



## **Scientific Advice Mechanism**

### **Minutes of the sixteenth plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors**

*(London, 12 and 13 January 2019)*

Brussels, 18 March 2019

Brussels, 18.3.2019

Minutes

16<sup>th</sup> ordinary plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of  
Chief Scientific Advisors  
12-13 January 2019, London

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

The agenda was adopted. The minutes of the previous meeting (4 and 5 December 2018, Brussels, Belgium) were under preparation for later adoption by written procedure and publication 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 was hosted by Sir Paul Nurse and took place at the Francis Crick Institute in London.

**3. List of items discussed**

Ongoing topics and up-dates on recently completed topics

- Pearl Dykstra informed the meeting about progress on the topic *Transforming the Future of Ageing*, including the expert workshop of 7 December 2018, organised by SAPEA. The meeting welcomed the revised structure of the 'Science Advice by European Academies (SAPEA)' Evidence Review Report (ERR). The Advisors agreed to establish a scientific opinion based on the ERR and tasked the SAM unit to develop the policy context of this topic and to propose a timeline for the publication of the ERR and the scientific opinion in coordination with the Chair of the SAPEA Working Group.
- Nicole Grobert reported on the Workshop on Health and Environmental impacts of *Micro-and-Nanoplastics* on 10/ 11 January as well as the Coordination Group meeting in Brussels. Based on the results of these events as well as the findings provided by the SAPEA ERR the Advisors agreed on a structure and identified possible areas for policy recommendations for their scientific opinion. The participants noted the complexity of the topic as well as the need for identifying relevant existing regulation for toxicity tests of different materials. Chief Scientific Advisor to the Canadian Government Mona Nemer as well as the Advisors underlined the importance of international cooperation in this area. Concerning the up-coming G7-like roundtable on micro- and nano-plastics on 13 February, the Advisors and Mona Nemer agreed to share the draft for a possible meeting summary with the representatives of the G7 countries.
- In the context of the topic *Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty* and in line with the agreement between the Advisors and the Director-General of the Joint Research Centre (JRC), Vladimir Šucha (see minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> plenary group meeting on 10/ 11 October 2018), David Mair, DG JRC, presented the

JRC project '*Enlightenment 2.0*'. This project aims at raising awareness of the influencing factors in decision-making processes, to train policymakers in better decision-making and thus to foster evidence-informed policy-making.

- Pearl Dykstra and the SAM Unit updated the meeting about progress on the topic *Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty* including the preparations for a SAPEA expert workshop on 11 February and a sounding board meeting planned for March/April 2019, as well as the delivery of the SAPEA draft ERR. The Advisors discussed the possible structure of the scientific opinion, emerging areas of recommendations and the timeline for this topic.
- 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 PEST committee (EP's special committee on the authorisation procedure for pesticides) had approved its final report on 6 December for a vote by the European Parliament on 14 January 2019. The Advisors noted that many of their recommendations are reflected in the draft PEST committee report and that three Articles directly refer to the Scientific Advice Mechanism. In view of this and DG SANTE's Regulatory Fitness exercise on the Regulation of Plant Protection Products to be finalised in the first half of 2019, the Advisors discussed next steps.
- The Advisors took note of the ongoing work of the JRC and the European Network on GMO Laboratories concerning the application of the obligations under the EU GMO legislation to products of gene editing as well as ongoing discussions in the European Parliament. They tasked the SAM unit to proceed with the planning of an event based on their statement published on 13 November 2018.

#### Candidate topics

- Carina Keskitalo with the support of the SAM unit presented the scoping paper for the candidate topic '*Towards an EU Sustainable Food System*', which had been adjusted following the discussions with Commissioners Carlos Moedas and Phil Hogan as well as Cabinet Andriukaitis at the previous plenary group meeting (see minutes of the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting on 4/5 December 2018). The Advisors agreed on the scoping paper with minor adjustments and tasked the SAM unit to send it to Commissioner Carlos Moedas for sharing with Commissioners Phil Hogan and Vytenis Andriukaitis. The advisors also supported the Specification of Work, an accompanying document to the scoping paper, with regard to practical organisation of the study. The SAM unit is progressing with a quick scoping review of relevant reports and studies, to be published towards the end of February. Based on this, the unit will work with SAPEA, and an expert workshop will be organised for February/ March.
- Regarding the candidate topic '*Climate Change and Health*' the SAM unit informed the Advisors about plans for organising a meeting with the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC).

Taking stock: SAM – three years on

The Advisors took note of their achievements and the impact of their work to date and requested the SAM Unit to report to Commissioner Moedas accordingly.

**4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions**

- Work will continue on the topic '*Micro-and Nano-Plastics*' regarding the G7-like roundtable (13 February 2019) in the margins of AAAS 2019 meeting (14-17 February 2019) in Washington, DC in cooperation with the Canadian Chief Science Advisor and for preparing a scientific opinion based on the findings of the expert workshop on 10 - 11 January, the SAPEA ERR and the conclusions of this meeting.
- Coordination between the topic on '*Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity of Uncertainty*' and the JRC project '*Enlightenment 2.0*' will be continued. The SAM unit will continue preparations for a sounding board meeting and for the scientific opinion following the instructions of the Advisors.
- The SAM unit will continue its work on the quick scoping review related to the topic '*Sustainable Food Systems*', for publication end of February, and coordinate with SAPEA for starting the work on the ERR and scientific opinion. The agreed scoping paper will be shared with European Commissioners Phil Hogan and Vytenis Andriukaitis.
- The SAM unit will develop the policy context to be included in the scientific opinion '*Transforming the Future of Ageing*' and coordinate with SAPEA for developing a time line for the scientific opinion.
- The SAM Unit 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 this context, it was agreed to invite Roberto Viola Director General for Communication, Networks, Content and Technology, to the next plenary group meeting on 22 March.
- Concerning the candidate topic '*Climate Change and Health*' the SAM unit will organise meetings with EASAC and the relevant policy DG's.

**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 22 and 23 March, 2019.

## 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.

### Chief Scientific Advisor of Canada

Mona Nemer.

### European Commission

Wolfgang Bartscher, Deputy Directorate-General for Research and Innovation;  
Johannes Klumpers (DG RTD, Head of Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism);  
David Mair (DG Joint Research Centre, Head of Unit H.01 Knowledge for Geographic Coordination);  
Jeremy Bray (DG RTD, Deputy Head of Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism);  
Sigrid Weiland (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism, Manager of Group of Chief Scientific Advisors);  
James Gavigan (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism);  
Piotr Kwiecinski (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism);  
Iphigenia Pottaki (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism);  
Stuart Kirk (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism).