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Answer given by Mr Serafin

on behalf of the European Commission

(22.4.2025)

The Rules on Special Advisers¹ to the Commission determine whether a special adviser should be paid or not and in the former case also provide the relevant aspects of their remuneration. The higher grade is chosen in duly substantiated exceptional cases, where the political importance is so high that a higher remuneration is justified to get the best services for the Commission. The skills of the chair of the strategic dialogue, his professional experience and knowledge of the subject were determinant for being engaged as a Special Adviser to the President of the Commission. The budgetary authority is always informed by the Commission of the budget foreseen for intended paid appointments.

Special advisers are engaged to assist Members of the College based on the level of their professional experience and expertise. The choice of the chair of the strategic dialogue was based on his knowledge of the subject and professional experience, especially when it comes to his ability to navigate as a trusted arbitrator in complex negotiation processes with high level stakeholders and to the proven capacity for consensus-building around complex issues.

As chairperson of the ‘Future Commission Agriculture’ of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (2021-2024), the chair of the strategic dialogue led the ‘agricultural summit’ discussion with 40 associations and organisations, proving his strong negotiation skills, and established a report on the future of agriculture. This expertise was not available within the Commission.

The procedure applied for the designation and appointment of a special adviser is laid down in the Rules on Special Advisers, including rules on prevention of conflict of interests, prior information of the budgetary authority, and specific appointment procedure.

¹ Commission Decision C(2007) 6655 of 19 December 2007, as amended by Commission Decision C(2014) 541 of 6 February 2014.