commission if requested by the participants. 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.

Done in Brussels, on 11.5.2026.

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.