

A Guide to EASAC Governance and Operations

This document is a guide to EASAC for new members joining EASAC Council, Bureau, Steering Panels or working groups, and for those academicians simply interested in knowing more about their regional academy network. It provides an overview of EASAC's membership, strategy, governance and operations.

New members are encouraged to read this guide before they take up their new role and to use it as a reference throughout their tenure. They may also find it helpful as a tool for informing their own academy's Council/governing body and wider membership about EASAC. The guide is accompanied by a slide pack and there is plenty of additional information on [EASAC's website](#). The members of EASAC's Bureau and the staff at the EASAC Secretariat are more than happy to help with any questions not covered in this short guide: please just contact secretariat@easac.eu.

(1) General overview

What is EASAC?

The European Academies' Science Advisory Council – or [EASAC](#) – is the authoritative voice of independent science advice in the European Union. Representing the national science academies of the EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland, EASAC is a mechanism for mobilising Europe's best scientific minds on important public policy issues and for providing science-based advice to European policy-makers and civil society.

The governing body of EASAC is its [Council](#) in which all member academies are represented. The operating arm of EASAC is the [Bureau](#), comprising the President, Vice-Presidents, the past and incoming Presidents (for one year after and before tenure, respectively), and involving Steering Panel Chairs, Programme Directors and Executive Director. EASAC governance and operations are defined by its [statutes](#).

EASAC policy work is presently organised under [core programmes](#) – Biosciences, Energy and Environment – each led by a Programme Director and Steering Panel. The experts on EASAC's Steering Panels identify and recommend new projects to Council and Bureau in the three science areas, but other domains of science that are important to society can also be considered. Once agreed, temporary project-specific working groups are formed to support individual projects, their most active phase lasting normally between 12 and 18 months.

EASAC Council, Bureau, Steering Panels and individual working groups within the programmes are all supported by the EASAC [Secretariat](#). With support by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters and the Royal Academies for Science and the Arts of Belgium, EASAC also maintains a permanent office in Brussels.

Since its establishment in 2001, EASAC has - with the input of its Steering Panels and working groups - produced a substantial number of high quality advisory reports and statements (listed [here](#)) aimed primarily at policy-makers in the [European Commission](#) and in the European [Parliament](#), and for the science advisory mechanisms within them. EASAC has an MOU with the [Commission's Joint Research Centre \(JRC\)](#) and works with the [European Parliamentary Research Service \(EPRS\)](#).

EASAC also works closely with the network of medical academies ([FEAM](#)), with the pan-European academy of sciences and humanities ([Academia Europaea](#)), the association of all academies in geographic Europe ([ALLEA](#)), and the network of engineering academies ([Euro-CASE](#)). From 2016 to 2020, these five networks are collaborating in a project consortium, [SAPEA](#), which is an integral but independent part of the European Commission's [Science Advisory Mechanism \(SAM\)](#).

EASAC is the regional affiliated network for Europe of the [InterAcademy Partnership \(IAP\)](#), the global network of more than 130 national science, engineering and medical academies, who work together on global science policy issues. Through IAP, EASAC works with other regional academy networks in Africa, the Americas and Asia, sharing good practice and lessons learned in influencing policy (working at the “science-policy interface”) and engaging with the media and civil society. EASAC has played a lead role in an innovative, interregional project for IAP on [Food and Nutrition Security and Agriculture](#).

Under its present strategy (2016-2021), EASAC has five core objectives:

1. To influence EU policy development and secondarily national policy within EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland i.e. those countries with EASAC members;
2. To inform EU and Member States' contributions to global policy frameworks, largely via its role as regional network for Europe to the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP);
3. To provide an independent EU-wide platform for debate and for convening scientists, policy-makers and publics;
4. To build the science policy capacity of EU academies and scientists, and mobilise the European science community to engage on regional policy agendas;
5. To build a progressive and more resilient science academies' network.

(2) EASAC Council and Bureau

EASAC Council

Council is EASAC's full assembly and governing body. It is composed of 29 highly experienced scientists, nominated by, and representing, EASAC member academies. Council members are expected to regularly consult with their academies about EASAC business, and be empowered by their academies to make decisions on their behalf at Council meetings. Council sets EASAC's direction, agrees the initiation of projects, monitors their progress and reviews and approves reports for publication. It meets every six months, usually in May and November, at the academy of the EU Member State which will take over the EU Presidency approximately one month later.

Council members typically serve a period of three years (renewable) and are expected to attend each meeting in person if they can (if they know they cannot attend at least 65% of meetings, they will be encouraged to stand down). Council members are required to:

- (1) *Ensure good governance* by monitoring and evaluating the progress of EASAC Bureau and activities under the three core programmes (Biosciences, Energy and Environment), and ensuring due diligence in EASAC finances and other services provided by the EASAC Secretariat;
- (2) *Contribute actively to EASAC business* by
 - nominating – in consultation with their member academy – experts to working groups, Steering Panels and peer review groups for EASAC documents;

- communicating EASAC’s recommendations on a national level to policy-makers (domestically and as national delegates to the EU), civil society, the media, other relevant audiences – including their own academy¹;
- acting as an intermediary between their own academy and EASAC, making sure information is exchanged in both directions – including giving regular updates to Council on their academy’s own policy work and/or relevant national policy development;
- where possible, sharing good practice and “lessons learned” in evidence-informed policy-making (within their academy and in EASAC business);
- acting as ambassadors for EASAC in their national and international circles.

