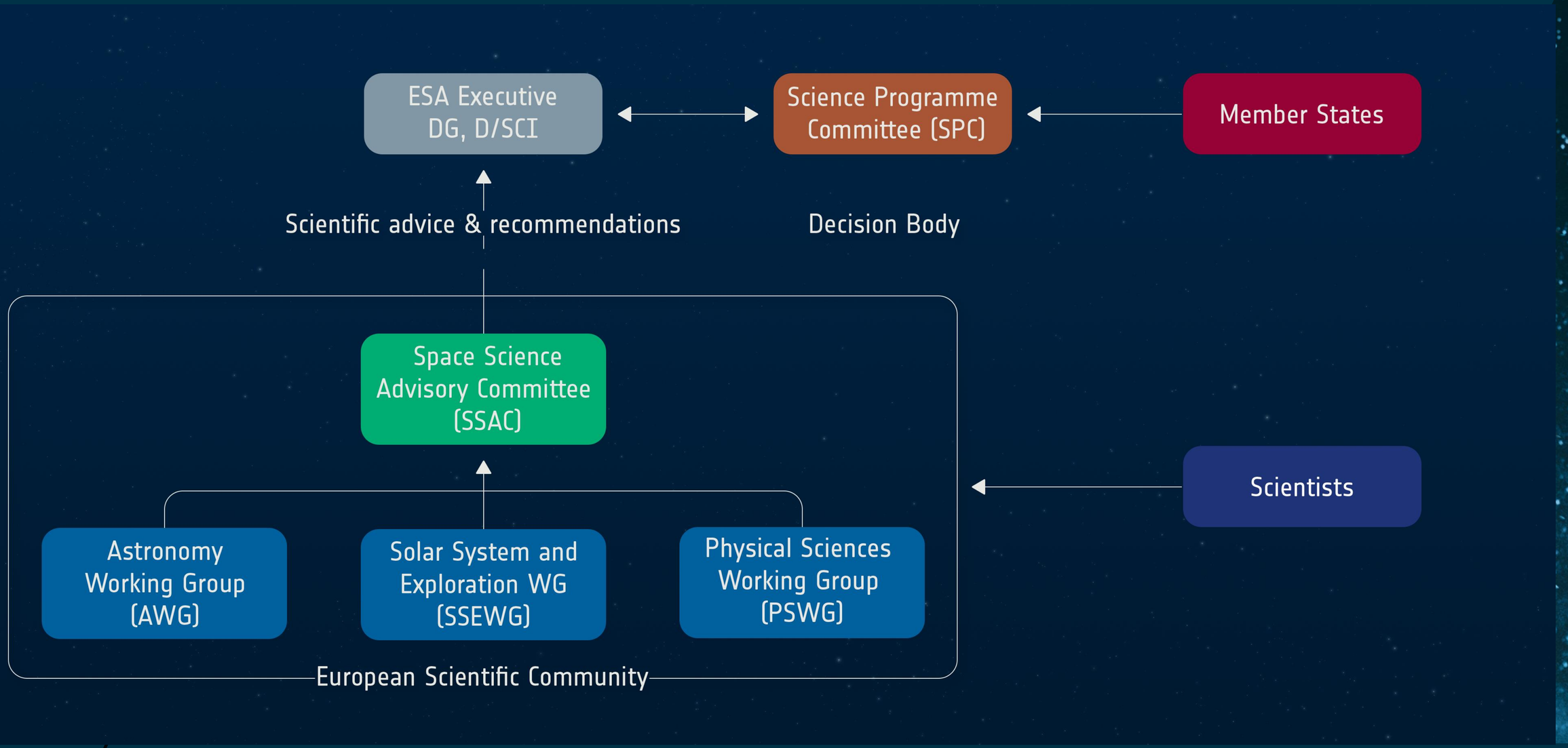
How our communities shape our missions

Gaitee Hussain

Office of Science Engagement and Oversight, Directorate of Science, European Space Agency

Governance/Building the Science Programme



Science Assessment Categories

I. Science missions – involvement of AWG/SSEWG & SSAC

- Call for a Medium-size and a Fast mission opportunity
- Exploratory call for a mini-F mission
- Recommendation on selection of M7 missions
- Mission extensions
- Downselection of M8 & F3 proposals

