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**A NEW MECHANISM FOR INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC ADVICE IN THE  
EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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Note d'information de M. Moedas  
en accord avec M. le Président et M. le Premier Vice-Président Timmermans

Destinataires: Membres de la Commission  
Directeurs généraux et chefs de service

## **INFORMATION NOTE TO THE COLLEGE FROM COMMISSIONER MOEDAS, IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT AND FIRST VICE PRESIDENT**

In order to further strengthen the use of independent scientific advice in Commission policy making, the President asked Commissioner Moedas on 15 January 2015 to explore options for a reinforced approach taking into account the experiences in the Commission, the Member States and worldwide. This note presents the outcome of this reflection and the next steps.

### **Experience in Member States, worldwide and within the Commission**

A review of practices in Member States and worldwide shows that there is no single model on how national governments receive scientific advice. Most countries make use of Advisory Councils or Committees, National Academies of Science or a combination of the two. Another model first instigated in the US and subsequently adopted in the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, is to appoint a single person as a Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA). In practice, almost all countries use a combination of different bodies and approaches. A common thread across Member States is the role of the national academies, which typically play an important role in providing scientific evidence in support of national policy making.

Within the Commission services extensive and diverse scientific advisory systems exist, including in-house expertise and use of expert groups, contracted studies, as well as standing, independent, advisory committees (such as the Advisory Committee on Agricultural Research) and scientific committees (such as the Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety). These structures are normally highly specialised and driven by the specific policy needs of each DG.

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) provides in-house scientific support to EU policy needs, for example in modelling policy impacts for impact assessments, through a relationship with the lead policy Directorate General. In addition, Horizon 2020 and previous Framework Programmes, under the coordination of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), finance longer term research projects needed to support EU policies.

### **A strengthened approach for Commission policy making**

Scientific advice needs to be independent of political or institutional interests, bring together evidence and insights from different disciplines and approaches, and ensure adequate transparency. In line with Better Regulation, the right approach for EU policy making needs to take into account the diversity of approaches across Member States, the specific nature of EU processes, and fully respect the principle of subsidiarity. Independent scientific advice needs to be organised to meet policy demand, and to do so at the right time in the policy cycle.

We have decided to set up a new mechanism to strengthen existing arrangements and bring together the supply and demand for independent scientific advice. The mechanism will have two main new features:

- *A structured relationship with scientific advisory bodies within the Member States and more widely.* This will enable the Commission to benefit from the wealth of expertise that exists within Member States. Not only would this avoid duplication of effort, but it would also help build legitimacy of the advice provided to the Commission. A first step towards this was a Memorandum of Understanding between the five main

associations of national academies and learned societies<sup>1</sup>, signed on 26 March 2015, under which they will join forces in support of EU policy making processes. In addition, channels should be developed to draw on the expertise of the wider scientific community, including international bodies.

- *Establishment of a High Level Group of eminent scientists* to improve the interaction between policy demand and the supply of scientific advice, and to ensure the independence, scientific integrity and transparency of the advice provided to the Commission. Based on policy demands from the Commission or on its own initiative, the Group would identify the required independent scientific advice in the short, medium and long term; review the quality of the available evidence and advice; and if necessary complement this with alternative expertise or sources of advice. The Group could also provide direct views on specific scientific questions where urgent advice is needed. The Group would be of limited size with high level expertise covering different fields. Members would serve in a personal capacity and would remain independent of the Commission

This new approach will not work in isolation from the sources of scientific advice existing in the European Commission and is not meant to take over, substitute, nor control or supervise the existing processes by which scientific advice is provided to the EU policy making process. The added value of the mechanism would be to better organise the demand and supply of independent scientific advice on key issues that may cut across many policy fields, and to clearly communicate the scientific evidence at political level.

The new scientific advice mechanism will receive operational support from DG Research and Innovation as the lead service, who will ensure close collaboration with other Commission services, including the Secretariat General, the European Political Strategy Centre, the Joint Research Centre, and those services responsible for existing specialist scientific advisory bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> Academia Europaea; the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA); the Association of National Academies of Science of EU Member States (EASAC); the organisation of National Academies of Engineering, Applied Sciences and Technology (Euro-CASE), and the European umbrella group of National Academies of Medicine (FEAM)