



Scientific Advice Mechanism

Minutes of the twelfth meeting of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors

(Brussels, 31 May 2018)

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Minutes

12th ordinary plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors
27 April 2018, Brussels

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

The agenda was adopted. The minutes of the previous meeting (31 January and 01 February 2018, Brussels) had been adopted beforehand by written procedure and are available on the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) website (<https://ec.europa.eu/research/sam/>).

The Scientific Advisors were informed that Commissioners Navracsics (Education, Culture and Sport) and Thyssen (Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility) had expressed their interest to Commissioner Moedas in the 'own initiative' topics *'Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty'* (Navracsics) and *'Transforming the Future of Ageing'* (both). The corresponding scoping papers, considered endorsed by the College of European Commissioners, will be published on the Scientific Advice Mechanism website shortly and work will begin on the development of scientific advice for both.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was not held in public. The meeting took place in Brussels at the offices of the European Commission.

3. List of items discussed

New candidate 'own-initiative' topics:

The Scientific Advisors took stock of work done following their previous meeting to determine the amenability of further candidate 'own initiative' topics to the provision of scientific advice. These included:

- *Micro- and Nano-Plastics*: a 'pre-scoping' workshop took place, 26 April, at the European Commission's premises in Brussels with Rolf-Dieter Heuer and Pearl Dykstra, and experts identified both by the Science Advice for Policy by European Academies (SAPEA) consortium and the secretariat. The workshop suggested that the Scientific Advisors will produce a first short document by end June with its initial observations on the topic as well as intended subsequent steps, pending endorsement by the College of European Commissioners, including an explanatory note before the end of the year, followed by a scientific opinion in early 2019. The explanatory note would critically review existing literature on the issue covering: 1. The natural sciences; 2. Social and behavioural sciences and humanities; 3. Political, legal and regulatory sciences; and 4. Modelling. The work will be led by Pearl Dykstra and followed closely by Rolf-Dieter Heuer and Elvira Fortunato.
- The Scientific Advisors took also stock of candidate 'own initiative' topics in the areas of *'Air Quality'* and *'Sustainable Food Systems'* (previously, *sustainable food production*). In view of the forthcoming WHO report on exposure to air pollution and health impacts, the Scientific Advisors decided to postpone the discussion on *'air quality'* until their next meeting. The Scientific Advisors requested the secretariat to

investigate the possibility of a ‘pre-scoping’ workshop similar to the one on MNP for SFS, with Carina Keskitalo and Janusz Bujnicki as lead Scientific Advisors.

- The Scientific Advisors noted the imminent preliminary ruling of the European Court of Justice and its relevance to their Explanatory Note on *'New Techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology'*. The ruling concerns the question whether products obtained with new techniques of mutagenesis are considered to be genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and exempted from the obligations of the GMO Directive 2001/18 in the same way as products obtained with older mutagenesis techniques. In view of this, the Scientific Advisors will explore the continuation of their work in this area, which may include cooperation with the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies.

Exchange of views between the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors and Director-General for Research and Innovation Jean-Eric Paquet

- The Chair of the Group, Rolf-Dieter Heuer welcomed Jean-Eric Paquet and congratulated him on his appointment. He summarised the Scientific Advisors' activities and achievements to date, including the impact of their advice on European policy making, and described their plans for the future. DG Paquet thanked the Scientific Advisors and underlined their important role.
- In the absence of Commissioner Moedas, Jean-Eric Paquet informed the Scientific Advisors about the renewal of their mandates. The mandates of Rolf-Dieter Heuer, Pearl Dykstra, Elvira Fortunato and Janusz Bujnicki (members of the Group since 2015) will be renewed for two additional years (to May 2020); and the mandates of Sir Paul Nurse and Carina Keskitalo, who joined the Group later, will be renewed for three years (to May 2021).

