

FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE: ROLE, MANDATE AND FUNCTIONING

S4Policy-Call 2024-2025. Reporting period 2026-2030.

Terminology

Every project funded within the S4Policy programme is mandatory accompanied by a committee of possible users of the project results. This committee is referred to as the “Follow-Up Committee” (NL: Opvolgingscomité / FR: Comité de suivi).

Below in this document, is a detailed description of what is expected from this committee by BELSPO. Please note that it is the nature of the project itself that determines the *specifics of the functioning & way of working* of this committee.

The Annex II (Annex II – Algemene Voorwaarden van Toepassing op het contract/ Annexe II – Conditions Generales Applicables au Contrat) can be read & downloaded on the [S4Policy website](#) , under the section “reference documents”.

PRINCIPLE

The aim of the S4Policy programme is to carry out cross-thematic research into societal issues that are among the priorities of the Federal Public Services (FPS) and the Federal Government. Through this programme, the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) will provide support and methodological expertise to the Federal Government & the Federal Administrations, by carrying out the selection and follow-up of research projects. It also aims to encourage policymakers to define research priorities and allocate additional research budgets at the political level for their implementation. The type of project(s) and theme(s) proposed by research teams will have to align with these research priorities.

In order to maximise the impact of deliverables of the funded research projects, the setting up of a **Follow-up Committee** is mandatory for each research project.

This committee should be understood as a forum for exchanges between the project promoters, relevant members of the (co-financing) federal administration, and potential users of the project results (academic and non-academic). Additionally, it is a meeting place between scientific expertise, (policy)expertise from the federal administrations and field knowledge.

By pooling expertise, exchanging and providing (open)access to data/samples/materials and equipment and/or giving access to the field, the aim is to consolidate the work of the scientific team(s), to **allow co-creation of the different phases and results of the project**, and to ensure their **dissemination and integration among appropriate users** in and outside the research field. In this context, it is also advisable to submit the valorisation actions and *outputs* of the project, such as policy recommendations, to the committee to ask their opinion.

The Follow-up Committee aims to promote dialogue and external communication on the project. The research team(s) should consider the opinion of the committee, to the extent possible and within the constraints imposed by the contract, such as the available time and budget. If the project team fails to do so, the BELSPO-Programme Manager may take up these recommendations and, in consultation with the research team, consider how to implement them.

COMPOSITION AND FUNCTIONING

COMPOSITION

The composition of the Follow-up Committee is collegially agreed upon by the co-funding administration, and the project team. It is **the responsibility of the project team to contact & invite potential members to the Follow-up Committee**. A final list will be communicated to Belspo, to be approved by the Programme Manager. Any modification to the composition made during the course of the project must be reported and approved by the BELSPO-Programme Manager and the co-funding administration(s).

Depending on the topic, the composition of the committee allows for variability. The only rule that should be accounted for, is to **bring together the most pertinent actors within the project's research field(s)**. It can therefore be composed of external researchers, representatives of federal administrations other than the co-funding administration(s), representatives of non-federal administrations, representatives of civil society organisations, etc.

We seek to have a stable and interactive committee for each project, with members who can usefully be informed by the research (outputs) and, when possible, reflect on the research and provide input to the project team. The goal is to involve the committee members at the earliest stage of the research.

The Follow-up Committee members agree to participate on a voluntary basis in the meetings, and to devote the necessary time to read the documents provided by the research team. This is their in-kind contribution to the project. Foreign experts may be members of the Follow-up Committee if feasible.

The list of Follow-up Committee members is made public on the S4Policy programme website, as well as in the project's final report, with **the explicit agreement of the members**, compliant with the relevant laws and regulations.

FUNCTIONING

ORGANISATION OF THE MEETINGS

It is the responsibility of the Project Coordinator, in consultation with the co-funding administration(s), to organise the committee meetings (date, invitations, preparatory documents, PowerPoint presentations, ...) and to write the minutes. **Minimum one meeting per year must be organised**, including a project **kick-off meeting and a closing meeting intended to discuss the final report and expected outcome (valorisation)**. It is up to the project

Coordinator to gather the members of the Follow-up Committee when substantial progress needs to be presented and discussed with the committee members.

OPERATION

The research team and co-funding administration(s), together with the members of the Follow-up Committee commonly set the rules for their operation (use of languages, internal communication, confidentiality, frequency of meetings, etc.).

MEETING PLACE

The first and last meeting of the Follow-up Committee must be organised (subject to the availability of a meeting room) at BELSPO. The other meetings shall be organised by the project team in consultation with the co-funding administration(s) and the Follow-up Committee members.

Physical meetings with members are not mandatory. Video conferencing platforms may be used to involve some or all of the members in discussions on the progress of the project. Ad hoc meetings on the sideline of other (inter)national meetings or conferences can provide additional opportunities to collect contributions from members.

BELSPO makes its meeting rooms available to project teams to host Follow-up Committee meetings. Please contact the Programme Manager at BELSPO for more information.

Accessibility

Please take into account the (physical) accessibility of the meeting location(s) for all members of the committee (provide instructions how one can enter the location/meeting room beforehand, check air quality, use fonts that are legible, etc.).

When food & drinks are present, the organisers should account for allergies and accommodate as much as possible (communicate available options beforehand, as for allergies and intolerances, follow food-safety guidelines, etc.).

It is also recommended to reflect on language & translation; if language barriers could hinder the (nuanced, transparent or sensitive) communication between members at meetings or events, please consider facilitating translation.

DOCUMENTS FOR THE FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE

Meeting and working documents, PowerPoint presentations, etc. produced by the research team should be written in clear and concise language, taking into account the diversity in roles & profiles within the committee. They will be circulated within 5 working days prior to the meeting.

The draft of the final report must also be submitted to the Follow-up Committee for examination, after which the team can present it to BELSPO for agreement before introducing a final version. Only after the submission of the accepted final report to BELSPO, can the final invoice(s) be submitted.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The members of the Follow-up Committee are required to respect the confidentiality of the information transmitted by the project team and not to disclose it outside their

organisation/institution, without having the prior consent of the project team, the BELSPO-Programme Manager and the co-funding administration(s). Likewise, when the research team receives sensitive information from committee members, any confidentiality clauses on the use of this information must be respected.

OTHER PROVISIONS

- It is important to underline that the Follow-up Committee, in order to maintain itself throughout the duration of the project, must be actively mobilised by the project team. It should function as a lever that the team is able to activate. For example, the project team could ask the committee to examine sampling results, to review questionnaires before publication, to compare analytical methods, or to help **formulate policy recommendations** that are in line with the scientific results obtained, or to reflect on different ways to valorise the results at the end of the project, etc.
- At the start of the research project, **a presentation of the state of the art on the research topic** is an important moment for the Follow-up Committee. This state of the art allows to present both what science already knows on the topic, and the questions not yet resolved at the scientific level. Such an overview constitutes **a reference for non-scientific stakeholders** and allows that each member of the Committee has a shared (baseline) understanding of the topic(s) at hand.
- At the request of the project team and/or the BELSPO-Programme Manager, the members of the Follow-up Committee are to inform their organisation/institution on the progress of the project, and facilitate the dissemination of information within their department, in order to stimulate exchanges between (indirect) stakeholders and the scientific team.