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(OR. fr)

SN 1344/19

WORKING DOCUMENT

Subject: **Implementing rules for Decision No 54/18 of the Secretary-General of the Council concerning interpreting for the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies and the reimbursement of travel expenses of delegates of EU Member States**

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Article 12(2) of Decision No 54/18 of the Secretary-General of the Council concerning interpreting for the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies and the reimbursement of travel expenses of delegates of EU Member States (hereinafter 'the Decision'), this document sets out the rules to be applied by the Member States with regard to the reimbursement of travel expenses of delegates of EU Member States as provided for by the Decision.

2. ONLINE REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES' ATTENDANCE

2.1 The General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) has developed an IT tool in the Delegates' Portal application that allows delegates to register their attendance at meetings of the Council and its preparatory bodies and to submit their travel information (place of origin and means of transport).

2.2 Member States must ensure that delegates register online:

- via their personal accounts on the Delegates' Portal application (<https://delegates.consilium.europa.eu/>)
- via the 'Guests' function for occasional participants who do not have a personal account on the Delegates' Portal application. A link to use this function is provided by the room attendant on the day of the meeting
- or via the user account of the permanent representation on the Digital Presence application, which allows up to five minister/heads of delegation to be registered for Council meetings. (<https://delegates.consilium.europa.eu/digital-presence/#/login>).

2.3 Online registration of ministers/heads of delegation and, where applicable, other delegates does not apply to European Council meetings or other eligible meetings provided for by the Decision, including external meetings (outside Brussels/Luxembourg).

2.4 An information sheet (in French and English) about online registration of delegates is available from the GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses (for contact details, see paragraph 3.1 - Contact Points).

2.5 Registration is only possible on the day of the meeting. It is obligatory for the reimbursement of delegates' travel expenses and must be carried out, except in duly substantiated cases. The GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses does not carry out ex post entry adjustments.

2.6 For exceptional cases, particularly:

- if online registration of the delegate was not possible on the day of the meeting, for reasons not attributable to them,
- if the meeting takes place outside GSC buildings in Brussels or Luxembourg¹,

a paper-based attendance certificate system has been set up. The purpose of this certificate is to serve as proof of the delegate's attendance for their national administration. The delegate must therefore submit the attendance certificate to their national administration responsible for managing delegates' expenses² in order to be included in the annual statement on the use of the envelope referred to in Article 9(3) of the Decision.

3. **CONTACT POINTS**

General Secretariat of the Council

3.1 The contact details for the GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses are as follows:

Council of the European Union

General Secretariat

Directorate-General ORG.2 Protocol and Meetings

Support Unit

Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175

B-1048 Brussels, Belgium

Email: delegates.travel.expenses@consilium.europa.eu

¹ For example, the 15 meetings (maximum) of working parties or committees traditionally organised in the country of the Presidency (point 2. (i) of Annex I to the Decision).

² It is possible, however, that for some reason the attendance certificate may not have been completed, or that the delegate does not have a copy of it in their possession.

Member States

3.2 Each Member State will designate a competent national administration as a single point of contact and provide the GSC with the contact persons' contact details.

3.3 The competent national administration's user account on the Digital Presence application (<https://delegates.consilium.europa.eu/digital-presence/#/login>), through which data pertaining to delegates can be retrieved (see point 6), is accessed using a personal username and password. Access is granted by the GSC to the contact persons of the competent national administrations.

3.4 Additional access may be granted, upon request, to any person from a Member State's other administrations. In this case, it is the competent national administration's responsibility to pass on all relevant information to the other administrations, as the GSC gives de facto priority to the single channel of communication with the competent national administration.

4. ELGIBLE TRAVEL EXPENSES

4.1 Only the transportation costs of delegates who have in fact travelled to participate in discussions at meetings eligible under the Decision may be reimbursed. These costs may include fees, compulsory insurance, airport and security tax or any other relevant fees, as well as any other costs that cannot be separated from the price of the journey. However, baggage transportation fees, if not included in the ticket, will be limited to one baggage item only.

4.2 Exceptionally, additional expenses due to incompatible flight schedules (substantiated by published airline timetables) may be covered, if justified. This applies to hotel costs, limited to a maximum of two nights spent in the place where the meeting was held (Brussels or Luxembourg - this option does not apply to external meetings).

4.3 In this case, Member States must provide proof of the absence of scheduled flights to or from the location of the meeting, necessitating the use of accommodation.

4.4 The costs concerned may be declared up to the official ceiling for hotel accommodation costs applicable to missions by officials and other servants of the European Union in the Member States³.

Special cases:

- **4.5** Expenditure arising from special flights (air taxis, military aircraft, charter flights, etc.) may be reimbursed. A supporting document must give the total costs of the flight, the total number of passengers and a list of delegates directly involved in the meeting, including their names and functions. All delegates directly involved in the meeting are entitled to declare an amount equal to the ratio of the total costs of the flight to the total number of passengers.
- **4.6** As regards transportation involving other meetings or missions not related to the meeting giving entitlement to reimbursement, the costs may be considered as follows:
 - (a) either a set amount quoted in advance by a travel agency for the eligible part of the itinerary, or
 - (b) half of the total cost of the itinerary.
- **4.7** Only the costs of cancelling or changing a ticket after a meeting has been cancelled or changed by the organisers, or in the event of force majeure, may be reimbursed. Cancellation or modification for any other reason will not give rise to reimbursement.

