



## **Scientific Advice Mechanism**

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

*(Brussels, 4 and 5 December 2018)*

Brussels, 12 February 2019

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Minutes

15<sup>th</sup> ordinary plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of  
Chief Scientific Advisors  
4-5 December 2018, Brussels

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

- The agenda was adopted. The minutes of the previous meeting (10-11 October 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/>).

**2. Nature of the meeting**

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

**3. List of items discussed**

**Impact of scientific advice**

- DG MARE (Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) informed the Advisors about the impact of the scientific opinion '*Food from the Oceans*', established on request by Commissioner Karmenu Vella and handed over end November 2017. Iain Shepherd underlined the outstanding quality, timeliness and relevance of the science advice delivered by the Advisors. He informed the meeting that the opinion has led to the inclusion of a new objective, 'food security', in the Commission's proposed post-2020 European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. The opinion underpins several fisheries and aquaculture related aspects of the EU's revised bio-economy strategy (adopted in October 2018) in terms of its goals to alleviate or eliminate unsustainable practices in the agriculture sector and rural milieu, in particular in relation to biomass for food and feed. He also stated that the scientific opinion provides useful guidance for how marine and maritime food production should evolve to contribute to achieving climate neutrality for the EU by 2050 according to the long-term strategy adopted by the Commission on 28 Nov 2018<sup>1</sup>.

**Ongoing topics, candidate topics and up-dates on recently completed topics**

- SAPEA informed the Scientific Advisors about progress on the topic '*Transforming the Future of Ageing*', including the expert workshop of 7 December 2018. A draft Evidence Review Report (ERR) was provided to the Group before the meeting. The SAM unit was tasked to summarise the EU policy context by early 2019. Janusz Bujnicki will share the responsibility for this topic with Pearl Dykstra as lead Chief Scientific Advisor.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/docs/pages/com\\_2018\\_733\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/docs/pages/com_2018_733_en.pdf)

- The SAM Unit updated the meeting on the topic '*Microplastic Pollution*'. A working group meeting took place on 19 October in Amsterdam; there will be an expert workshop on 10/11 January 2019; and a coordination group meeting in the afternoon of 11 January; as well as the events planned in the margins of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) meeting, Washington DC, 14-17 February 2019. In particular, the SAM Unit informed the meeting that the co-organisation with the Chief Scientific Advisor to the Canadian Government, Mona Nemer, of the Roundtable on '*Scientific Advice Cooperation on Micro-plastics Pollution*' with representatives of G7 countries is progressing well.
- The SAM Unit and SAPEA updated the meeting on the topic '*Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty*', including the upcoming working group meeting on 10 December and the state-of-play of the SAPEA ERR. The SAM unit informed the meeting about ongoing work on three briefing documents concerning (1) the achievements and challenges in the current policy and regulatory response to scientific complexity and uncertainty (2) the landscape of science advice to policy and (3) the policy context.
- Commissioner Moedas noted the Advisors' statement on *gene editing*, published 13 November, considering it an important contribution to the debate on how regulation can ensure high levels of protection while enabling beneficial innovation.
- Concerning the candidate topic '*Climate Change and Health*', the SAM Unit informed the meeting that the draft scoping paper was discussed with colleagues from relevant EC services and that mostly positive comments had been received. A meeting will be organised in January during which EASAC will present the interim results of their planned report in the area of climate change and health, intended for publication in the first half of 2019.
- SAPEA representatives informed the meeting that they are presently investigating the possibility of proposing further 'own-initiative' topics to the Advisors in the areas of '*A systemic approach to Energy in Europe*' and '*Data Governance*'.

**Exchange with Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan, and with Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos Moedas**

- The Scientific Advisors presented their proposal to prepare a scientific opinion on '*Sustainable Food Systems*'. They noted the consensus, mostly based on natural sciences, for a more holistic approach to food policy taking account of sustainable development goals, while at the same time noting the difficulty in acting on the recommendations already made. With that in mind, their opinion would build on existing reports, and evidence from social and political sciences, in order to make recommendations on how to make the transition to a more sustainable food system.
- The Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan, welcomed the proposal in principle, noting existing work in the area, and the need better to understand imbalances in the urban/ rural divide; the socio-economics of the farming sector; food waste; and the drivers of consumer food choice.