II. Selection of roles – involvement of AWG/SSEWG

- EnVision: EuroSAR Science Team Members, Proba-3: Guest Investigators, MMX: Membership of the Science Board, BepiColombo: Interdisciplinary Scientists and Guest Investigators, IRIS: Science Planner AO-12
- ARRAKIHS Science Team

III. Guest Observer Programmes on Astronomy missions – User communities

- CHEOPS, PLATO, XMM-Newton, XRISM (ESA time)

I. ESA Missions: Scientific Review

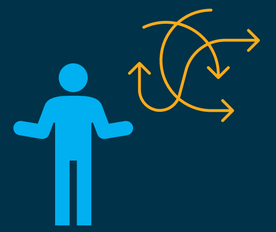
1. Science Assessment Review Panel (SARP)

- Inputs: Assessment Study Reports (Yellow Books), detailed scientific assessment inc. Q&A sessions
- Composition: Panel members are unconflicted AWG/SSEWG members + additional experts

2. Senior Science Committee (SSC)

- Inputs: Assessment Study Reports, SARP and Mission Selection Review Board reports. Invited to follow the SARP meetings & discussions.
- Composition: Committee members are unconflicted SSAC members, complemented by additional senior scientists to restore balance after conflicts identified.
- Aspects evaluated in detail: science excellence, technical/programmatic maturity, European distribution of responsibilities, timeliness & scientific landscape in late 2030s, programme balance, uniqueness, public outreach & openness

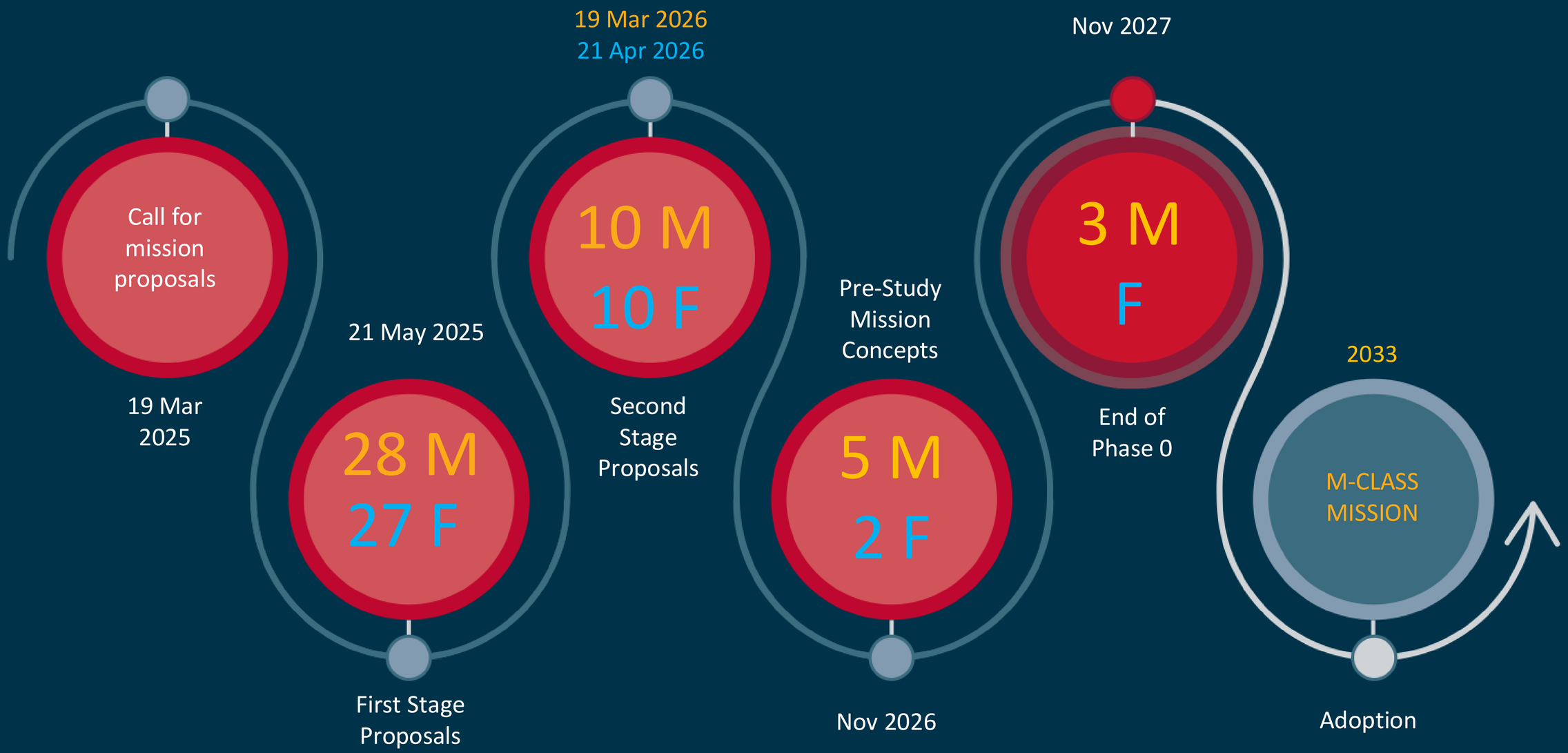
I. ESA Missions: Conflicts of Interest



- A “strong” conflict of interest results from either being directly involved in a mission (as a member of the proposing team), or being in a situation in which selection of the mission would bring direct benefit to the individual (e.g., by having a hierarchical relation with a member of the proposing team or by being part of a research group who would benefit, e.g., financially, from the mission being selected). Also, any other situation (e.g., due to a personal or family relationship) that leads the individual to feel strongly conflicted must be declared. Any other conflict of interest is categorised as “weak”.

- Individual members of the Advisory Structure affected by “strong or weak conflicts” of interest are excluded from the evaluation process.
- All members of review panels/committees are required to sign a "non-disclosure understanding and conflict of interest statement” which are archived for future reference.