³ Ceiling as at 1 January 2019: EUR 148 per night per person in Belgium and Luxembourg, according to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1611 of 7 July 2016 on reviewing the scale for missions by officials and other servants of the European Union in the Member States (OJ L 242, 9.9.2016, p. 1).

5. PREPARING THE ANNUAL STATEMENT

5.1 In preparation for the annual statement of use of the envelope, Member States (competent national administrations and, where applicable, any other administration) must ensure throughout the year that, except in duly substantiated cases, delegates register their attendance online in accordance with point 2.2.

5.2 To that end, Member States (competent national administrations and, where applicable, any other administration) should introduce regular monitoring of delegates' attendance at meetings giving entitlement to reimbursement of travel expenses, to ensure that the annual statement is reliable and comprehensive.

5.3 The GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses reserves the right to draw the attention of competent national administrations to abnormal rates of attendance registration among their delegates.

6. ANNUAL STATEMENT ON THE USE OF THE ENVELOPE

6.1 To draw up the annual statement showing how the envelope for delegates' travel expenses allocated to them has been used (Article 9(4) of the Decision), Member States (competent national administrations and, where applicable, any other administration) have access to a user account on the Digital Presence application here:

<https://delegates.consilium.europa.eu/digital-presence/#/login>.

6.2 This allows them to generate an Excel file containing information relating to the delegates from their Member State who have pre-registered (to obtain a one-day access badge) or confirmed their attendance at meetings and, where applicable, declared their travel information:

- Date, Coreper code⁴, title and location of the meeting
- Surname, first name, email address and information regarding the delegate's place of work
- Pre-registered (YES/NO)
- Attendance confirmed (YES/NO)
- Travel information: place of origin and means of transport

6.3 Member States (competent national administrations and, where applicable, any other administration) are invited to review this file to delete extraneous data⁵ and manually add missing data⁶.

6.4 A guide entitled 'Extracting reporting data for national administrations' (only available in English) explains how to operate the generated file. This guide can be obtained from the GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses.

6.5 The last three columns in the Excel file ('Delegate's Ministry/Entity', 'Travel Expenses' and 'Comments') are to be filled in by the Member State (competent national administration and, where applicable, any other administration) to complete its declaration, by cross-checking the information and supporting documents submitted by delegates.

⁴ Code for the meeting as specified in Annex I to the Decision.

⁵ Duplications, absent delegates or delegates who did not travel, etc.

⁶ Delegates who were unable to register online, external meetings (outside Brussels/Luxembourg) (see point 2.6), ministers/heads of delegation/delegates who attended European Council meetings, etc.

6.6 The costs incurred must be declared in euros and/or in the national currency of the Member State.

6.7 Member States (competent national administrations and, where applicable, any other administrations) must also ensure:

- that the delegate whose travel expenses are being declared did in fact travel and attend the meeting (by consulting the database via their user account on the Digital Presence application and referring to attendance certificates, see point 2.5)
- that the meeting is eligible for reimbursement under the terms of the Decision
- that the travel expenses declared have in fact been paid
- that the travel expenses declared have in fact been reimbursed to the delegate
- that the travel expenses relate to a meeting which took place during the calendar year corresponding to that of the annual statement (year N).

6.8 The annual statement (year N) must be submitted before the end of February of the following year (year N+1) (Article 9(4) of the Decision), by email, accompanied by a letter signed by an official duly authorised to appoint the competent national administration, to the GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses.

6.9 No supporting documents need to be submitted at this point. These documents should nevertheless be kept for future verification.

6.10 However, the GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses reserves the right to request supporting documents for delegates whose attendance was not registered online (see point 2.5).

7. CHECKING THE ANNUAL STATEMENT

7.1 The GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses reviews the annual statement and carries out the necessary checks (Article 9(5) of the Decision).

7.2 For Member States that have not adopted the euro, the costs incurred expressed in national currencies are converted to euros based on the 'monthly accounting rate of the euro', as published by the European Commission's DG Budget for February of the year in which the statement is received (conversion rate available from INFOREURO at http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/index_en.cfm).

7.3 These checks may give rise to a correction of the annual statement to apply the provisions laid down in Article 9(6) and (7) of the Decision.

8. AUDIT/EX POST CHECKS

8.1 The GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses is authorised to carry out ex post checks to verify, in particular, supporting documents and the correct application of the rules on the reimbursement of delegates' travel expenses.

8.2 These ex post checks may give rise to a correction of the annual statement to apply the provisions laid down in Article 9(6) and (7) of the Decision.

8.3 Member States (competent national administrations and, where applicable, any other administration) must ensure that at the time of the ex post checks or on-site audit, all evidence of the incurred costs declared has been centralised in one place. These documents must be kept for at least five years, in addition to the current year.

8.4 During the ex post checks, the GSC service responsible for delegates' travel expenses must be able to establish with certainty, for each declaration, by cross-checking supporting documents:

- travel dates
- travel itinerary
- delegate's identification
- total travel costs
- proof of payment for travel
- proof of reimbursement of travel costs to the delegate.

8.5 The supporting documents therefore include (non-exhaustive list):

- transport ticket: ticket, e-ticket, boarding pass, receipts, etc.
- invoices from a travel agency, an air-taxi company, a competent military authority or any other transport provider
- mission order/statement
- proof of payment of the invoice or monetary transfer commensurate with the declared travel expenses
- proof of reimbursement to the delegate of the travel expenses incurred
- any other substantiating documents.

W. SHAPCOTT

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