



EU Insight – The new Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM)

How should independent scientific advice be institutionalised in the European Commission (EC) after the mandate of the EC Chief Scientific Advisor (CAS) came to an end in November 2014? For several months, the EC searched for ways to answer that question, studying the various science advisory models around the globe and the “particular needs and culture of the commission”.¹ Finally, in mid-May 2015, EC President Jean-Claude Juncker endorsed a new instrument for high quality, timely, independent scientific advice: the so-called **Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM)** recommended by Commissioner Carlos Moedas, responsible for Science, Research and Innovation within the college of commissioners.

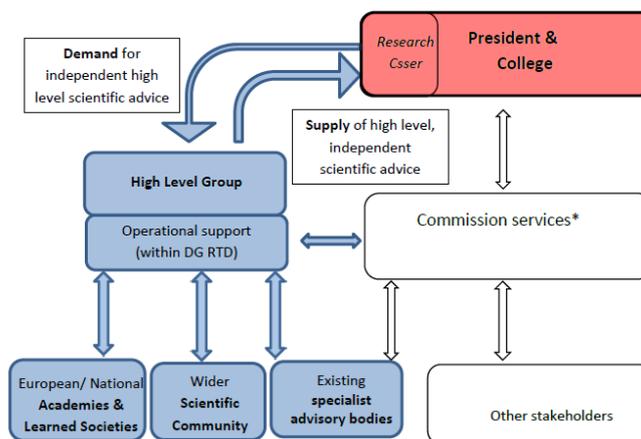
Scientific Advice across all policy areas

Key criteria of the new mechanism are **independence of institutional or political interests, bringing together evidence and insights from different disciplines and approaches, and transparency.**² For specific policy areas, the EC already has access to extensive scientific advice through 1) the Joint Research Centre (JRC) providing in-house scientific support, 2) external experts (groups, contracted studies, and standing, independent advisory committees), and 3) Horizon 2020 financed research projects in support of EU policies (societal challenges). However, the new mechanism is envisioned to provide timely, independent, high level scientific advice to meet needs **across all policy areas.**³

The Scientific Advice Mechanism’s features

This future mechanism will draw on the wide range of scientific expertise in Europe through a **close relationship with national academies and other bodies**, coordinated by a **High-Level Group of Independent**

Figure 0.1: SAM’s two main features are: (1) a structured relationship with scientific advisory bodies in Member States (e.g. national academies) – to benefit from the wealth of knowledge and expertise; (2) a High-Level Group of eminent scientists supported from within DG RTD – to improve the interaction with scientific community, and to ensure independence, scientific integrity, and transparency. The high-level group and the Commission services (incl. JRC) provide scientific advice to the EC president and the college of commissioners.



Scientists.⁴

* Including the Joint Research Centre which provides in-house scientific support

Source: “A new mechanism for independent scientific advice in the European Commission.”

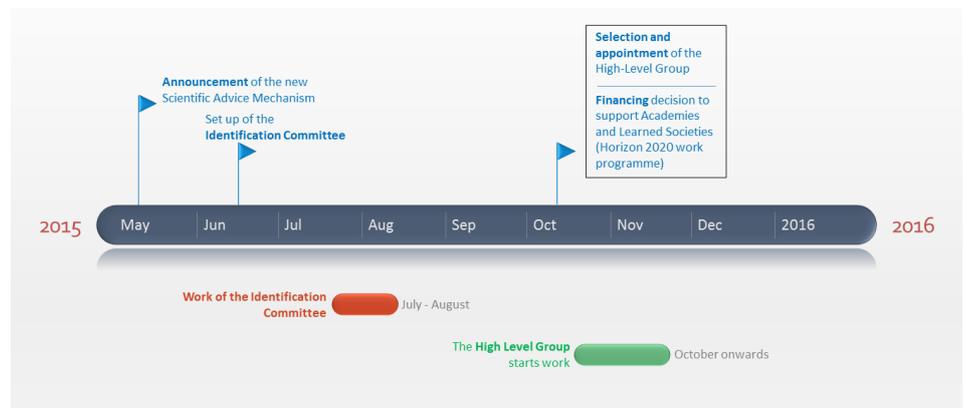


The group will consist of seven members, who can come from anywhere in the world, and who will receive operational support from within the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG-RTD) in the form of a 20 to 25 person-strong secretariat. Commissioner Moedas’ role will be that of a “intermediary” between the future high-level panel and the EC president as well as the EC commissioners.⁵

Implementation timeline

In the coming months, Commissioner Moedas’s task will be to implement this new arrangement involving other Commissioners and making the most of effective cooperation between Commission services. The figure below is taken from the NCP Brussels website⁶, indicating the envisioned timeline for the set-up of the Scientific Advisory Mechanism until autumn 2015.

Figure 1.2: Timeline for the set-up of the Scientific Advisory Mechanism: May to December 2015.



Source: NCP Brussels.

According to *Science*, “The advisory panel’s members will be recruited by a[n] [...] ‘identification committee,’ through a process modeled after the [European Research Council’s search for scientific council members](#)”.⁷

A budget of up to EUR 6 million of EU funding is envisioned to support the Scientific Advise Mechanism, but this has yet to be confirmed.

The mechanism will be in place by autumn 2015.

Sources and further information

¹ Alison Abbott. “European Commission unveils long-awaited science advice plans”. *Nature*. 13 May 2015. <http://www.nature.com/news/european-commission-unveils-long-awaited-science-advice-plans-1.17557> . Accessed 23 June 2015.

² “President Juncker welcomes world-leading scientists, discusses role of science in competitiveness and announces new mechanism for scientific advice”. European Commission. Press release. 13 May 2015. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4970_en.htm?locale=en . Accessed 22 June 2015. [European Commission, 2015a]



³ “A new mechanism for independent scientific advice in the European Commission.” European Commission. <http://europa.eu/rapid/attachment/IP-15-4970/en/Science%20Advice%20Mechanism.pdf>. Accessed 22 June 2015 [European Commission, 2015b].

⁴ European Commission, 2015a.

⁵ Rabesandratana, Tania. “Updated: European Commission to appoint seven to new high-level science advice panel”, *Science*, 13 May 2015. <http://news.sciencemag.org/europe/2015/05/breaking-european-commission-create-new-high-level-science-advice-panel>. Accessed 22 June 2015.

⁶ The Scientific Advise Mechanism. NCP Brussels. News. 11 June 2015. <http://www.ncpbrussels.be/tools-and-information/news/236-the-scientific-advice-mechanism>. Accessed 23 June 2015.

⁷ Rabesandratana, 2015.