



Scientific Advice Mechanism

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

(Brussels, 14 and 15 May 2019)

Brussels, 17 July 2019

Brussels, 17 July 2019

Minutes

18th ordinary plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of
Chief Scientific Advisors
14-15 May 2019, Brussels

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

The agenda was adopted. The minutes of the previous meeting (22 and 23 March 2019, Brussels) had been adopted by written procedure and published 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 at the Commission's premises in Brussels.

3. List of items discussed

Exchange with the Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos Moedas

Pearl Dykstra as the leading Advisor for the topic '*Making Sense of Science for Policy under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty*' presented the main lines of the scientific opinion in development and draft recommendations to Commissioner Carlos Moedas who welcomed this work. Director-General of the JRC, Vladimir Šucha, presented the preliminary results of the JRC's forthcoming report '*Enlightenment 2.0*'. Participants noted the complementarity of the two reports. The unit is tasked to find a suitable event for the handover of the Opinion to the European Commission, with SAPEA. Preliminary findings from the draft opinion will be presented for discussion and feedback from expert practitioners attending the joint European Science Advisors Forum/ International Network on Government Science Advice meeting in Dublin on 26/27 June.

Exchange with Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government Sir Patrick Vallance

Sir Patrick and representatives of the UK Government Office for Science (GO-Science) described the provision of science advice to government in the UK.

Sir Patrick outlined current priorities for UK science advice: working on the demand side for science advice and measuring its impacts; systems energy; neuroscience and education for reducing inequality; productivity and technology update in companies; data ecosystems; genomics beyond health; high performance computing; food systems; and rural futures. The Advisors presented the work of the Group and up-dates on ongoing topics. The Advisors and UK CSA will share expertise, relevant meeting invitations and outputs.

Impact of science advice provided by the Scientific Advice Mechanism: Feedback by Anne Bucher, Director-General for Health and Food Safety, on published and ongoing topics

Director-General for Health and Food Safety, Anne Bucher, provided feedback on the impact of the scientific opinion '*EU Authorisation Processes of Plant Protection Products*' (PPP), and the explanatory note '*New Techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology*' (NTAB), both established on request by European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis, and published April 2018 and June 2018, respectively.

Both were welcomed, with the former serving as a useful summary of complex issues for informing discussions and the latter feeding into the 'regulatory fitness and performance (REFIT)' evaluations of corresponding legislation (relating to PPP and the General Food Law). The uptake of several recommendations by the European Parliament's PEST committee in their report (for the EU authorisation procedure for pesticides) was noted. The working method for the provision of advice, with regular communication between the advisors and policy makers was an important factor in ensuring the relevance of each. Ongoing work on the topics '*Towards an EU Sustainable Food System*' and '*Transforming the future of Ageing*' was welcomed, as was the forthcoming topic '*Climate Change and Health*'; the unit was instructed to inform DG SANTE as these progress.

All participants expressed their satisfaction with the strengthened cooperation between the Advisors and the Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks (SCHEER).

Ongoing topics and updates on recently completed topics

- Pearl Dykstra and Janusz Bujnicki informed the meeting about progress on the topic '*Transforming the Future of Ageing*'. Pearl Dykstra will participate in the 'Day of Older People' in Madrid on 1st October for the handover of the SAPEA Evidence Review Report (ERR). The unit was tasked to continue with the preparation of a description of the policy context to inform the Advisors' deliberations on their Opinion.
- Rolf Heuer reported on the handover of the scientific opinion '*Microplastic Pollution*' to Commissioner for Trade, Cecilia Malmstroem, and to Commissioner Carlos Moedas, on 30 April. The unit will continue to monitor international follow-up of the Opinion.
- Rolf Heuer and Janusz Bujnicki reported on their presentation of the Advisors' statement on gene editing for agricultural applications in the European Parliament, April 2nd. The event was jointly organised by the unit with the organisation Re-Imagine Europa. A report will be published on the SAM website and further events are envisaged.

Candidate topics

- Carina Keskitalo and Janusz Bujnicki reported on progress of the work on the topic '*Towards an EU Sustainable Food System*'. Orientations for the first working group meetings on 22 May and 25 June were discussed, taking account of the results of the

quick scoping review report published on the SAM website (<https://ec.europa.eu/research/sam/index.cfm?pg=food>) and comments received from European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan.

