



UCL GUIDANCE NOTE

Engaging with
European Union
policymaking
as a researcher
post-Brexit



This guidance was produced as part of a wider project to facilitate international policy engagement at UCL, led by UCL European Institute, UCL Global Engagement and UCL Public Policy.

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Why engage with European Union policymaking?

If you want to impact on policy in the broadest way possible, influencing EU policy offers an opportunity to shape priorities and legislation across 27 Member States.

As a result of the specific competences of the EU, its policies and policymaking processes often focus on issues that benefit particularly from scientific and technical input.

As a so-called 'regulatory superpower', policy at EU level also influences norms and legislation across the world (the "Brussels effect").

Is it still possible to engage with EU policymaking as a UK-based researcher post-Brexit?

Yes. EU policymakers, like policymakers around the world, are working to address complex societal challenges. Drawing on the best available expertise and advice, regardless of where it comes from, is central to this process.

The UK's decision to leave the EU may have made the routes to policy impact more complex but the strength of the UK's leading universities, like UCL, is recognised across the continent.

There is also general interest across the EU-27 in international benchmarking, comparative perspectives, and the identification of best practice from countries outside the Union.



How does European Union policymaking process work?

The EU policymaking process is complex. Decision-making processes and the role of the EU institutions differ depending on the subject under consideration, and can be supranational or intergovernmental in character. The EU can only make law in areas where it has been given responsibility under the Treaties.

In areas of 'EU competence', the legislative, or law-making, function of the EU is typically carried out by three institutions, outlined on p.6.

Policymaking in the EU typically takes place by 'ordinary legislative' procedure or 'co-decision'. This procedure involves the Commission, Parliament and Council, who aim to come to agreement on the final legislation.

For a useful overview of this process, see this overview by the **Royal Society**.

EU policy is enacted through various types of legislation, some binding and others not. For an overview of legal acts in an EU context, see EU official webpages.

Further information

An overview of the **EU decision-making process** (EU Official webpages)

The EU: Institutions explained by Professor Hussein Kassim (UK in a Changing Europe)

How is Policy developed in the European Union (Royal Society)

The Ordinary Legislative Procedure (European Parliament)

The European Union: Questions and Answers (US Congressional Research Service)

The European Commission

is the executive of the

How does science inform EU policymaking?

Actors within the EU institutions and associated agencies draw on science advice (from across the disciplines) in diverse formal and informal ways to help inform policy and legislation. What follows provides an overview of the main formal structures for science advice in the EU.



Science advice in the European Commission

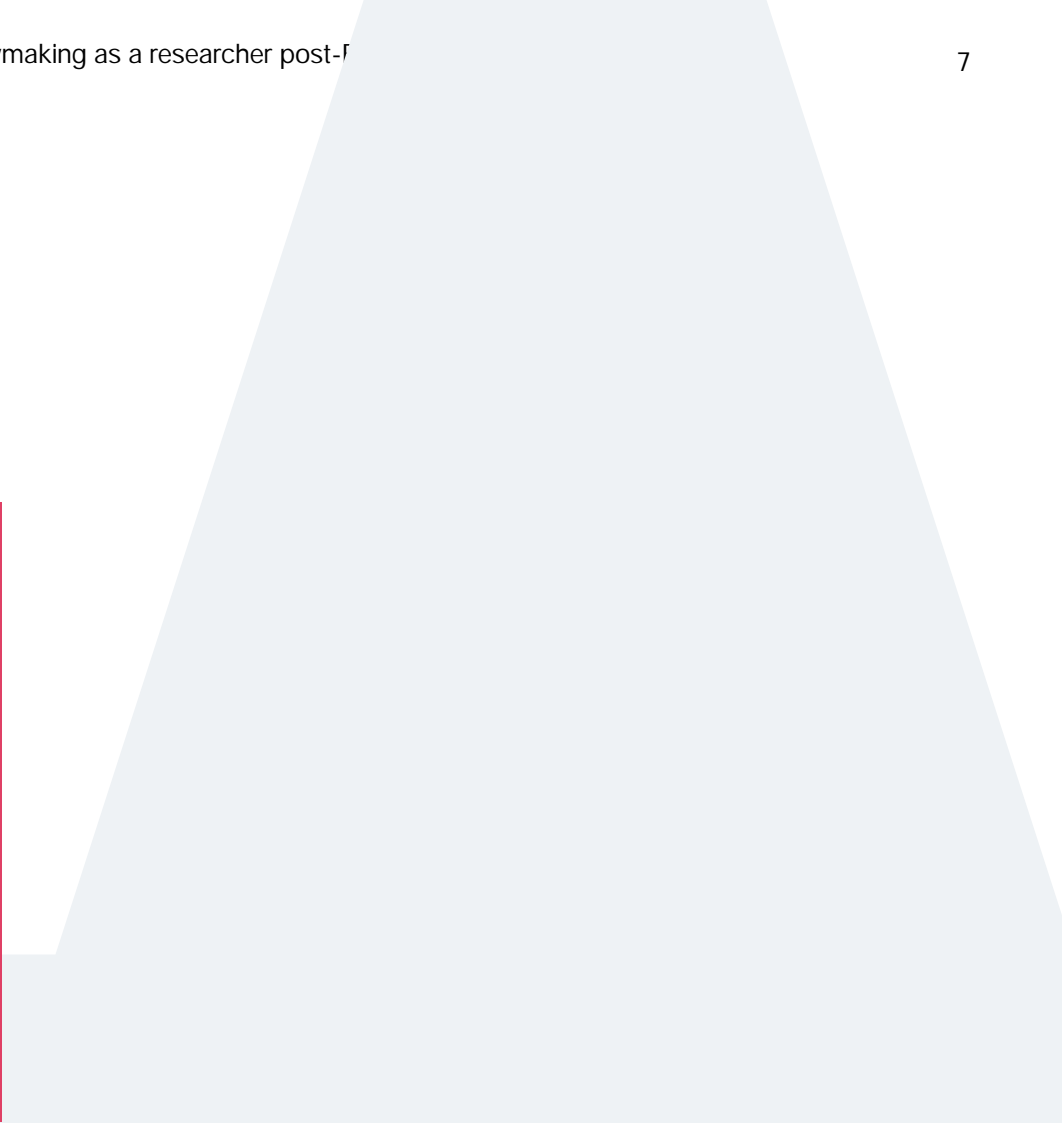
The European Commission has an in-house science service, the **Joint Research Centre** (JRC), which runs seven scientific institutes across the EU and responds to requests from other Directorate Generals for scientific analysis.

