



Scientific Advice Mechanism

Minutes of the thirteen plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

(Brussels, 7 August 2018)

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Minutes

13th ordinary plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of
Chief Scientific Advisors
9-10 July 2018, Toulouse

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

The agenda was adopted. The minutes of the previous meeting (27 April 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 Chair of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, Rolf Heuer, welcomed the new Group Member Nicole Grobert who was appointed by Commissioner Carlos Moedas in April as replacement of previous Group Member, Çedric Villani.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was not held in public. The meeting took place in Toulouse in the margins of the European Science Open Forum.

3. List of items discussed

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*: SAM Unit will prepare a draft overview of the policy context and the work of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) relevant to micro-plastics pollution and potential impacts to be shared with the Group and the project Science Advice for Policy by European Academies (SAPEA); an initial statement on the impact of microplastic pollution including a proposed approach for the provision of science advice on this topic had been drawn up by the Group and submitted to the Commission on 26 June for possible comment and feedback ahead of this meeting; this initial statement was adopted by the Group and endorsed by Commissioner Moedas, on behalf of the College on 9 July 2018; it was also agreed to collaborate with ECHA on this topic.
- *Sustainable Food Systems*: The Scientific Advisors took also stock of preparatory work for the candidate 'own initiative' topic on '*Sustainable Food Systems*'. The SAM unit is instructed to further develop the background for this topic, along the lines of the draft outline developed by Carina Keskitalo, with a view to the development of a scoping paper, in consultation with SAPEA, and selected experts from relevant organisations and policy makers; the SAM unit was tasked to check on progress concerning the pre-scoping workshop to be prepared by SAPEA (EASAC).
- *Air quality*: In view of the work of the WHO (a report on exposure to air pollution and health impacts published on 2 May and a conference to take place end of September for the identification of research gaps) and based on discussions with the European

Commission's Directorate General for Climate Action, the Scientific Advisors decided to re-focus the work on 'Climate change and health'. The SAM unit is tasked to prepare a first draft scoping paper based on consultation of the relevant Commission services and in collaboration with SAPEA.

- SAM unit informed the Scientific Advisors about the intention of SAPEA (Euro-Case) to propose an own-initiative topic related to the *'Decarbonisation of the Society'*.
- *New Techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology*: The Scientific Advisors decided to develop a scientific opinion based on their explanatory note on *'New Techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology'*, published in April 2017. It was agreed that Janusz Bujnicki and Paul Nurse would be the leading Chief Scientific Advisors for this and draft an addendum to the scoping paper of 25 November 2016 as basis for further work on this topic for discussion and possible adoption at the next meeting of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors. In view of the Commission's request to the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) to provide ethical advice on 'gene editing' the EGE will be informed in detail about the content of the explanatory note and any additional work by the Chief Scientific Advisors; possibilities of collaboration with EGE, including possible work going beyond the scope of the explanatory note will be further explored.

Ongoing topics

- Pearl Dykstra reported on the scoping expert workshop for the topic *'Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty'*, 4 June, which resulted in a list of revised questions to be addressed under this topic; the SAM unit was instructed to add key words to these sub-questions for more detailed instruction of the evidence review report to be delivered by SAPEA by mid-December; it was agreed that the SAM unit will further work on some specific aspects such as a description of existing science advice structures; in addition to Pearl Dykstra, Paul Nurse and Rolf Heuer will be members of the Coordination Group.
- The Scientific Advisors noted that work on the SAPEA initiated topic *'Transforming the Future of Ageing'* is progressing according to plan. On 29 June SAPEA organised a first expert working group meeting in Brussels and a second one was to take place on 16 July; the working group was divided into two subgroups: one working on *'Today's older generation'* and one on the *'Future older generation'*; the number of sub-questions identified in the first meeting would be reduced in the second meeting.

Follow-up of published Scientific Opinions

- *Novel Carbon Capture and Utilisation Technologies*: The Group of Chief Scientific Advisors took note that the Scientific Opinion was published on 23 May 2018 and highly appreciated by the European Commission's Directorate General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA) which will organise a conference on 17 September during which the Scientific Opinion will be presented. A session on this topic, co-organised by SAPEA and SAM, took place at the European Open Science Forum on 11 July.
- *Authorisation Processes of Plant Protection Products in Europe*: The Group of Chief Scientific Advisors took note of the publication of the Scientific Opinion on 4 June 2018 and of a Nature magazine editorial concerning this opinion, 5 June 2018; the

Group received feedback from a first presentation of the Scientific Opinion by Paul Nurse on 7 June at the European Parliament's PEST committee;

Lunch time discussion with European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas, Members of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors and the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE)

During the working lunch which took place in the presence of Government of Canada's Chief Scientific Advisor Dr. Mona Nemer the two Groups discussed with Commissioner Moedas further possibilities of cooperation. They took note of the already ongoing good coordination between the two Groups, facilitated by the two secretariats, and positive developments since the meeting between Christiane Woopen, Chair of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies, and the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (see minutes of 10th meeting on 29/30 November 2017) including the joint session at the ESOF on 11 July (What kind of future do we want for our children?).