New EASAC Council members are encouraged to seek additional briefing from their predecessors and from support staff in their nominating academies. Before attending their first meeting, they should complete a declaration-of-interest form and submit it to the EASAC Secretariat. New Council members are also warmly invited to contact the EASAC Secretariat to set up a telephone call or Skype meeting with one of the members of EASAC Bureau or the EASAC Executive Director.

EASAC Bureau

Council is supported by [EASAC Bureau](#), consisting of the EASAC President and Vice-Presidents, as well as (for one year each) its immediate Past President and President-Elect, to ensure business continuity. Since 2012, the three Chairs of the EASAC Steering Panels have been co-opted to the Bureau. EASAC Bureau normally meets four times per year and in an extended format to also include the Programme Directors and the Executive Director.

Bureau is accountable to Council: it is responsible for implementing Council’s decisions and ensuring EASAC business runs smoothly. It is supported by the [EASAC Secretariat](#) which is managed by the Executive Director and also comprises the Programme Directors, Secretariat Coordinator, Head of Communications, Senior Policy Officer (SAPEA) and Senior Brussels Officer. Bureau’s responsibilities are to strengthen EASAC’s infrastructure; develop and implement the EASAC strategy; appoint Steering Panel Chairs, oversee the Steering Panels and project-specific working groups; build and maintain working links with EU policy-makers, EU institutions and other relevant EU and national agencies; liaise and – where relevant – work with other science academy networks, e.g. IAP, ALLEA, [NASAC](#) (the network of African Science Academies); maintain close contact with [EASAC member academies](#); and oversee EASAC’s communication activities, such as press releases, newsletter and website. Programme Directors additionally provide vital scientific input and drafting expertise, and are the engine of EASAC’s productivity.

(3) EASAC Steering Panels

EASAC has three Steering Panels – Energy, Environment and Biosciences – each run by a Programme Director and meeting normally once every six to nine months (as much of their work is conducted electronically). Steering Panel members are nominated by EASAC member academies and selected on the basis of their expertise in a respective field, complementing the skill set of the rest of the Panel to ensure good coverage in terms of discipline, technology, sector and/or specific policy area. In addition to being able to assess knowledge in particular sectors, they will also have experience of applying knowledge to public policy-making. They normally serve a period of three years, renewable on the approval of Bureau.

¹ For example: arranging the posting of translated summaries of EASAC recommendations on their academy website, arranging one-to-one meetings between scientific experts and key national policy-makers, convening workshops for key stakeholders, writing articles or commentaries in national newspapers.

The primary purpose of the Steering Panels is to advise EASAC on potential projects where EASAC can *add unique value* and have *high impact on EU policy*, drawing on a set of key criteria for project selection – see Annex.

Steering Panel members are required to:

- provide leadership in the development of EASAC’s programme work (once approved by Council, each project is taken forward by a specific working group appointed by Council);
- support the Programme Director in developing the work plan for the programme;
- explore opportunities for working on cross-sectoral/inter-disciplinary issues with the other EASAC programmes;
- support the initiation of new projects, identifying priority topics and target audiences within European institutions, in consultation with their member (nominating) academy;
- support the development of project working groups by identifying suitable candidates and recommending them to their member (nominating) academy;
- monitor the progress and quality assure the output of the working groups;
- advise on reactive programme work e.g. responding to public consultations from the EU or inaccurate media reporting;
- develop relationships with the European institutions and other interested bodies, where appropriate, as well as key scientists in relevant/associated fields;
- support the dissemination of project outputs at a national and regional level to (1) their member (nominating) academy (drawing on policy and media teams where they have them) and (2) policy-makers (domestic and national delegates to the EU), civil society, the media, and other relevant audiences;
- act as ambassadors for EASAC in their national and international circles, especially in Brussels and Strasbourg.

Steering Panel members should familiarise themselves with the project flow chart and ensure they have completed declaration-of-interest forms (advising any changes of circumstances which may be relevant). Current Steering Panel members and projects are listed on the EASAC website under each programme ([Biosciences](#), [Energy](#), [Environment](#)).

(4) EASAC Working Groups

After a new project has been scoped and recommended by the Programme Steering Panel(s), reviewed by Bureau and subsequently approved by Council, a project working group is established. Working group members are nominated by EASAC member academies and Council, and shortlisted by the Programme Director and relevant Steering Panel on the basis of their expertise and its application to the policy question being explored, as well as complementing the skill set of the rest of the group to ensure good coverage (in terms of discipline, sector, technology etc). Appointment of working group members rests with Bureau, and they serve for the duration of the project.

