



**Minutes of the twenty-third plenary meeting of the
European Commission's Group of
Chief Scientific Advisors**

11-12 May 2020 (by videoconference)

Brussels, 29 June 2020

Minutes

23rd ordinary plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of
Chief Scientific Advisors
11-12 May 2020 (by videoconference)

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

The agenda of the 23rd plenary meeting was adopted. The minutes of the previous meeting (22-23 March 2020, Webex) had been adopted by written procedure and published on the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) website (<https://ec.europa.eu/research/sam/>).

2. Nature of the meeting

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus crisis, the meeting was held via videoconference and was not open to the public.

3. List of items discussed

- The Chair welcomed Eva Kondorosi (Research Director Institute of Plant Biology, Biological Research Centre, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence), who will join the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors as of 16 May 2020.
- The Chair thanked Janusz Bujnicki for his work as a member of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors and welcomed the fact that the Advisors will be able to continue to consult with him as an invited expert.

Ongoing and possible future scientific advice

- The Advisors decided to produce a short statement in the near future, applying recommendations from their scientific opinion on '*Scientific Advice to European Policy in a Complex World*' to the present COVID-19 crisis, for its ongoing management. It will among others, recall the various uncertainties complicating the response to the pandemic, describe the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to its management, note the importance of openness and transparency in communications by advisors and relevant authorities, and of distinguishing between the roles of advisors and policy makers.
- The statement will further propose scientific advice by the Advisors on 1) better preparedness and resilience to pandemics to be delivered in the autumn of 2020 and 2) on resilience to crises in general, to be delivered in the longer term. The statement will identify other work (not necessarily to be done by the Advisors) that may enhance the COVID-19 response in the short term.
- In delivering this work, the Advisors will co-ordinate with other scientific advisors including Professor Peter Piot (Special Advisor to EC President on COVID-19, see below), the European Science Advisors Forum, with other expert groups of the

European Commission, and with the Joint Research Centre, and will work with the Scientific Advice for Policy by European Academies (SAPEA) consortium.

- Carina Keskitalo reported on the sounding board meeting regarding the topic *[‘Adaptation to climate change-related health effects’](#)* (CCH) of 27 April. The stakeholder meeting will take place on 13 May and the Advisors intend to publish the opinion in June in order to inform the forthcoming revision of the EU adaptation strategy, planned for adoption in late 2020/early 2021 as well as the concept of a virtual observatory on climate change and health on which Directorate-General for Climate Action is consulting.
- The first co-ordination group meeting for the topic *[‘A systemic approach to the energy transition in Europe’](#)* (Energy) took place 29 April. The Advisors intend to publish their scientific opinion in the first quarter of 2021 in order to inform upcoming key policies and measures needed to achieve the European Green Deal. This scientific opinion aims at contributing to the preparation, acceleration, and facilitation of the energy transition in Europe given the present state of knowledge on the possible transition pathways.
- Nicole Grobert informed the meeting about progress and the recent SAPEA working group meeting of 23-24 April regarding the topic *[‘Biodegradability of plastics in the open environment’](#)*.

Exchange with Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President (EVP) of the European Commission responsible for the European Green Deal and European Climate Law

- The Advisors informed EVP Timmermans about their activities in providing scientific advice to the Green Deal and, in general, in support of Better Regulation. They described their recently published and forthcoming scientific opinions *‘Towards a sustainable food system’* (SFS) and *‘Adaptation to climate change-related health effects’* (CCH). They outlined their intentions in relation to COVID-19.
- EVP Timmermans welcomed the Advisors’ existing and forthcoming scientific advice underpinning policy. He described the Green Deal, emphasized the importance of basing policy on science, and underlined the importance of not losing sight of climate objectives when recovering from the present crisis.

Exchange with Peter Piot, special advisor to Ursula von der Leyen on COVID-19

- Following an exchange on the roles of Professor Piot and the Advisors in relation to COVID-19, discussion focussed on how they might work together in support of exit and recovery from the present crisis, as described above.

Exchange with Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

- The Commissioner thanked Janusz Bujnicki for his valuable work, welcomed Eva Kondorosi to the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, and congratulated the Advisors on their recently published opinion *[‘Towards a sustainable food system’](#)*.

- Commissioner Gabriel anticipated the forthcoming advice on '*Adaptation to climate change-related health effects*' and COVID-19. She in particular noted the key elements for the exit and recovery – cooperation, coordination, investment in R&I - recognising that this will require the mobilisation of all policies.

Exchange with Jean-Eric Paquet, Director-General of DG RTD

- The Director-General thanked the Advisors for their work, informed them about current research and innovation activities related to COVID-19, and welcomed their co-operation with Professor Piot.

Exchange with Reinhard Hüttl (Chair of SAPEA Board)

- Reinhard Hüttl informed the meeting about the academies' COVID-19 related work and offered full support from SAPEA. In addition, he informed about the progress with the topics '*Biodegradability of plastics in the open environment*' and '*A systemic approach to the energy transition in Europe*'.

Updates from the Secretariat

- The Secretariat informed the meeting that a call for nominations of new Advisors has been widely published and is open until 15 June 2020.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

- Publication of the scientific opinion '*Adaptation to climate change-related health effects*' in June.
- Continued work on the scientific opinions '*A systemic approach to energy transition in Europe*' and '*Biodegradable plastics in the open environment*'.
- Publication of a statement on COVID-19 in the near future, and its announcement of subsequent related scientific opinions.

5. Next steps

- As above

6. Next meeting

The next plenary meeting of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors will take place by videoconference on 10 June 2020.

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;
Paul Nurse, Member;
Éva Kondorosi, new Member as of 16 May 2020.

Other participants

Peter Piot, Special advisor to EC President von der Leyen and member of the panel of scientific advisors on COVID-19.

SAPEA (Science Advice to Policy by European Academies)

Reinhard Hüttl (President of Euro-CASE, Chair of SAPEA board);
Rudolf Hielscher, SAPEA Coordinator.

European Commission

Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President of the European Commission;
Damyana Stoyanova, Member of Cabinet Timmermans;
Lukas Visek, Member of Cabinet Timmermans;
David Kiss, Assistant to Damyana Stoyanova;
Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth;
Chiara Salvelli, Deputy Head of Cabinet Gabriel;
Vasco Ferreira, Member of Cabinet Gabriel;
Dorina Byanova, Assistant to Commissioner Gabriel;
Cidalia Santos, Assistant to Vasco Ferreira and Chiara Salvelli;
Jean-Eric Paquet, Director General of Directorate General for Research and Innovation;
Renzo Tomellini, DG RTD, Head of Unit 03 Chief Scientific Advisors – SAM, EGE;
Jeremy Bray, DG RTD, Deputy Head of Unit 03 Chief Scientific Advisors – SAM, EGE;
Sigrid Weiland, Assistant to Special Advisor to the EC President on COVID-19, Peter Piot;
Annabelle Ascher, DG RTD, Unit 03 Chief Scientific Advisors – SAM, EGE, Secretary of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors;
Vladia Monsurro, DG RTD, Unit 03 Chief Scientific Advisors – SAM, EGE, Secretariat of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors;
Additional members of the unit depending on topic discussion.