

Science Europe Statement on the Establishment of a Scientific Advice Mechanism by the European Commission (19 May 2015)

Science Europe welcomes the recent announcement by the European Commission of its intention to put in place a Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) to ensure provision of independent scientific advice.

The European Commission, at its highest level of decision making, needs independent scientific advice and Science Europe is pleased that the proposed new structure acknowledges this.

While subscribing to the wisdom of the Commission's view that in Europe there is not one single model or best practice for the provision of scientific advice to executive governance levels, and while welcoming the planned structured exchanges with national advisory bodies, Science Europe would like to caution against a scientific advice structure that is too complex to be truly effective.

In order to fulfil its vital function, there will need to be a very clear mandate for the SAM, and a clear definition of its role within the scientific advice structures that already exist, including the Joint Research Centre (JRC). Crucially, there must also be absolute clarity about who are the recipients of its advice, and it will need the autonomy and necessary support to provide advice on all relevant matters and at all times, not only on the basis of explicit requests or demand by the recipients.

It is essential that it is a recognisable voice, with the ability to express unambiguous scientific opinion and with the independence to be a dissenting voice when needed.

Science Europe has long advocated the need for evidence-based policy making as one of the guiding principles of the European Institutions, and to ensure that policies respond to societal challenges and to the needs of citizens. Advancing the understanding of the universe and helping to improve lives are the most important roles of scientific research – and providing decision makers with a sound basis for their decisions is a key part of this.

Science Europe looks forward to continuing collaboration with the European Commission and with the new scientific advisory mechanism in order to ensure that science gets the support and resources it deserves to accomplish its vital role.

About Science Europe:

Science Europe is an association of major European research funding and research performing organisations in 27 countries, established in 2011 to promote the collective interest of its members and to foster collaboration between them. For more information, see www.scienceeurope.org.

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