- Cabinet Andriukaitis similarly welcomed the proposal adding that it would be crucial to consider also innovation and health related aspects in the scientific opinion. Sabine Juelicher, DG SANTE, Director of Directorate E Food and Feed Safety, Innovation, underlined in particular the importance of paying more attention to sustainability and citizens' expectations.
- The Advisors instructed the Unit to prepare a scoping paper in consultation with the relevant services and Cabinets, and of their intention to adopt this early in 2019.

#### **Exchange with SAPEA**

- The Scientific Advisors and SAPEA Board Members emphasised the very good and successful cooperation between SAPEA, the Group and the SAM Unit. In particular and based on the example of the scientific opinion '*Food from the Oceans*', they agreed to further increase outreach activities. Participants expressed their wish to continue the constructive dialogue and will discuss ongoing and candidate own-initiative topics in a dedicated meeting in 2019.

#### **Events with participation of Group of Chief Scientific Advisor**

- The SAM unit provided the Advisors with an up-date of the discussions between INGSA, the European Science Advisors Forum (ESAF) and the Commission regarding the coordination between INGSA's 'European Chapter' and ESAF. INGSA will set up a European Committee, in which ESAF, JRC, SAM, Academics and others will be represented. Discussions will be continued at the next ESAF meeting on 26/ 27 June.

#### **4. Conclusions/ recommendations/ opinions**

- The Scientific Advisors instructed the SAM Unit to organise an extraordinary meeting in spring with the SAPEA board members to discuss ongoing and planned own-initiative topics.
- Work will continue on the topic '*Microplastic Pollution*' with the aim of publishing the SAPEA ERR on 10 January during an expert workshop, forming a bridge to the development of the scientific opinion. 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.
- The SAM Unit will deliver the abovementioned briefings related to the topic '*Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty*', drafts of which will be discussed at the next plenary meeting. SAPEA will continue to work on the first draft of the ERR for delivery by beginning of January.
- Work will continue on the draft scoping paper for the topic '*Sustainable Food Systems*' taking account of the exchange with Commissioner Hogan, Cabinet Andriukaitis and DG SANTE for possible adoption in the next plenary meeting. The SAM Unit will continue its work on a 'quick scoping review' related to the topic for publication in February 2019.

- SAPEA will continue their work on the ERR '*Transforming the Future of Ageing*', informed by the up-coming expert workshop on 7 December 2018.
- The Advisors instructed the SAM Unit to organise a meeting with EASAC for a presentation of the preliminary results of EASAC's study on '*Climate Change and Health*'.
- The SAM Unit will explore possibilities for contributing to a public discussion on *gene editing* based on the Advisors statement on this subject.

## 5. Next steps

As above

## 6. Next meeting

The next plenary meeting of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors will take place in London on 12 and 13 January, 2019.

## 7. List of participants

### Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

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

### SAPEA (Science Advice to Policy by European Academies) Agenda Items 5 and 6

Sierd Cloetingh (President AE), incoming Chair of SAPEA board;  
Bernard Charpentier (Previous President FEAM);  
Antonio Loprieno (President ALLEA);  
Thierry Courvoisier (President EASAC);  
Reinhard Hüttl (President Euro-CASE);  
Rudolf Hielscher, Coordinator of SAPEA;  
Jacqueline White, Senior Science Policy Officer;

### European Commission

Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan (agenda item 4);  
Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos Moedas (agenda item 3 and 4);  
Keith Sequeira, Cabinet Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation;  
Jean-Eric Paquet, Director-General for Research and Innovation (agenda item 3 and 4);  
Wolfgang Burtscher, Deputy Director-General for Research and Innovation;  
Sabine Juelicher, Director of Directorate E Food and Feed Safety, Innovation (agenda item 4);

Marco Valletta, Cabinet Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety  
(agenda item 4);

Iain Shepherd, Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Unit A.1 Maritime  
Innovation, Marine Knowledge and Investment (agenda item 6);

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;

Sigrid Weiland, DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism;

Annabelle Ascher, DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism;

Maria Da Graça Carvalho, DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism;

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