



**Minutes of the 30th plenary meeting of the
European Commission's Group of
Chief Scientific Advisors**

14 July 2021 (by videoconference)

Brussels, 07 September 2021

Minutes

30th ordinary plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of
Chief Scientific Advisors
14 July 2021 (by videoconference)

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

The minutes of the 29th plenary meeting have been adopted by written procedure and published on the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) [website](#).
The agenda for the 30th plenary meeting has been approved.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was held via videoconference and was not open to the public.

3. List of items discussed

Nicole Grobert, chair of the Group of the Chief Scientific Advisors (“the Advisors”), thanked Piotr Kwiecinski for his dedication to the work of the Advisors. He will be moving to the Secretariat General of the Commission.

Ongoing and possible future scientific advice

- Nicole Grobert summarised progress on the scientific opinion ‘*Strategic crisis management in the EU*’. Commissioner Mariya Gabriel (Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth) mandated the Advisors, by way of a scoping paper, to deliver scientific advice on this topic by the second quarter of 2022. The cabinet of Commissioner Janez Lenarčič (Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management) has confirmed his endorsement of the work of the Advisors on this topic. The consortium of academies ‘Science Advice for Policy by European Academies’ (SAPEA) has started their review of the scientific evidence by creating a Working Group of experts. Nebojsa Nakicenovic expressed his interest in this topic and will join the team of Advisors working on it.
- Éva Kondorosi summarised progress on the topic of ‘*Cancer screening*’ and informed the meeting that SAPEA will conduct the evidence review through three workshops where expert views will be elicited. SAPEA will also carry out a literature review. The Advisors’ scientific opinion will inform the update of the EU’s Cancer screening recommendations of 2003.
- Nebojsa Nakicenovic informed the meeting of the publication of the opinion ‘*Energy systems - A systemic approach to Energy in Europe*’; the opinion was handed over to Commissioner Gabriel on 29 June. He thanked everybody who contributed to this successful project. Nebojsa Nakicenovic presented the recommendations at a European

Parliament's Science and Technology Options Assessment (STOA) webinar on 2 July. Prior, he had presented a 'teaser' for the opinion's release during the 'Leading the global clean energy race' session at the EU Research and Innovation Days on 24 June. Further outreach activities will take place after the summer, also in preparation of COP26, the UN Climate Change conference to be held in November.

Exchange on outreach and synergies, alumni network

The Advisors discussed possible modalities of an "alumni" network on the basis of a first proposal by the Secretariat. It would include knowledge transfer as former Chief Scientific Advisors have valuable expertise and often remain interested in the work of the Advisors. In the context of the emerging science-advice-for-policy ecosystem, the Advisors discussed their role in it and where synergies with other organisations could be increased.

Discussion with Tarmo Soomere (Chair of ESAF and President of the Estonian Academy of Science)

Nicole Grobert welcomed Tarmo Soomere, who presented the European Science Advisors Forum (ESAF). It is a relatively small organisation of people who have the national mandate for either giving scientific advice to policy or organising its provision. The membership is based on country representation, but members do not formally represent their countries. Different European countries have different systems for the provision of scientific advice, which also means that members of ESAF have different functions in their home countries. There are also differences in the nature of the scientific advice, e.g. ad-hoc advice versus structural or institutional science advice. In this context, it is important to have clarity on mandates, framework and rules.

One question raised was whether scientific advice to the governments should be public, considering that some governments have embargos on scientific advice and government or cabinet meetings often are not public.

As scientific advice is typically expressed in the national languages, one of ESAF's challenges is the difficulty to develop a common understanding or share documentation, especially reflecting operational advice. On the other hand, its strength is that ESAF makes it possible to rapidly reach scientific advice mechanism in all countries that are members.

It was suggested to look at the work carried out by the EC Joint Research Centre analysing different scientific advice systems as a possible basis for future possible cooperation.

Discussion with SAPEA representatives

The chair welcomed Antonio Loprieno, President of ALLEA and new chairman of the SAPEA Board as of 15 June 2021. The Advisors updated SAPEA on progress of their work. SAPEA informed about progress on the '*Cancer screening*' topic and their planned three workshops with experts from very broad backgrounds and the constructive coordination group meeting between SAPEA, including the Federation of European Academies of Medicine (FEAM) and the Advisors as well as about the meetings in preparations of the opinion on '*Strategic crisis*

management in the EU'. Nebojsa Nakicenovic thanked the SAPEA staff, the Working Group members and chairs and the Lead Academy Network Euro-CASE for their work on the Evidence Review Report for the opinion on '*Energy systems - A systemic approach to Energy in Europe*'.

Participants exchanged views about questions of principle regarding the successor of the SAPEA grant agreement, the unique two-tier Scientific Advice Mechanism and respective division of responsibilities.

All participants confirmed that topics are always top-down and that a mandate from the Commission is always required to develop scientific advice and to secure maximal impact of scientific advice on policy.

Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

- Continuation of outreach activities for the scientific opinion on '*Energy systems - A systemic approach to Energy in Europe*' in the context of ongoing policy initiatives ("Fit for 55") and high levels events on energy (COP26 in November).
- Continuation of SAPEA's efforts setting up the three expert elicitation workshops on the topic of '*Cancer Screening*'.
- Follow-up on the call for experts launched by SAPEA on the topic of '*Strategic crisis management in the EU*'.
- Further development of the proposal for an "alumni" network.
- Continuation of discussion between the Advisors, SAPEA, Young Academies and the Secretariat to discuss the implementation of the SAPEA successor grant and modalities for the efficient functioning of SAM.
- Organisation of regular meetings with SAPEA to examine candidate topics.

4. Next steps

- As above

5. Next meeting

The next plenary meeting of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors will take place by videoconference on 15-16 September 2021.

List of Participants

Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

Nicole Grobert, Chair;
Nebojsa Nakicenovic, Deputy Chair;
Éva Kondorosi, Member;
Maarja Kruusmaa, Member;
Alberto Melloni, Member;
Eric Lambin, Member;

SAPEA (Science Advice to Policy by European Academies)

Antonio Loprieno (President ALLEA), Chairman of SAPEA Board, agenda point 5;
Rudolf Hielscher, SAPEA Coordinator, agenda point 5.

Other participants

Pearl Dykstra, Professor of Sociology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, agenda point 2b, 3 and 4;
Tarmo Soomere, Chair of the European Science Advisors Forum (ESAF) and President of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, agenda point 4.

Observers

Moniek Tromp, (observer) Deputy Chair of the Young Science Academies, agenda point 5.

European Commission

Jacques Verraes, DG RTD, (acting) Head of Unit 03 -Science Policy, Advice and Ethics;
Piotr Kwiecinski, DG RTD, Unit 03 -Science Policy, Advice and Ethics, SAM team leader;
Annabelle Ascher, DG RTD, Unit 03 -Science Policy, Advice and Ethics, Secretary of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors;
Vita Volante, DG RTD, Unit 03 -Science Policy, Advice and Ethics, Secretariat of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors;
Ingrid Zegers, DG RTD, Unit 03 -Science Policy, Advice and Ethics, Policy Officer

Additional members of the unit depending on topic discussion.