Draft Scientific Opinion 'Novel Carbon Capture and Utilisation Technologies'

The Chair and Jean-Eric Paquet thanked the representatives of DG CLIMA and Cabinet Cañete for having entrusted the Chief Scientific Advisors to work on *'Novel Carbon Capture and Utilisation Technologies'*. Artur Runge Metzger and Silvia Bartolini expressed their satisfaction about the high quality work delivered by the Chief Scientific Advisors on the previous topic *'Closing the Gap between Light-Duty Real-World CO₂ Emissions and Laboratory Testing'*, which is cited in November 2017's legislative proposal setting new, post 2020, CO₂ emissions standards for passenger cars and light commercial vehicles. They explained the relevance of the scientific opinion *'Novel Carbon Capture and Utilisation Technologies'* for the upcoming Future of Energy Communication as well as in the broader policy context of the reduction of CO₂ emissions, energy efficiency and life-cycle assessment.

Elvira Fortunato, the lead Scientific Advisor for this topic, presented the recommendations in the draft scientific opinion, followed by a presentation of the results of the SAPEA evidence review by the Co-Chair of the working group, Marco Mazzoti.

Ongoing topics

- The Scientific Advisors discussed the close-to-final version of the scientific opinion on *'Authorisation Processes of Plant Protection Products in Europe'* taking into account the recent adoption of the EC proposal for a revised General Food Law Regulation. The opinion will undergo minor revisions and be published shortly.

- The Scientific Advisors noted the planned scoping expert workshop for the topic '*Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty*', 4 June. The Scientific Advisors further reflected on the scoping paper in view of the breadth of the issues described therein and the necessity for their Advice (as mandated in the Decision establishing the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors) to be critical to the development of Union policies or legislation. In view of this they noted that the scoping paper may be further focused, including suggestions from the abovementioned scoping workshop.
- The Scientific Advisors discussed the SAPEA initiated topic '*Transforming the Future of Ageing*', and adopted the corresponding scoping paper. The Group nominated Pearl Dykstra as lead Scientific Advisor. The goal for delivery of scientific advice is April 2019.

Update on meetings and events 2018/19

The Scientific Advisors discussed their next plenary meeting (9 and 10 July 2018) which takes place during the European Open Science Forum (ESOF) meeting in Toulouse; as well as their extraordinary meeting with SAPEA representatives, 20 June, Paris.

The Scientific Advisors held a working lunch with Mark Ferguson, Chief Scientific Advisor to the Irish Government, Bernard Charpentier, Chair of SAPEA board and President of FEAM, Jean-Eric Paquet, Director General for Research and Innovation and Wolfgang Burtscher, Deputy Director-General I of DG Research and Innovation. Different models for the provision of scientific advice were discussed, and the importance of ensuring the independence of advice was underlined.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

The Scientific Advisors will finalise the '*Carbon Capture and Utilisation Technologies*' and '*Authorisation Processes of Plant Protection Products in Europe*' scientific opinions.

Work will continue on candidate own-initiative topics: *Micro-and Nano-Plastics* and *Sustainable Food Systems*: a short document as described above will be prepared for *Micro-and Nano-Plastics* by end June 2018 and a pre-scoping expert workshop will be organised for *Sustainable Food Systems*. The College will be informed. The Scientific Advisors will monitor developments in relation to their explanatory note, *New Techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology*.

The secretariat will prepare the scoping workshop for the topic '*Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty*'. The secretariat and SAPEA will propose a timeline and organisation for implementing the work on '*Transforming the Future of Ageing*'.

The secretariat will 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, among others, to monitor their impact on EC policy-making.

5. Next steps

As above.

6. Next meeting

The next plenary meeting of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors will take place on 9 and 10 July, 2018

7. List of participants

Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

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

SAPEA (Science Advice to Policy by European Academies)

Bernard Charpentier, Chair of SAPEA board;
Rudolf Hielscher, Coordinator of SAPEA;
Yves Caristan, Secretary-General of Euro-Case;
Marco Mazzotti, Co-Chair of CCU Working Group;
Wolf Gehrish, Euro-Case, member of coordination team;
Jacqueline Whyte, Senior Science Policy Officer.

European Commission

Silvia Bartolini, Cabinet Cañete, European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy;
Keith Sequeira, Cabinet Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation;
Jean-Eric Paquet, Director-General for Research and Innovation;
Artur Runge-Metzger, Director C, Climate Strategy, Governance and Emissions from Non-Trading sectors, Directorate-General of Climate Action;
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);
Maria Da Graça Carvalho (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism);
Sigrid Weiland (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism, Manager of Group of Chief Scientific Advisors).