With an average of 2-3 meetings and extensive electronic exchange, each EASAC working group prepares a draft report, which then goes through a thorough peer review process and is finally circulated to all Council members for endorsement by member academies. This process is sometimes fast-tracked when policy timeframes are tight and advice is required urgently, or when the topic is relatively narrow in scope, and a shorter statement is produced instead of a report. Working group drafts become formal EASAC documents once they have been endorsed.

Working group members are required to:

- support the Programme Director and working group Chair in developing the work plan for the project;
- contribute significantly to the preparation of the report/statement - where tasked, co-drafting it – to a high standard and to meet the project timetable;
- support the dissemination of project outputs at a national and regional level to (1) their member (nominating) academy (drawing on policy and media teams where they have them)

and (2) policy-makers (domestic and national delegates to the EU), civil society, the media, and other relevant audiences, liaising with their national member on the Steering Panel where there is one;

- act as ambassadors for the project in their national and international circles, especially in Brussels and Strasbourg.

Working group members should familiarise themselves with the project flow chart and ensure they have completed declaration-of-interest forms (advising any changes of circumstances which may be relevant).

(5) EASAC Member Academies

EASAC's member academies are its bedrock. EASAC's finances depend upon its members' subscriptions and in-kind support for travel, meeting, staff and publication expenses. EASAC's expertise relies on its members' nominations of national experts. Without the financial and in-kind support of its member academies, EASAC could not function. More recently, member academies are also being encouraged to lead project-specific work on issues where they have particular expertise and/or insight or a special commitment to inform policy-makers and the public.

EASAC member academies are required to:

- provide a Council member (this could be the President, an officer such as the Foreign Secretary/equivalent, or a senior and active member of their fellowship) and help ensure they are engaged and proactive in EASAC business;
- nominate appropriate Steering Panel and working group members, and peer review contributors², according to their own in-house procedures and strength of national expertise;
- support these appointments financially, administratively (e.g. logistics) and intellectually (e.g. with support on national activities and policy demand/development);
- ensure there is a two-way communication between their representatives/nominations in EASAC, their own Council/governing body and – where possible – their core membership;
- support the dissemination of EASAC project outputs in their own national and international business, including policy outreach and translation (where appropriate);
- be alert to intelligence and opportunities for EASAC, particularly with respect to horizon scanning/longer-term horizons, and feed this into EASAC through their representatives/nominations;
- consider taking the lead on project-specific work where they have intellectual leadership (e.g. strong national expertise and/or previous academy experience) and administrative and/or financial (direct or in-kind) capacity.

The publication of a report or statement is the start of a vital period of dissemination and outreach, to maximise the likelihood of policy impact, with subsequent follow-up to evaluate this impact. EASAC member academies have a special responsibility to support this dissemination and follow-up to ensure that the joint work of the academies in EASAC reaches target audience(s). Member academies are encouraged to engage proactively with their relevant national government policy leads, their EU delegates, their Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), their national press and other media agencies, and relevant parts of civil society. Methods of proactive engagement include personal letters e.g. to relevant Ministers; face-to-face meetings with Ministers and other senior policy-makers; expert meetings with local research communities; meetings that bring different user communities together; national press releases and launch events, as well as using social media. Equally important, member academies are encouraged to follow-up EASAC reports six, 12, and 24 months and longer, after their dissemination, to evaluate their policy impact and potential legacy.

² Peer Review is a critical part of the project delivery plan and academies can nominate Peer Reviewers as an economical way of contributing their members' expertise to the formulation of EASAC policy positions.

ANNEX: CRITERIA FOR PROJECT SELECTION

1. What policy problem is the project addressing? Why does the problem merit the attention of EASAC?
2. Is the project relevant to the EU agenda and to EASAC's objectives? Does it fit in with the current range of EASAC advisory work? If not, is there a case for expanding that range?
3. Is the project relevant to other parts of the world?
4. Is the problem such that objective scientific evidence is relevant for the policy maker? If so, can EASAC secure access to that evidence?
5. Who is responsible (or should be) for the problem at the EU policy level? What might they do differently as a result of the EASAC project? What is the evidence that they are interested in the problem as formulated?
6. Who are the other stakeholders in the issue being addressed? Does the project proposal accommodate their concerns?
7. What external factors influence the timing of the project, i.e. should it be completed by a certain date in order to have maximum impact?
8. What work is already done by others in this area? Have member Academies already been active? Why would EASAC intervention have added value and how would it be distinctive?
9. Is there a case for doing the project together with anyone else?
10. What are the intended project deliverables (e.g. detailed report, shorter statement, workshop or other event)? Why is this particular deliverable the best way to influence the target customer?
11. What issues need to be taken into account by Council for allocation of EASAC resources, e.g. timetable, choice of chairman and experts for multidisciplinary working group; and is the topic within the competencies and interests of EASAC member Academies?