



Charter of expertise by the Académie des sciences

As described in Articles 2 and 3 of its Statutes (see Annex 1), one of the missions of the Académie des Sciences is to study and make recommendations on scientific and technical issues. It may carry out expertises when the nature of the question addressed to it, or taken up on its own initiative, justifies it. It should be noted that not all notices and publications by the Académie constitute an expertise according to the definitions in Annex II.

1. The qualification as an expertise

The qualification of “expertise” is given by “Comité secret”, a plenary closed-door session attended only by the titular Members. This plenary session, upon request by the Bureau, decides whether the Académie is competent in the matter brought before it and whether to proceed with the evaluation requested.

In case of urgency, the Bureau can decide to initiate the procedure directly, referring the matter to the Comité restreint, a committee of 20 elected members, by electronic mail along with a proposal for a list of experts, while informing the members of the Académie of the steps taken.

2. The selection of experts

- 2.1 If the study is defined as an expertise, the Comité restreint first determines which members of the Académie are competent and considered experts in the relevant fields. In turn, the latter will set a deadline for submitting the conclusions and decide whether to call upon external experts. The Comité restreint will then validate these decisions.
- 2.2 A diversity of scientific approaches should be systematically included in all expert evaluations.
- 2.3 The experts who are contacted, whether they are members of the Académie or not, must state in writing any possible conflict of interests that might compromise their neutrality in the areas concerned (for a definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest, see Annex II). The Bureau will decide on their participation. The experts will sign a document detailing the terms of their involvement and stating the intellectual property rules of the Académie.
- 2.4 The Académie will post on its website the list of the experts selected, access to their curriculum vitae and any possible links between the experts and parties concerned by the experts’ evaluation.

3. The evaluation procedure

- 3.1 All expert inquiries require:
 - in the case of a study commissioned by the public authorities, the drafting of an agreement signed by the Académie, any other academies who participate in the study and the public authorities. This agreement will state the purpose, the timeframe and the terms and conditions of the study (in particular, the form

expected for the conclusions, the procedure for communicating the results, its eventual budget). The letter of referral to the Academy, accompanied by its detailed reply, may serve as an agreement.

- in the case of a study initiated by the Academy itself, the drafting of guidelines specifying the same terms and conditions validated by the Comité restraint.

3.2 Instructions for accessing these documents will be specified on the Académie's website.

3.3 In agreement with the experts chosen, the Comité secret will appoint one of the experts as coordinator and spokesperson. The members of the committee of experts will be required to make a written commitment not to disclose the content of the debates and their own opinion to third parties.

4. The evaluation report

4.1 The Comité restraint can ask the panel of experts to report on the progress of its work. If necessary, the Comité restraint can exclude from the panel any member whose behavior is deemed inappropriate.

4.2 In its foreword, the experts' report will give an account of the background of the study, including the question brought before the committee and the eventual comments by the experts on the phrasing of the question. The report will specify all sources used to draw its conclusions. The Académie will publish these sources on its website.

4.3 The presentation of the experts' report will be included on the agenda of the plenary session of the Académie. It will be sent confidentially to the members of the Académie 10 days before the meeting date. On the basis of the experts' report, the plenary session will formulate an opinion as a panel of citizen-scientists who are devoid of expertise on the issue concerned but who are guarantors of the quality of the methodology used. This opinion will be submitted to a simple majority vote and attached to the experts' report. Minority opinions are to be included as an annex to the opinion.

5. The conclusions of the experts

5.1 If the current state of knowledge does not provide sufficiently clear evidence for a definitive decision to be taken on some of the points, these are to be mentioned in the experts' report. In such cases, the report will state the controversies, independent of whether they are linked to current uncertainties, and mention eventual diverging opinions formulated within the experts' committee. The report will state the points that have been settled with a sufficient degree of certainty in the light of the current state of scientific knowledge.

5.2 The experts' report and the opinions expressed by the Académie on the report constitute the Académie's Report which is transmitted to the authorities who commissioned it or to the relevant authorities in the case of a study initiated by the Académie.

5.3 The results are made accessible according to the terms laid out in the expertise agreement. Save in exceptional cases, the results are made public.

5.4 In the case where either the experts' study or the Académie identifies a health or environmental risk, the Académie will address the issue and formulate an opinion on actions that might be taken such as a new expert study, precautionary measures and further research.

Annex

I. Excerpts from the Académie's Statutes

Article 1:

The Académie des sciences of the Institut de France brings together French scientists and Foreign Associate Members, both the former and the latter being elected from among the most prominent in their fields. They contribute to achieving the aims of the Academy.

Article 2, subparagraphs 1 and 2:

The Academy is an independent, long established institution, the primary aim of which is to encourage science and contribute to the advancement of the sciences and their applications:

- *by studying social questions associated with the development of the sciences and by formulating advice and recommendations, possibly with the involvement of other Academies.*

Article 3:

The Academy shall steadfastly reflect on the position of French research on the world stage, on the organization of research, on the policy directions of the scientific programs and, likewise, on technology and the applications of the sciences.

It shall carry out this activity by itself and in cooperation with other Academies:

- *by undertaking studies through its own initiative or commissioned at the request of international, national or regional authorities,*
- *by addressing societal issues that have scientific aspects and by publicly taking a position by issuing detailed reports,*
- *by presenting recommendations, proposals and suggestions pertaining to issues of national and international interest,*
- *when invited to do so, the Academy shall designate Members to represent it on various councils and committees or shall offer its opinion in regard to certain nominations when their statutes require it.*

The Academy shall make its conclusions known in publications, press releases and by any other means that ensures wide dissemination.

II. Definitions

Definition of an expertise, according to AFNOR Standard NF X 50-110 (May 2003):

An expertise is an approach frequently used where opinions, interpretations and recommendations are formulated in order to anticipate, prevent, innovate, build, explain the origin of an event or a catastrophe, establish responsibilities, assist in resolving conflicts, assess damages, objects, goods and services of any kind.

The quality of an expertise depends on the competence, independence and integrity of the experts and on the expertise process itself that increasingly requires transparency and accountability.

Definition of an expertise, according to Philippe Roqueplo (1997, *Entre savoir et décision, l'expertise scientifique*. Coll. Sciences en questions, Ed. Inra, Paris):

The expression of knowledge formulated as an answer to a request by persons who need to make a decision, with the understanding that this answer will be integrated within a decision-making process.

Definition of an expertise, according to Jean Baechler (Member of the French Political and Moral Sciences Academy):

An expert may be defined as a person recognized by his/her peers as mastering the competencies required to provide an answer to a question.

Definition of a conflict of interest, according to the commission set up to reflect on the prevention of conflicts of interests in public life (Commission de réflexion pour la prévention des conflits d'intérêts dans la vie publique, *Pour une nouvelle déontologie de la vie publique*, Report submitted to the President of the Republic on 26 January 2011. Jean-Marc Sauvé, vice-president of the State Council, Didier Migaud, first president of the State Audit Office and Jean-Claude Margendie, former first president of the Paris Court of Appeal):

A conflict of interests is a situation where there is an interference between a public service mission and the private interests of a person participating in the mission and where the nature and magnitude of this interest may reasonably be considered as affecting or appearing to affect the independent, impartial and objective performance of the person's duties. Within the meaning and for the purposes of the preceding subparagraph, the private interest of a person participating to a public service mission means an advantage for the person, his/her family, relatives or persons and organizations that he or she has or has had business relations with or significant professional relations or with whom he or she is directly bound through financial or civil transactions.