



Scientific Advice Mechanism

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

(Brussels 23 and 24 March 2017)

0. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The Chair (Rolf Heuer) noted the excused absences of HLG members Cédric Villani and Paul Nurse on both days, and of Janusz Bujnicki on the first day. The Chair also noted his replacement as Chair by Pearl Dykstra for the later part of the afternoon of the second day of the meeting.

1. SAM HLG discussion, ongoing topics

Explanatory Note: New techniques in agricultural biotechnology

The secretariat informed the HLG that during the following day's meeting with Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis, Janusz Bujnicki would advise the Commissioner of the probable delivery of the explanatory note in April 2017 (rather than in March 2017 as was originally requested). This is due to the need for some limited further scientific consultation, editorial work and the preparation of a summary.

Scientific Opinion: Scientific advice to support the forthcoming evaluation of pesticides legislation

The Chair welcomed the draft scoping paper, entitled "Authorisation processes of plant protection products in Europe from a scientific point of view". The HLG concluded that it would on the following day and in discussion with Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis explore the possibility of adopting the scoping paper, with the caveat that question (b) would be addressed only if time and an appropriate form of evidence interrogation and consultation permits.

Scientific Opinion: Food from the Oceans

Carina Keskitalo informed the HLG that the first and second steering group meetings have taken place. These have resulted in the elaboration of the questions included in the scoping paper into a number of additional sub-questions and the development of a working group composed of experts provided by the SAPEA consortium, representing both natural and social sciences and humanities. A literature review is underway which is planned for completion in the third quarter of 2017. This review will be presented to an expert workshop, the outcomes of which will inform the draft Opinion to be presented to stakeholders in the fourth quarter of 2017. A launch event for the Opinion is planned for early 2018. The possibility of interim public outreach events, and participation in other relevant stakeholder meetings will be further discussed during forthcoming steering group meetings.

Scientific Opinion: Cybersecurity in the European Digital Single Market

The Chair welcomed the next day's planned and ceremonial presentation of the scientific opinion on Cybersecurity in the European Digital Single Market to Commissioner Carlos Moedas, and expressed his gratitude on behalf of the HLG to the SAM secretariat for its support during the production of the Opinion. The Chair noted that the Opinion was formally adopted by written procedure by the HLG some days previously.

The Chair encouraged the secretariat closely to follow and inform the HLG of the use of the Opinion in the forthcoming digital single market and cybersecurity strategy reviews.

2. SAM HLG Activity planning

The HLG briefly discussed its planned extraordinary plenary meeting to take place at the CERN site, 11-12 April 2017. The purpose of the meeting will be threefold: to enable the HLG to make recommendations; to discuss potential 'own initiative' topics, for subsequent discussion with SAPEA and eventual recommendation to the Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation that the HLG is asked to work on these; and to discuss ways to respond to the Commissioner's recommendation at the previous HLG meeting.

3. Meeting with SAPEA representatives

The Chair warmly thanked the European Academy Presidents and SAPEA representatives for their efforts in identifying experts to assist in the production of Opinions and Explanatory Notes. The Presidents in turn confirmed their appreciation for the effective co-operation on the various ongoing topics.

In relation to the Food from the Oceans topic, the Academy Presidents provided further information on the possibility of interim public outreach events. The Chair appreciated the potential value of such events and recommended that their precise nature is clearly defined and differentiated from the specific expert and stakeholder events: summaries of these outreach events may be annexed to the eventual Opinion to guarantee transparency.

In relation to the 'Authorisation processes of plant protection products...' topic, the Academy Presidents and SAPEA representatives declared their intention to participate in answering question (a) and agreed with the HLG's appraisal of and approach to question (b).

The Chair noted the concurrent release by EASAC of its policy report on Genome Editing and confirmed that the HLG explanatory note is different in nature: it will not make recommendations to policy, but will rather explain and compare new techniques with established techniques of genetic modification and with conventional breeding techniques, and it will consider only agricultural applications of these techniques (and not, for example, medical applications).

4. Food from the Oceans

Commissioner Vella highlighted the relevance of his request in particular to the 'Ocean Resources' section of the Commission's Blue Growth strategy, noting the economic opportunities presented by oceanic food and the corresponding environmental responsibilities, leading to the question of how to obtain more food and biomass from the oceans in a sustainable manner. Following Carina Keskitalo's presentation the discussion focussed on how the Opinion can best inform future policy debates on this topic.

5. New techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology and Scientific advice to support the forthcoming evaluation of pesticides legislation

Janusz Bujnicki recalled Commissioner Andriukaitis's initial request for an explanatory note confirming that the note will not present opinions, nor examine legal aspects and is a technical and neutral document providing a basis for subsequent discussion, and a possible request for a scientific opinion. Already at an advanced stage, the explanatory note will be a comprehensive description and comparison of conventional breeding techniques, established techniques of genetic modification and new breeding techniques. Commissioner Andriukaitis accepted delivery in April and described his planned High Level Conference 28 September, 2017 to which Janusz Bujnicki is invited as a keynote speaker, presenting the Explanatory Note.

The Chair then advised the Commissioners of the HLG's previous discussions in relation to the scoping paper 'Authorisation processes of plant protection products...' and Commissioners Andriukaitis and Moedas accepted the proposed approach. The scoping paper was thus adopted by the HLG.

6. Information about the extraordinary plenary meeting at CERN

The Chair advised Commissioner Moedas of the discussion under agenda item 2.

7. Handover of the opinion Cybersecurity to Commissioner Moedas

The hand-over of the Cybersecurity opinion took place.

8. Discussion on the explanatory note on New Technologies in Agricultural Biotechnology

A drafting session took place to prepare the summary as requested under item 5 above. The HLG agreed to revisit this summary during its extraordinary plenary meeting at CERN.

9. Any other business

The meeting closed with no other business.

**Minutes of the seventh meeting of the High Level Group of
Scientific Advisors**

Present:

23 March

- Rolf-Dieter Heuer, Chair SAM HLG
- Pearl Dykstra, Deputy Chair Sam HLG
- Elvira Fortunato, Member SAM HLG
- Carina Keskitalo, Member SAM HLG
- Wolfgang Burtscher, Deputy Director General, Directorate General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), European Commission (EC)
- Johannes Klumpers, Head of Unit, SAM unit, DG RTD, EC
- Other members of the SAM Unit

24 March

- As above
- Janusz Bujnicki, Member SAM HLG
- Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation (items 4-7)
- Keith Sequeira, Cabinet Commissioner Moedas (items 4-7)

Excused:

- Cédric Villani and Paul Nurse (both days), Janusz Bujnicki (23 March)

Invited participants:

Agenda item 3

- Bernard Charpentier, President, Federation of European Academies of Medicine (FEAM)
- Sierd Cloetingh, President Academia Europaea
- Thierry Courvoisier, President of the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC)
- Reinhard Hüttl, Secretary-General of European Council of Academies of Applied Sciences, Technologies and Engineering (Euro-CASE)
- Günter Stock, President, All European Academies (ALLEA)
- Rudolf Hielscher, Coordinator of the project "Science Advice for Policy by European Academies" (SAPEA)

Agenda item 4

- Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
- András Inotai, Cabinet, Commissioner Vella
- Iain Shepherd, Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
- Eoin MacAoidh, Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

Agenda item 5

- Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
- Nathalie Chaze, Cabinet, Commissioner Andriukaitis
- Sabine Juelicher, Directorate General for Health and Food Safety