In addition, the European Commission has a **Scientific Advice Mechanism** (SAM) to provide high-level, multidisciplinary advice on strategic policy issues.

The SAM consists of a group of seven **Chief Scientific Advisers** supported by the **Science Advice for Policy by European Academies** (SAPEA) a consortium of over 100 European academies across all disciplines, which provides evidence reviews and access to a multidisciplinary expertise, and a dedicated secretariat in DG Research & Innovation (RTD).

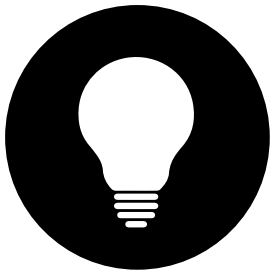
The European Commission convenes over 1000 **expert advisory groups** across the Directorates-General. These can be permanent or temporary.

European Commission bodies may also directly commission research or reviews to inform policy through consultancy. These will tend to be oriented towards specific policy initiatives that are in development.





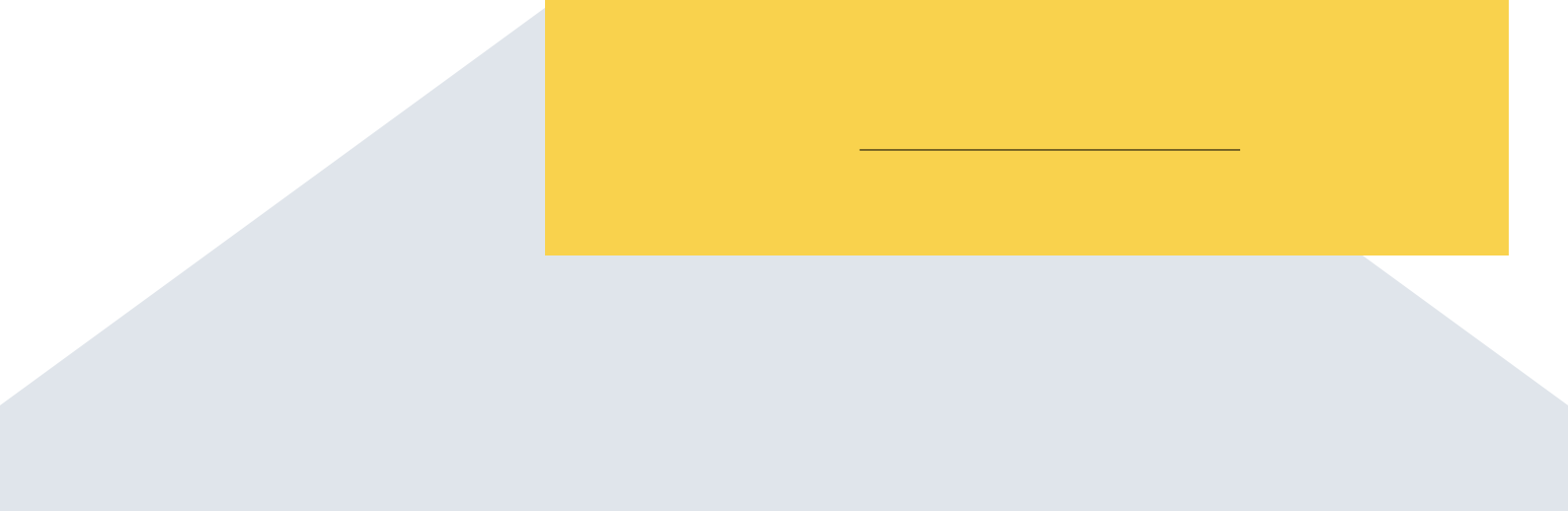
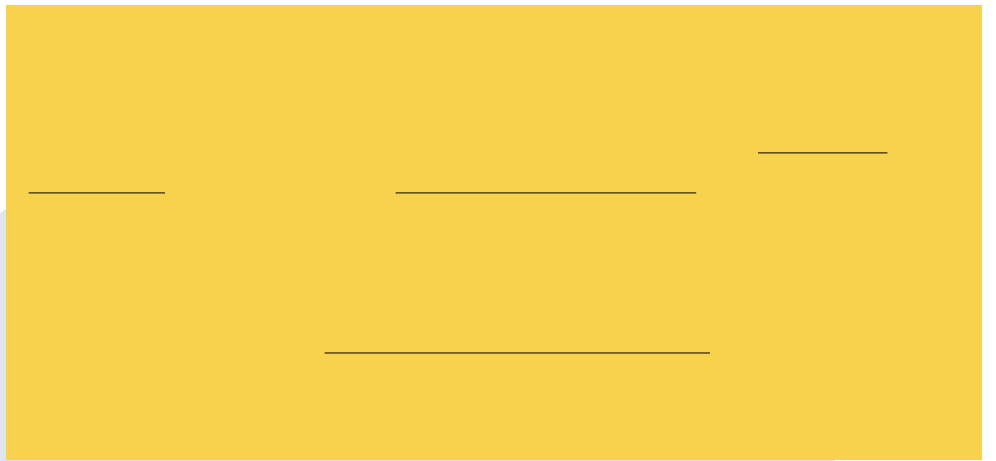
Many of these entities do not engage with the formal science advice machinery outlined above, yet still make use of scientific and technical knowledge on a regular basis through formal and informal processes. These entities are often key in the early stages of scoping new policy proposals and guidance documents.

