



Scientific Advice Mechanism

Minutes of the fourteenth plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

(Brussels, 10 and 11 October 2018)

Brussels, 29 November 2018

Brussels, 29 November 2018

Minutes

14th ordinary plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of
Chief Scientific Advisors
10-11 October 2018, Brussels

1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting

The agenda was adopted. The minutes of the previous meeting (9-10 July 2018, Toulouse, France) had been adopted beforehand by written procedure and are available on the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) website (<https://ec.europa.eu/research/sam/>).

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was not held in public. The meeting took place in Brussels.

3. List of items discussed

International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA) conference 2018 – “Science Advice for a Changing World” – 6-7 November 2018, Tokyo, Japan

Pearl Dykstra, Janusz Bujnicki and Johannes Klumpers confirmed their participation as speakers at the event.

American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) 2019 – 14-17 February 2019, Washington DC, USA

The Chair informed the meeting that the application for a session was accepted. “Clutching at Straws: Science Advice, Uncertainty, and Global Micro-plastic Pollution” will be held on 15 February 2019 with Pearl Dykstra as moderator. Following the Group’s previous plenary meeting, discussions are ongoing with Dr Mona Nemer (Chief Science Advisor of the Government of Canada) and other national science advisors/representatives of national science advisory bodies to organise a meeting entitled “G7 Round-table: Scientific Advice Cooperation on Micro-plastics Pollution” in Washington DC on 13 February 2019. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for G7 partners to cooperate in building a shared understanding of the science available to support policymaking in addressing the challenge of micro-plastics pollution.

Impact of scientific advice

The Advisors had previously requested that the SAM Unit organise meetings with relevant Commissioners or their services in order to monitor the impact of their advice on EC policy making. Peter Vis, special advisor at the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC) to Jos Delbeke, the previous Director-General of the Directorate General for Climate Action, joined the meeting. Mr Vis informed the meeting that the climate relevant Opinions had been well received. He noted the long time period before which the impact of advice becomes fully apparent and offered some ideas for other candidate topics related to air and maritime transport emissions.

Ongoing topics and up-dates on recently completed topics

- SAPEA informed the meeting about progress on the topic *Transforming the Future of Ageing*, and the upcoming expert workshop of 7 December 2018. Nils-Eric Sahlin, Member of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies will contribute to the report and an experts' meeting on 23 October.
- The SAM Unit updated the meeting with reference to the forthcoming working group meeting on *Micro-and-Nanoplastics* on 19 Oct in Amsterdam; and the events planned in Washington DC in 2019 described above.
- The SAM Unit and SAPEA updated the meeting with reference to SAPEA's working group meeting on *Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty* of 11 September, the key outcomes of which included an agreed structure outline of the Evidence Review Report, and a division of drafting responsibilities among working group members. Further, information was provided on plans for a workshop with science advice practitioners in February 2019 and on a sounding board meeting planned for March/April 2019.
- The Advisors took note of the impact of the *Novel Carbon Capture and Utilisation (CCU) Technologies* Opinion on EU policy making as described in a workshop organised by DG CLIMA on 17 September 2018 entitled "Carbon Capture and Utilisation Technologies: Technological Status, Environmental Impacts and Policy Developments". During this workshop, the Opinion and the SAPEA ERR were presented by Elvira Fortunato and Marco Mazzotti (co-chair of the SAPEA Working Group). The Advisors took note of DG CLIMA's plans to incorporate recommendations from the CCU Opinion into guidelines for the Innovation Fund, to be published at the end of 2018. Moreover, the recommendations would be incorporated in the revision of the European Monitoring, Reporting, Verification process of greenhouse gas emissions (MRV) framework.
- The Advisors took note of work ongoing in the European Parliament of relevance to their Scientific Opinion on *Authorisation Processes for Plant Protection Products (PPP)*. The ENV committee adopted its report assessing the implementation of the pesticides regulation 14 September, and the PEST committee (EP's special committee on the authorisation procedure for pesticides) will submit its final report for a vote by the European Parliament on 14 January 2019. The Advisors noted that many of their recommendations have been taken up in the draft final version of the PEST committee report and that the ENV report was complementary to their recommendations in so far it looked at ensuring effective implementation of the pesticides regulation.

Candidate topics

- Carina Keskitalo and Janusz Bujnicki, the leading Chief Scientific Advisor for this topic, with the support of the SAM unit informed the Group about progress on the candidate topic *Sustainable Food Systems*. The SAM unit is carrying out a review of relevant reports and studies, to be published towards the end of the year, in order to provide an overview of existing evidence and to identify possible questions to be

addressed by a scientific opinion. Based on this, the unit will discuss with SAPEA and an experts workshop will be organised for February/ March. The Chief Scientific Advisors agreed to this approach.