I. ESA Missions: Down-selection of M8/F3



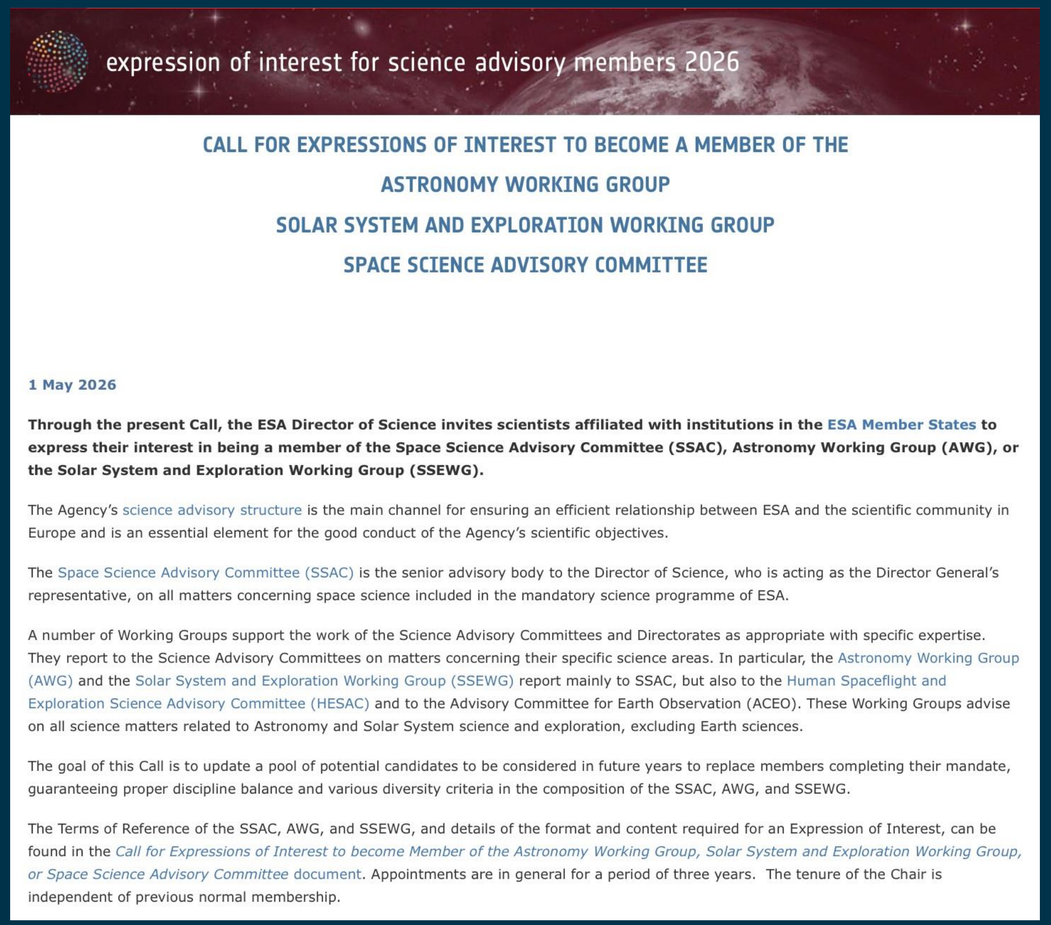
II. Selection of roles on ESA Missions

1. Announcement of Opportunity released by Director of Science
2. Applications usually require letters of support from home institute
3. Composition of panel:
    1. Solar System Exploration or Astronomy Working Group members
    2. Executive Secretary is the corresponding Science Coordinator & Project Scientist is an observer
4. Recommendations from Panel go to the Director of Science
5. Individuals are appointed by the Director of Science and feedback is given to all applicants

III. Time Allocation Committees

1. **Time Allocation Committee members recruited from within user communities**
2. **Announcement of Opportunity issued by Director of Science**
3. **Project Scientist coordinates peer review**
4. Panel recommendations and rankings reviewed and approved by Director of Science
5. Feedback is sent out by mission teams overseen by Project Scientist

Joining the Science Advisory Bodies



expression of interest for science advisory members 2026

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ASTRONOMY WORKING GROUP SOLAR SYSTEM AND EXPLORATION WORKING GROUP SPACE SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1 May 2026

Through the present Call, the ESA Director of Science invites scientists affiliated with institutions in the ESA Member States to express their interest in being a member of the Space Science Advisory Committee (SSAC), Astronomy Working Group (AWG), or the Solar System and Exploration Working Group (SSEWG).

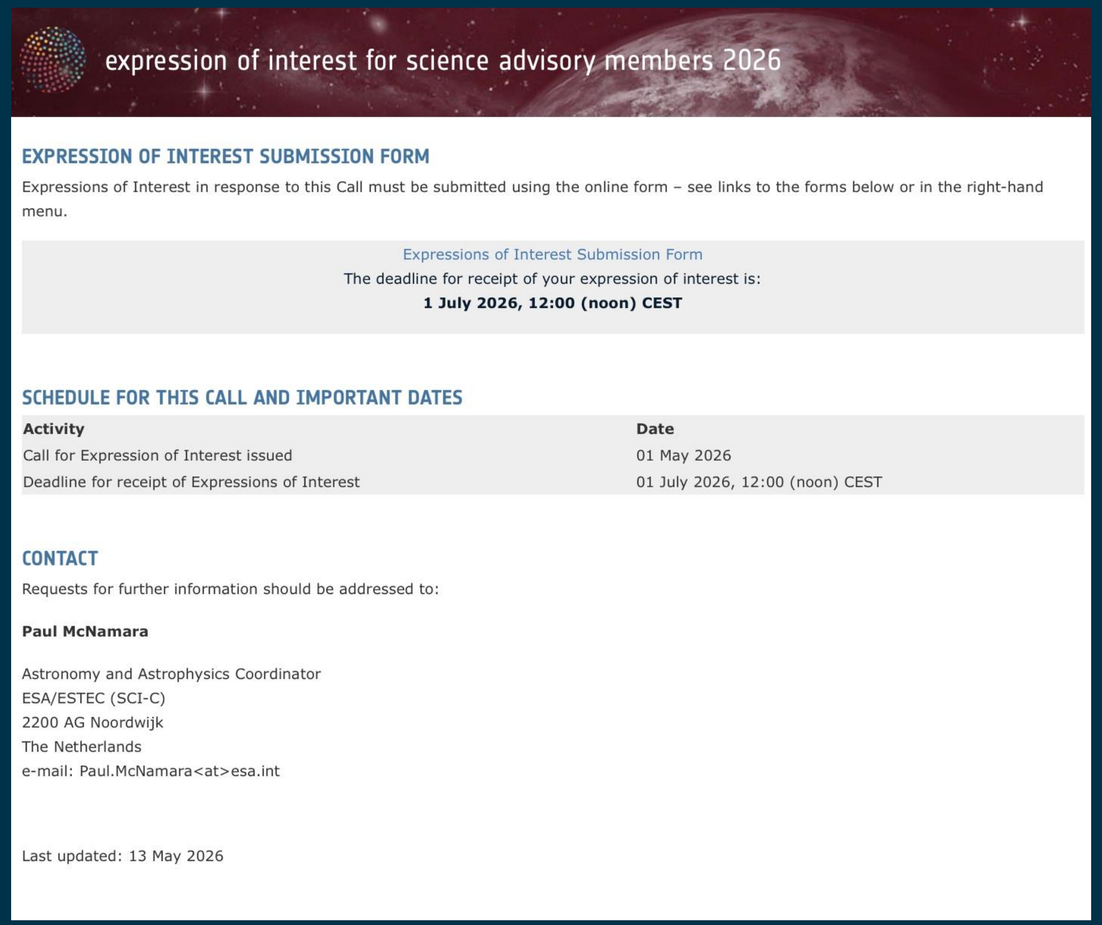
The Agency's science advisory structure is the main channel for ensuring an efficient relationship between ESA and the scientific community in Europe and is an essential element for the good conduct of the Agency's scientific objectives.

