



**Minutes of the 32nd plenary meeting of the  
European Commission's Group of  
Chief Scientific Advisors**

2 December 2021 (by videoconference)

Brussels, 18 January 2022

## Minutes

32nd plenary meeting of the European Commission's Group of  
Chief Scientific Advisors  
2 December 2021 (by videoconference)

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

The minutes of the 31<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting have been adopted by written procedure and published on the [scientific advice mechanism](#) website.

The agenda for the 32<sup>nd</sup> plenary meeting has been approved.

### **2. Nature of the meeting**

The meeting was held by videoconference and was closed to the public.

### **3. List of items discussed**

#### **Exchange with Jean-Eric Paquet, Director-General DG RTD and Joanna Drake, Deputy Director-General DG RTD**

Nicole Grobert thanked Jean-Eric Paquet and Joanna Drake for their support and commitment to the work of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors ('the advisors'). Jean-Eric Paquet opened the discussion by offering his thoughts on a strategic approach to ensure that the advisors' scientific advice is impactful, visible and better connected to the Commission's policy pipeline; stronger engagement with the general public; mutual reinforcement with the work of the Joint Research Centre (JRC); the choice of future topics for scientific advice to look at immediate opportunities for new topics; the ambitious recommendations to be concrete, highly relevant and well used by policymakers (the scientific opinion on *Biodegradability of plastics in the open environment* was a good example).

Joanna Drake then shared her views on the focus, timing, time to delivery and communication of scientific advice; the need to connect with young people; the methodology of triggering the right questions for future scientific advice; the choice of questions for scientific advice to focus on substance; the need to work with Commission services to identify topics where the Commission is active and that could be useful for the missions (e.g. cancer screening) and concrete questions so that policymakers use the recommendations.

The ensuing discussion highlighted the importance of timing in delivering scientific opinions, scoping of the scientific question and communication targeted to the specific science discussion. It also highlighted the importance of connecting scientists with public administrations. Participants confirmed the need for more traditional solid evidence-based scientific opinions (such as the upcoming opinion *Strategic crisis management in the EU*), but also for shorter-term scientific advice with fast evidence gathering. They also agreed that

scientific advice needs to be less complex, more digestible and politically relevant, should address science scepticism, and be informed by insight from the Commission on upcoming initiatives, uptake and impact of their scientific advice.

### **Ongoing and possible future scientific advice**

- Éva Kondorosi updated the participants on the scientific opinion *Cancer screening* and informed them that a clear view had emerged from the three expert elicitation workshops that Science Advice to Policy by European Academies (SAPEA) had conducted. The importance of the societal dimension was raised. The advisors' scientific opinion will inform the update of the EU's cancer screening recommendations of 2003 and is expected to be delivered by February 2022.
- Maarja Kruusmaa summarised the exchange with Commissioner Lenarčič (Crisis Management) on 26 November 2021. He had emphasised the importance of establishing synergies and links between the ongoing work of his departments and the advisors' scientific advice. He suggested the civil protection forum on 28-29 June 2022 as a possibility to present the scientific opinion *Strategic crisis management in the EU* (tbc). Nicole Grobert then summarised progress on this scientific opinion. The SAPEA consortium had started their systematic literature review. The participants discussed the possibility of delivering an intermediate analysis in advance of the expected delivery of the scientific advice related to this topic, which is planned for the second quarter of 2022.
- The participants discussed ideas for possible future topics related to AI, which is central to the interaction between government and the general public, the digital and energy transitions, and sustainable food production/consumption. They also emphasised the potential contribution of scientific advice to the missions.

### **Discussion with SAPEA representatives**

The advisors updated SAPEA participants on outreach activities on the energy topic, on progress made on the scientific opinion *Strategic crisis management in the EU* and on the recent exchange with Commissioner Lenarčič (Crisis Management) on 26 November 2021.

The secretariat updated participants on preparations for a handover of the scientific opinion on *Cancer screening* to Commissioners Gabriel (Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth) and Kyriakides (Health and Food Safety) at the beginning of March 2022 (tbc).

SAPEA informed participants about progress on the topics *Cancer screening* and *Strategic crisis management in the EU*.

Participants discussed preparations for a conference of the Scientific Advice Mechanism to be jointly organised by the advisors and SAPEA on 'Scientific advice under pressure'. The conference will take place on 27-28 April 2022 in Brussels, with the possibility of attending virtually (hybrid event).

In the exchange on SAPEA's submission for a successor grant agreement, Antonio Loprieno acknowledged feedback from the Commission and SAPEA's plans to address it.

### **Exchange on outreach**

The advisors discussed possibilities for broadening their communication and outreach activities, including to the general public, and leveraging existing channels and platforms such as the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Building on the successful experience of COP26, the advisors discussed how to continue engaging with their international counterparts in the Member States and beyond. They proposed convening a round table of international science advisors to jointly prepare a statement on science advice under pressure, to be discussed with stakeholders as part of the 2022 conference 'Scientific advice under pressure'.

The advisors were informed of ongoing work within the Commission to co-create a vision for the future of the science advice ecosystem in Europe with a broad range of stakeholders. The work is being jointly led by DG RTD and the JRC.

### **Next steps and conclusions/recommendations/opinions**

- Crisis management team to continue work on the scientific opinion *Strategic crisis management in the EU* and possible presentation at the civil protection forum on 28-29 June 2022. SAPEA to deliver first draft Evidence Review Report by the end of January 2022.
- Cancer screening team to continue work on the scientific opinion *Cancer screening* and possible handover to Commissioners Gabriel and Kyriakides on 2 March 2022 (tbc).
- SAPEA to continue coordination and organisation of the 'Science advice under pressure' event on 27-28 April 2022, with input from the advisors and the secretariat.
- Continue the discussion between the advisors, SAPEA, Young Science Academies and the secretariat on implementing the SAPEA successor grant and arrangements for the efficient functioning of the scientific advice mechanism.

#### **4. Next meeting**

The next plenary meeting of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors will take place by videoconference on 2-3 March 2022.

## **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;  
Eva Zažimalová, Member.

### SAPEA

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

### Other participants (invited experts)

Pearl Dykstra, Professor of Sociology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, agenda point 3b;  
Janusz Bujnicki, International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology in Warsaw, Poland, agenda point 3a.

### Observers

Moniek Tromp, Young Academy of Europe Vice-chair, agenda point 5.

### European Commission

Jean-Eric Paquet, Director-General DG RTD;  
Joanna Drake, Deputy Director-General DG RTD;  
Jacques Verraes, DG RTD, Deputy Head of Unit 03 – Science Policy, Advice and Ethics;  
Ingrid Zegers, 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;

Additional members of the unit depending on topic discussion.