



## MINUTES

### First Meeting of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) under its new mandate

Brussels, 24-25 April 2017

**Present:** Prof. Emmanuel Agius, Dr. Anne Cambon-Thomsen, Prof. Ana Sofia Carvalho, Prof. Eugenijus Gefenas, Prof. Julian Kinderlerer, Prof. Andreas Kurtz, Prof. Jonathan Montgomery, Prof. Herman Nys, Dr. Siobhán O'Sullivan, Prof. Laura Palazzani, Prof. Barbara Prainsack, Prof. Carlos Maria Romeo Casabona, Prof. Nils-Eric Sahlin, Prof. Marcel Jeroen van den Hoven, Prof. Christiane Wooten

**Excused:** -

**Commission:** Wolfgang Burtscher, Maria da Graca Carvalho, Jim Dratwa, Rasida El-Haouzi, Johannes Klumpers, Joanna Parkin

Monday 24 April 2017

**Morning session:** (BERLAYMONT building, room S9)

**09H00 - 10H00: Introduction**

Wolfgang Burtscher, Deputy Director-General, DG RTD, opened the meeting and welcomed the new members of the EGE. He expressed thanks on behalf of the Commission for their commitment to the Group and explained the background to their appointment, including the procedure for their selection. He requested Prof. Julian Kinderlerer to act as interim Chair until the election of the EGE Chair.

Johannes Klumpers, Head of Unit for the Scientific Advice Mechanism, DG RTD, then explained the location of the Group within the Commission's institutional architecture, in the Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation.

Jim Dratwa, Head of the EGE Secretariat, explained that the EGE remains a group of the Commission President and will operate under the direct supervision of Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation. He introduced the Commission colleagues present, before setting out the agenda for the meeting.

Questions were invited and an initial discussion took place, covering aspects of the EGE's budget, number of annual meetings and the length of term and mandate. An extended discussion took place on the impact of EGE Opinions noting that while improvements had been made in recent years, there was an additional work required to raise the profile of the Group. Key points included the role of members as ambassadors of the Group; the need to allocate resources between Opinion preparation and post-Opinion outreach; how to curate the body of work by the EGE and refresh older Opinions; the need to explore more flexible forms of participation of stakeholders and output and the need to, at an early stage in the process, link the development of Opinions to the EU policy agenda.

**10H00 - 10H30: Welcome by Commissioner Moedas and tour de table**

Commissioner Moedas thanked the members of the EGE and underlined its value for the European Commission. He recalled the origins of the EGE and emphasised that the initial justifications for establishing the EGE remain as great, if not more so, today, due to the rise of new challenges such as data science and artificial intelligence.



He explained his vision of the EGE as located within a triangle between scientists, institutions and citizens. The EGE is charged with the task of navigating this triangle, to make connections between different disciplines, to foster a dialogue with citizens and help instil trust by being honest about what we know and what we do not know against a background of sometimes uncertain and conflicting scientific evidence.

The Commissioner then opened the floor for a *tour de table* and introductions by each EGE member.

In closing the session, the Commissioner recalled the differences and complementarities with the Scientific Advice Mechanism's High Level Group, underlining that the role of the EGE is to provide an in-depth long-term reflection encompassing not only science and technology but also legal and values dimensions.

### **10H30 - 12H30            Discussion of the EGE Rules of Procedure and calendar of meetings for 2017**

Discussion focused on the draft rules of procedure compiled by the EGE secretariat. It was explained that this draft brought together the rules of procedure of the previous EGE under its fourth mandate and the template provided by the European Commission as annex to the Commission Decision of 30 May 2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission Expert Groups.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- Role and configuration of Chair(s) and Deputy Chair(s)
- Division of tasks between the EGE members and rapporteurs, as well as the EGE Secretariat
- Role of rapporteurs, sub-groups and external experts
- Meeting attendance and the possibility of virtual meetings
- Clarification of different forms of EGE outputs
- Media guidance
- Procedure for providing consent and dissent before Opinion adoption

The session broke for lunch.

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### **12H30-14H00**

*Group photo*

**Working lunch with Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation (Salon 2, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor)**

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The working lunch centred around an exploratory discussion on the six potential topics for EGE Opinions identified via the Commission's consultation of the services in 2016: the future of work; technologies of democracy; artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics; solidarity; migration; and gene editing.

Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General of DG RTD thanked Julian Kinderlerer for his Chairmanship under the previous mandate of the EGE before Commissioner Moedas launched discussion on the topics.

An exchange took place on the future of work, focusing on the following key questions: how to link the future of work to social welfare and labour rights? How to re-skill the workforce and what happens to those who cannot be re-skilled? The implications for the so-called 'squeezed middle' and the changing nature of solidarity, as well as the need to re-conceptualise the notion of labour (to include also care of children, elderly, and other contributions to society).

There followed a wide-ranging discussion on technologies of democracy, with members raising the following points: the new role of big technology companies in influencing political and societal processes; new forms of democratic outreach offered by new technologies; the need to educate people to think critically as part of a wider project for improving democratic processes; the relational nature of trust. The place of academic freedom, and how we see notions of facts, evidence and objectivity were also raised as important components of this area, particularly against the background of rising distrust of scientists and science.



Relatedly, it was noted that gene editing and CRISPR-Cas9 pose questions about the levels of freedom we wish to give researchers and the conditions we should attach to research as well as fundamental questions about the kind of society we wish to live in. Also noted were the fundamental questions posed by AI to the notion of intelligence, creativity and what distinguishes human being as such.

When asked about his prioritisation of topics, Commissioner Moedas underlined that the future of work would provide a rich topic for an EGE Opinion and would respond to several cross-cutting initiatives within the Commission's policy agenda. He drew attention to the breadth of issues under the heading of the future of work, including automation and artificial intelligence, collaborative economy and circular economy, social security and the future of society. He also referred to technologies of democracy (including the place of science and research) and artificial intelligence as interesting potential topics, while migration, solidarity may offer longer term fields of reflection.

**Afternoon session:** (BERLAYMONT building, room S9)

**14H30- 17H00** Discussion of the EGE Rules of Procedure and calendar of meetings for 2017

The afternoon session began with a finalisation of the amendments to the draft rules of procedure.

The secretariat agreed to circulate a revised version of the rules of procedure in advance of the next EGE meeting for adoption by the Group, as well as a document outlining guidance for dealing with the media.

There followed a discussion on the possible calendar for EGE meetings in 2017. Several members highlighted the importance of setting the right frequency of meetings, and ensuring an efficient balance between plenary meetings and working group meetings in order to allow for a smooth advancement of Opinions and other outputs.

The scheduling of meetings should also take into account sufficient time to allow the progression of work between meetings.

Each member provided information regarding their agenda and corresponding availability and it was agreed that the secretariat would circulate a draft timetable of the meetings scheduled for 2017.

17H00 End of the meeting

**Tuesday 25 April 2017**

**Morning session:** (ORBAN building, room 3/67)

**09H00 - 10H00** Discussion and election of EGE chair and deputy-chairpersons

The session was devoted to the election of the Chair and Deputy Chairs.

As had been the case the previous day, the meeting was chaired by Prof. Julian Kinderlerer, who decided not to stand in the election.

Julian Kinderlerer was warmly thanked by Jim Dratwa and Johannes Klumpers for his remarkable stewardship of the Group over many years.

A brief discussion on procedure, the length of Chairmanship and the possibility of rotating Chairs took place before it was agreed that one member would Chair for the duration of the term. Members were asked to nominate themselves or others for the role of Chair and members posed questions to the nominees before proceeding to the votes to elect one Chair and two Deputy Chairs.

Prof. Christiane Woopen was elected as Chair.

Prof. Herman Nys and Dr. Siobhan O'Sullivan were elected as Deputy Chairs.

Prof. Christiane Woopen took over as Chair.



## **10H00 - 11h00            Transmission of legal and financial information**

Members were provided with an information note informing them of the rules applicable under the Commission's new horizontal rules for expert groups (in force as of May 2016).

They were reminded of the need to declare any relevant change in the information provided regarding conflict of interest and requested to pay careful attention to the reimbursement rules when arranging travel and accommodation for meetings. It was recalled that members should inform the Commission of their itinerary in advance in case of deviation from the established reimbursable itinerary (i.e. from the member's work or home address to the place of the meeting). It was recalled that members should not make travel or accommodation arrangements until they receive the formal letter of invitation from the Commission for each meeting.