**TOP TIP:**

Advising national regulators and agencies in particular Member States can be an effective way to influence EU policy, in certain situations - particularly where bodies are European groupings of national, high-capacity bodies. For example, in bodies such as the European Data Protection Board (EDPB) or the Body of the European Regulators of Electronic Communications (BEREC), national regulators are often given the task of acting as rapporteurs on important pieces of regulatory guidance. They will draw upon their own networks as the European-level secretariats, which have co-ordination rather than enforcement roles, often lack the staff and/or specialist expertise.



Where should I start?



TOP TIPS

TOP TIP:

Invest time in building relationships. Take time to attend relevant conferences and events, visit Brussels if you have an opportunity, and persevere. There are many demands on policymakers' time.

TOP TIP:

Cultivate a diverse network. While it can be important to engage directly with civil servants and decision-makers, you should also

engage with other relevant bodies on their terms, as well as through their umbrella organisations. It can also be important to engage with the private sector, including through industry associations.





European Parliamentary Committees

European Parliamentary Committees play a crucial legislative role: preparing the European Parliament response to legislation proposed by the European Commission, developing a common position, and negotiating with the European Commission and the Council.

The European Parliament's political and legislative work is carried out **by 20 standing committees and three subcommittees** each of which elects a chair and up to four vice-chairs, and each of which has its own Secretariat.

For each legislative file, the responsible committee nominates a 'rapporteur', tasked with consulting with political groups and outside experts, organising hearings, and preparing a report including amendments which is subject to a vote, first in committee then in plenary. Political groups also have the option to nominate 'shadow rapporteurs' which play an important role in facilitating the search for compromise on a legislative proposal.



TOP TIP:

When engaging with the European Parliament it is important to understand who has influence on a particular piece of legislation. The nominated rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs are particularly important and, during intense negotiations, are often amenable to taking part in external discussions and to receiving expert input, including proposed amendments.



Contracting with the European Parliament

Like the European Commission, the European Parliament commissions consultancy services. For an overview of open invitations to tender, [see here](#)

If it aligns with your research interests, you may also wish to subscribe to updates from **Research4Committees**, which provides updates on in-house and commissioned reports and contract opportunities for the CULT, AGRI, PECH, REGI and TRAN committees.

Engaging with the Council of Ministers



Sources of support at UCL

To learn more about the elements of effective policy engagement, see [UCL Public Policy resources, including a dedicated UCL Extend module](#).

To access support in presenting your research to EU policy audiences, contact the [UCL European Institute](#)

To discuss options and models for engaging in policy-related services provision to EU bodies, contact [UCL Consultants](#)

For EU funding related queries, contact [UCL European Research and Innovation Office](#)

To connect with other colleagues with an interest in the region, sign up to [UCL European Research and Innovation Office](#)