- Sir Andrew Haines (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) presented the EASAC report “The Imperative of Climate Action to Protect Human Health in Europe”, for publication 4 July. This report will serve as one of the major sources of evidence for the Advisors’ planned scientific opinion on climate change and health, which will focus on adaptation measures. The Advisors noted EFSA’s project on climate change as a driver of emerging risks for food and feed safety, plant, animal health and nutritional quality (CLEFSA), explaining their Opinion’s focus on human health only. There will be an expert workshop, 7 June in Brussels, on this topic. In line with the agreed focus of the scientific opinion, the Advisors asked the unit to pay particular attention to the availability of evidence on the effectiveness of adaptation measures which could inform the policy recommendations.

Data Governance

- Sierd Cloetingh, President Academia Europaea and Chair of the SAPEA board presented plans for the ALLEA organised workshop on ‘Data Governance’, Berlin, 6 June. Rolf Heuer and a member of the unit will attend. Representatives of other relevant Directorates-General as well as an expert to be suggested by Sir Patrick Vallance will be invited.

Scientific Advice Mechanism -impact and reporting

Drawing on their discussions with recipients of their advice in recent meetings, the Advisors instructed the unit to prepare a report on their first years of operation, for publication on the SAM website before the end of the year.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

- The unit will explore further collaboration possibilities with the GO-Science office, in particular in the frame of the topics ‘*Making Sense of Science under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty*’, ‘*Towards an EU Sustainable Food System*’ and ‘*Transforming the future of Ageing*’ and will send information on the workshop on ‘Data Governance’, organised by ALLEA in Berlin on 6 June.
- As follow-up to the meeting with Director-General for Health and Food Safety, Anne Bucher, the Advisors supported by the unit will continue discussions with DG SANTE concerning the topics of particular relevance to their portfolio, i.e. ‘*Towards an EU Sustainable Food System*’, ‘*Climate Change and Health*’ and ‘*Transforming the future of Ageing*’ to receive input regarding the policy context.
- Concerning the candidate topic ‘*Climate Change and Health*’ the unit will continue with the preparations of the Expert Workshop as requested by the Advisors. DG SANTE and representatives of other Commission services will be invited as observers. The scoping paper is envisaged for publication after that workshop.

- Work will continue on the topic '*Making Sense of Science for Policy under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty*' with a view to presenting the draft recommendations at the 5th meeting of the European Science Advisors Forum in Dublin on 26/27 June, co-organised with the International Network on Government Science Advice. In coordination with SAPEA, the unit will make a proposal for an event as suitable context for its hand over to the Commission.
- Work on the topic '*Towards an EU Sustainable Food System*' including the preparations for the first working group meetings on 22 May and 25 June will continue.
- The unit will continue to develop the policy context summary document in cooperation with other Commission services for the scientific opinion '*Transforming the Future of Ageing*'.
- The unit will prepare a second *Science in Society Salon* in cooperation with Re-Imagine Europa, on a subject to be determined.
- The unit will prepare a report on the work of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors to date for publication before the end of the year.

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 24 and 25 September, 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;

Additional Participants

Sir Patrick Vallance, Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government and Head of the Government Science and Engineering (GSE) Profession (agenda items 5-7);
Madeleine Mackay, UK Government Office for Science;
Sarah Gates, UK Government Office for Science;
Sir Andrew Haines, Professor of Environmental Change and Public Health, London School of Hygiene and tropical Medicine (agenda item 11);

SAPEA (Science Advice to Policy by European Academies)

Sierd Cloetingh (President Academia Europaea), Chair of SAPEA board (agenda items 9-11);

Rudolf Hielscher, SAPEA Coordinator (agenda items 9-11);

European Commission

European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas;

Keith Sequeira, Cabinet Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation;

Christiane Kirketerp de Viron, Cabinet Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation;

Anne Bucher, Director-General for Health and Food Safety (for agenda item 10);

Vladimir Šucha, Director-General of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) (for agenda item 4);

Wolfgang Burtscher, Deputy Director-General RTD;

Sabine Juelicher, Director of Directorate E Food and Feed Safety, Innovation of Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (for agenda item 10);

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, Manager of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors;

Several members of Unit 0.2 Scientific Advice Mechanism, depending on the respective agenda item.