## **11H00 - 12h00            Discussion on potential topics of the first EGE opinions**

The Chair launched discussion on the possible topics of the first EGE Opinion. Several proposals and suggestions were put forward. The Chair grouped these under the following clusters:

- Future of work
- Democracy (technologies of), solidarity and conscientious objection
- Artificial intelligence, robotics and ICTs
- Biosecurity
- Migration
- Value of science, open access and integrity
- Benefit sharing
- Governance models
- Synthetic embryos
- Climate change
- Genome editing and gene drives

A discussion then followed in which the members engaged in a prioritisation of the list of topics, applying a range of criteria (e.g. whether they overlap with recent EGE Opinions; the policy need on the part of the Commission; the expected policy impact, the relevance for people in Europe etc.)

The future of work and technologies of democracy emerged from the discussion as having both strong relevance for the Commission and profound societal implications. Other topics (e.g. synthetic embryos, value of science, AI, genome editing) have a narrower focus and may suit a shorter form of analyses, as opposed to an Opinion. Several members underscored the worth of working on two topics in parallel (one Opinion and one shorter form of analysis).

The future of work was deemed to be the most relevant topic for the EGE's first Opinion under this mandate with members highlighting the various angles by which this issue may be examined (e.g. the future of society, digital society, impacts of AI, man-machine interaction, coexistence and hybridity, impacts on social systems, among others.) The topic offers the possibility to combine fundamental conceptual reflection with concrete analysis in order to give actionable recommendations.

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## **12H00-13H00            Lunch (*DG Research and Innovation Cafeteria*)**

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### **Afternoon session:        (ORBAN building, room 3/67)**

The first part of the afternoon session was devoted to next steps as regards topic selection and confirmation.



It was recalled that the outcome of the group's discussions would be fed back to the Commission, following which a letter formulating a formal request for an Opinion would be drawn up, addressed to the Chair and signed by Commissioner Moedas.

Johannes Klumpers provided an overview of the Commission structure involved, including the EGE's supervisory structure and recalled the role of the secretariat.

A discussion followed on the independence of the Group, the need for confidentiality balanced with the need to ensure openness and engagement with external stakeholders, particularly with a view to soliciting input. It was agreed that members would be provided with further guidance on these questions.

Jim Dratwa provided an update regarding pending requests to the EGE:

- Invitation from the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition to engage a lead or contributing author to address equity and ethical issues related to modern technologies in the food system in the chapter of Social Equity of the UNEP TEEB Agri-Food study (Julian Kinderlerer volunteered to consider this).
- Invitation to participate in the UNICAB/ITU conference 'AI for Good: Connecting AI to Sustainable Development Goals' (The EGE Chair indicated she will be participating).
- Invitation from Anne Cambon-Thomsen to attend ESOF. Members were invited to join forces to organise a joint EGE session, with a deadline for the submission of sessions as 2 June.
- General requests for a meeting with STOA and a meeting with the EDPS group to be scheduled in the future.

The Chair then initiated an exploratory discussion on a second topic for the EGE's attention that could form either a short statement or other form of ethical analysis.

In discussing the criteria and considerations in choosing this second topic, members mentioned the need to choose a science-based topic, as well as the need to position the EGE in the public domain with an output that responds to current policy debates or initiatives.

Three topics emerged from the discussion as particularly relevant:

- Artificial intelligence and robotics
- Synthetic embryos
- The value of science

The group decided to examine the area of artificial intelligence and robotics, with a potential focus on issues of liability and responsibility and the notion of 'meaningful human control' in the context of the use of AI in domains such as healthcare, connected cars, and weapons.

A sub-group was formed to examine this issue, tentatively comprising Jeroen van den Hoven, Barbara Prainsack, Carlos Maria Romeo Casabona, Christiane Woopen, Laura Palazzani and Julian Kinderlerer.

**15H30**                      **End of the meeting**

### Action Points

- EGE Secretariat to circulate a revised calendar of meetings.
- EGE Secretariat to circulate a revised Rules of Procedure for adoption at the next plenary meeting.
- EGE Secretariat to circulate a media guidance document.
- Meeting of the Chair, Deputy-Chairs and EGE Secretariat to be held on 26 May 2017.