Participants expressed their interest in exploring and benefitting from possible synergies between the two groups while fully respecting their independence and different mandates. Possibilities for collaboration were in particular identified for the phase of the evidence gathering for describing the scientific state-of-the-art. It was agreed to continue discussions with a particular view on the area of 'gene editing'. Both groups were informed about the impending request to the EGE for an opinion by the Commission, to which the Chief Scientific Advisors' explanatory note on '*New Techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology*' is relevant. Participants also reflected on the possibility of ad-hoc cooperation on specific topics, e.g. through the invitation of Members with relevant expertise of one Group to meetings of the other Group. Dr. Mona Nemer confirmed the importance of ethical and scientific advisors co-operating and being seen to cooperate by the public.

Exchange between the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors and Government of Canada's Chief Scientific Advisor Dr. Mona Nemer

The Group of Chief scientific Advisors and Dr. Mona Nemer exchanged experience in the provision of governmental scientific advice and expressed their wish to collaborate. As areas of particular common interest the participants identified microplastics, aquaculture and sustainable food systems.

Preparation of ESOF activities

The Group had final preparatory discussions for the three sessions with Chief Scientific Advisors' participation at ESOF on 11 July: 'Citizens and science Advice – challenges and opportunities of participatory science advice'; 'What kind of Future do we want for our children?' together with members of the EGE; and 'Carbon Capture and Utilisation for Climate Change: hype or hope?' co-organised with SAPEA.

Feedback from meetings following the 12th meeting of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

The Group was informed about a joint European Parliament Science and Technology Options Assessment (STOA)/ European Research Council meeting in Strasbourg, 31 May 2018; an extra-ordinary meeting with representatives of SAPEA, Paris, 20 June 2018 in which Rolf Heuer, Pearl Dykstra and Janusz Bujnicki participated; and the fourth meeting of the European Science Advisors Forum (ESAF), Tallinn, 26/ 27 June 2018 in which Janusz

Bujnicki participated. The importance of ESAF for promoting the establishment of science advice structures at national level was underlined. ESAF members intend to collaborate on specific scientific advice topics with the potential for immediate impact.

AOB

The Scientific Advisors were informed that the SAM unit is currently examining SAM working methods in the spirit of continuous improvement.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

The SAM unit in collaboration with the Scientific Advisors Pearl Dykstra, Rolf Heuer and Paul Nurse will further specify the scope of the sub-questions for the topic on *'Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity of Uncertainty'* identified in the scoping workshop by adding keywords which should be addressed as a priority.

Work will continue on the own-initiative topics: *Micro-and Nano-Plastics* according to the approach described in the statement of the Group of Chief scientific Advisors published on 9 July 2018.

The SAM unit will further work on background related to the topic *'Sustainable Food Systems'*, with a view to the development of a scoping paper, in consultation with SAPEA, and selected experts from relevant organisations and policy makers; the SAM unit will coordinate with SAPEA (EASAC) for preparation of a pre-scoping workshop.

The Scientific Advisors under the lead of Paul Nurse and Janusz Bujnicki will develop a document as an addendum to the existing scoping paper for the explanatory note on *'New Techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology'* as a basis for further work on this topic and will monitor developments in relation to the preliminary ruling of the European Court of Justice regarding new techniques of mutagenesis. The Chief Scientific Advisors will continue discussions with Members of the EGE to further explore possibilities of collaboration, in particular in the area of *'gene editing'*.

The SAM unit will develop a scoping paper on *'Climate Change and Health'* based on consultation with the relevant Commission services (DG CLIMA, DG ENV, DG SANTE, DG RTD and DG HOME) for later consultation with SAPEA.

The SAM unit will facilitate the invitation of relevant EGE Member(s) to one of the working group meetings for the topic *'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, amongst 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 10 and 11 October, 2018.

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;
Sir Paul Nurse, Member;

European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies

Christiane Woopen; Chair;
Siobhan O'Sullivan; Vice-Chair;
Herman Nys; Vice-Chair;
Anne Cambon-Thomsen; Member; ESOF Champion 2018
Emmanuel AGIUS, Member;
Ana Sofia Carvalho; Member;
Eugenijus Gefenas; Member;
Julian Kinderler; Member;
Andreas Kurtz; Member;
Laura Palazzani; Member;
Barbara Prainsack; Member;
Carlos Maria Romeo Casabona; Member;
Nils-Eric Sahlin; Member;
Marcel Jerooen Van den Hoven; Member;

Others participants

Mona Nemer, Chief Scientific Advisor to the Government of Canada;
Michael Willmott, First Secretary, Science and Technology, Mission of Canada to the
European Union/ Government of Canada;

European Commission

European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas;
Antonio Vicente, Head of Cabinet Moedas;
Keith Sequeira, Cabinet Moedas;
Jean-Eric Paquet, Director-General for Research and Innovation;
Jessica Larssen, Assistant to Jean-Eric Paquet
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);
Jim Dratwa (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism, team leader of EGE
secretariat);
Maria Da Graça Carvalho, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism, Senior Policy Officer;
Sigrid Weiland (DG RTD, Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism, Manager of Group of Chief
Scientific Advisors).