- Paul Nurse, Janusz Bujnicki and Rolf Heuer reported on progress regarding their statement on gene editing, and their expectation that it is adopted before the end of November. This follows the Advisors's explanatory note on '*New techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology*' and may serve as an addendum to their scoping paper of 25 November 2016, providing the basis for further work on this topic. The Chief Scientific Advisors in principle agreed on the approach and content of the draft document and instructed the SAM unit to revise the document according to their comments. Anne Bucher, Director-General of Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, provided the Group with input on the policy and regulatory background related to gene editing.

Exchange between the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors and Vladimir Šucha, Director-General of DG Joint Research Centre (JRC)

- Director – General Vladimir Šucha and the Chief Scientific Advisors expressed their satisfaction with the excellent cooperation between JRC staff and the SAM unit. The Chief Scientific Advisors appreciated the valuable and very constructive contribution of the JRC to all scientific advice products delivered by SAM so far. The Chief scientific Advisors and Vladimir Šucha emphasised the complementarity of the JRC's and the Group's work.
- The Chief Scientific Advisors and Director-General Vladimir Šucha exchanged information about the ongoing SAM topic '*Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty*' and the JRC project '*Enlightenment 2.0*' and agreed to continue to do so. The project '*Enlightenment 2.0*' aims at collecting evidence on what drives the policymakers' decision-making processes and ultimately to train the policymakers in better decision-making. The first report of the '*Enlightenment 2.0*' project will be presented to the Chief Scientific Advisors and discussed at their next meeting.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

- Work will continue on the topic *Micro-and Nano-Plastics* where an expert workshop is planned for 10-11 January to review the state of scientific knowledge on the environmental and human health impacts of microplastic pollution. Work is also continuing with regard to the cooperation with the Canadian Chief Science Advisor in view of the abovementioned roundtable (13 February 2019) on the margins of AAAS 2019 meeting (14-17 February 2019) in Washington, DC.
- SAPEA will continue to work on the first draft of the SAPEA Evidence Review Report for the topic on *Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity of Uncertainty* for delivery by beginning of December. Furthermore, it was decided to

continue coordination between the topic on *Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity of Uncertainty* and the JRC project *Enlightenment 2.0* with a possible presentation of a first report of the *Enlightenment 2.0* project by the JRC during the next plenary meeting of the Group.

- The SAM unit will continue its work on background document related to the topic *Sustainable Food Systems*, with a view to the development of a scoping paper, in consultation with EC services, SAPEA, and selected experts from relevant organisations and policy makers.
- The Scientific Advisors asked the SAM unit to implement their requests for modification of the statement on gene editing with a view to finalising the document before end of November.
- SAPEA will continue their work on the preparation of an expert workshop on the topic *Transforming the Future of Ageing* on 7 December 2018.
- The secretariat will continue to organise follow-up meetings between the Scientific Advisors and relevant Commissioners (or their services) concerning the scientific opinions and explanatory notes already published, in order, amongst others, to monitor their impact on EC policy-making. In the context of the own-initiative topics, it was suggested to consider establishing a list of candidate topics (e.g.: air and maritime transport emissions).

5. Next steps

As above

6. Next meeting

The next plenary meeting of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors will take place in Brussels on 4 and 5 December, 2018.

7. List of participants

Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

Rolf-Dieter Heuer, Chair;
Pearl Dykstra, Deputy Chair;
Janusz Bujnicki, Member;
Elvira Fortunato, Member;
Nicole Grobert, Member;
Carina Keskitalo, Member;
Sir Paul Nurse, Member.

European Commission

European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas;

Antonio Vicente, Head of Cabinet Moedas;

Keith Sequeira, Cabinet Moedas;

Vladimír Šucha, Director-General for the Joint Research Centre;

Anne Bucher, Director-General for Health and Food Safety;

Wolfgang Burtscher, Deputy Directorate-General for Research and Innovation;

Johannes Klumpers (DG RTD, Head of Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism);

Jeremy Bray (DG RTD, Deputy Head of Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism);

Peter Vis (Advisor, European Political Strategy Centre - EPSC);

Maria Da Graça Carvalho, (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism, Policy Officer);

Annabelle Ascher, (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism, Policy Officer);

Sigrid Weiland (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism, Manager of Group of Chief Scientific Advisors).

Additional colleagues of the SAM secretariat depending on the respective agenda item

SAPEA

Bernard Charpentier, Chair of SAPEA board;

Jacqueline Whyte, Senior Science Policy Officer;

Rudi Hielscher, SAPEA Coordinator.