The Space Science Advisory Committee (SSAC) is the senior advisory body to the Director of Science, who is acting as the Director General's representative, on all matters concerning space science included in the mandatory science programme of ESA.

A number of Working Groups support the work of the Science Advisory Committees and Directorates as appropriate with specific expertise. They report to the Science Advisory Committees on matters concerning their specific science areas. In particular, the Astronomy Working Group (AWG) and the Solar System and Exploration Working Group (SSEWG) report mainly to SSAC, but also to the Human Spaceflight and Exploration Science Advisory Committee (HESAC) and to the Advisory Committee for Earth Observation (ACEO). These Working Groups advise on all science matters related to Astronomy and Solar System science and exploration, excluding Earth sciences.

The goal of this Call is to update a pool of potential candidates to be considered in future years to replace members completing their mandate, guaranteeing proper discipline balance and various diversity criteria in the composition of the SSAC, AWG, and SSEWG.

The Terms of Reference of the SSAC, AWG, and SSEWG, and details of the format and content required for an Expression of Interest, can be found in the *Call for Expressions of Interest to become Member of the Astronomy Working Group, Solar System and Exploration Working Group, or Space Science Advisory Committee* document. Appointments are in general for a period of three years. The tenure of the Chair is independent of previous normal membership.



expression of interest for science advisory members 2026

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST SUBMISSION FORM

Expressions of Interest in response to this Call must be submitted using the online form – see links to the forms below or in the right-hand menu.

Expressions of Interest Submission Form

The deadline for receipt of your expression of interest is:

1 July 2026, 12:00 (noon) CEST

SCHEDULE FOR THIS CALL AND IMPORTANT DATES

Activity	Date
Call for Expression of Interest issued	01 May 2026
Deadline for receipt of Expressions of Interest	01 July 2026, 12:00 (noon) CEST

CONTACT

Requests for further information should be addressed to:

Paul McNamara

Astronomy and Astrophysics Coordinator
ESA/ESTEC (SCI-C)
2200 AG Noordwijk
The Netherlands
e-mail: Paul.McNamara<at>esa.int

Last updated: 13 May 2026

https://www.cosmos.esa.int/web/expression-of-interest-for-science-advisory-members-2026

Engagement Opportunities

ESA Science Newsletter

www.cosmos.esa.int/web/scinews

ESA Space Science Research Fellowship

www.cosmos.esa.int/web/space-science-faculty/opportunities/research-fellowships

ESA Trainees

www.esa.int/About_Us/Careers_at_ESA/Graduates_Young_Graduate_Trainees

Announcements of Opportunity

www.cosmos.esa.int/web/science-announcement-of-opportunities

Where to find us this summer

eas 2026 Lausanne

29 June – 3 July

European Astronomical Society

Lausanne, Switzerland

COSPAR 2026 Florence 1-9 August 46th Scientific Assembly

1 – 9 August

COSPAR Scientific Assembly

Florence, Italy

EUROPLANET SCIENCE CONGRESS EPSC2026

6– 11 September

EuroPlanet Science Congress (EPSC)

The Hague, The Netherlands

EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

Thank you

Gaitee Hussain
gaitee.hussain@esa.int

www.esa.int
science.esa.int