

ESAF Annual Meeting 2022  
**The role of science advice in rebuilding the society<sup>1</sup>**  
29.–30.11.2022  
Lithuanian Research Council, Vilnius, LITHUANIA

**Chair of the meeting: Professor Tarmo Soomere** (Chair of ESAF, President of Estonian Academy of Sciences)

## Agenda

<b>Opening</b>
Professor Romas Baronas, Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania Professor Jūras Banys, President of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Dr Reda Cimpperman, Scientific Secretary Research Council of Lithuania Jacques Verraes, European Commission, DG Research & Innovation
<b>Introduction to the meeting.</b> Overview of the main activities of the Members and ESAF Secretariat during 2022. Prof Tarmo Soomere, ESAF Chair, President of Estonian Academy of Sciences
<b>Session 1. The role of science advice in rebuilding the society</b>
<b>Keynote.</b> Science in Ukraine: survive, transform, take the lead Dr Oleksiy Kolezhuk, Head of the Scientific Committee of the National Council of Ukraine on Science and Technology Development
<b>Keynote.</b> Vaughan Turekian, Executive Director Policy and Global Affairs, Franklin Carrero-Martinez, Senior Director, Global Sustainability and Development & Science and Technology for Sustainability Policy and Global Affairs, U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine
How to advise your government on the challenges of a tilting world order? Anne-Greet Keizer, Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR)
Independent expert report: Strategic crisis management in the EU. Dr Maarja Kruusmaa, member of the EC Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences
<b>Session 2. Recent developments</b>
Science for policy: developments in Finland, Dr Jaakko Kuosmanen, Finnish Academy of Sciences
<b>Session 3. The mandate and the future of ESAF</b>
Introduction of European Commission Staff Working Document: Supporting and connecting policymaking in the Member States with scientific research. Kristian Krieger European Commission, Joint Research Centre; Jacques Verraes, European Commission, DG Research & Innovation
Future of ESAF. Proposal of changes in ESAF Terms of Reference and Membership agreement. Prof

<sup>1</sup> <https://esaforum.eu/esaf-annual-meeting-2022-esaf-8-the-role-of-science-advice-in-rebuilding-the-society/>

Tarmo Soomere. Proposal for next Annual Meeting. Prof Mădălin Bunoiu.

## Minutes of the meeting

### Opening

**Welcome speeches by Lithuanian hosts: Prof Romas Baronas** (Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania) and **Prof Jūras Banys** (President of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. **Reda Cimpmperman** (Scientific Secretary Research Council of Lithuania) made an overview of the activities of Lithuanian Research Council.

**Jacques Verraes** (European Commission, DG Research & Innovation). Mr Verraes opened the meeting by stating that Science for Policy is high up in EC agenda and will be one of the priority issues during next 2 EC presidencies (Sweden and Spain). Spain has setup a working group to prepare Council conclusions that should cover also science for policy issues and bring together policy insights trends and needs surrounding Science for policy that will be adopted on the 24th of November 2023. In December 2023, the council will adopt a recommendation on guiding principles of knowledge valorisation. The recommendation defines for the first time knowledge valorisation to include not only patents and intellectual property rights, but also explicitly the uptake of scientific knowledge in policymaking. The commission is laying the groundwork for an international Ministerial Conference on science for policymaking that is scheduled for the 10th and 11th of October 2023. The conference will carry forward discussions on the staff working document on knowledge validation<sup>2</sup> in the European Research Area working groups as well as in the European Parliament, for instance in STOA<sup>3</sup>.

### Introduction to the meeting.

#### Overview of the main activities of the Members and ESAF Secretariat during 2022 (Stand 27 Nov 2022).

##### **Prof Tarmo Soomere (ESAF Chair)**

- December to February: the wide and deep discussions at the 2021 annual meeting required production of not only short notes but, instead, a thorough overview of the opinions of the future of ESAF. The notes agreed with the presenters are now on the ESAF website.
- 26.02.2022 Letter of the Chairman to the International Science Council (ISC) European group members about possible framing of the aggression of Russia against Ukraine forwarded, with comments, to ESAF.
- 08.03.2022 Zoom discussion with the SAM unit about framing the future of ESAF. Meeting with new Head of SAM unit Gilles Laroche and Deputy Head of SAM Unit Jacques Verraes.

<sup>2</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/file/staff-working-document-supporting-connecting-policymaking-member-states-scientific-research\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/file/staff-working-document-supporting-connecting-policymaking-member-states-scientific-research_en)

<sup>3</sup> Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA)  
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/en/home/highlights>.

This was the first informal meeting of ESAF Chairman and new Head of SAM unit Gilles Laroche. The Chairman explained the concerns and the position of ESAF members regarding ESAF future based on the ESAF-7 meeting Group Discussions (ESAF hybrid annual meeting in December 2021). Head of SAM Unit agreed that ESAF as an informal network has big value. Both sides agreed to continue the cooperation.

*We are thankful to the SAM for the call to take more active and possible more formal role in the science for policy ecosystem in Europe. The majority of ESAF members are of opinion that the informal way of operation offers more benefit for the members and for this ecosystem.*

*The Terms of Reference and Membership Principles need certain adjustment. One important aspect has not been mentioned in ToR: the ESAF members are, as a rule, in the position (and often have the mandate) to shape the national science advice system. This feature is not really used but could be important and instrumental in the future. Another aspect: European Research Area is framework-dependent, and the relevant formulations in the Membership Principles should be adjusted so that we do not lose important competence.*

- 05.04.2022 The Chairman had physical meetings and discussion about the functioning of the national science advice system in Hungary with the Hungarian ESAF member Dr Istvan Szabo and the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Prof Tamas Freund.
- 27.–28.04.2022 The Chairman and former ESAF member Prof Mark Ferguson participated in the discussion panel “How close is too close? The complex role of a government science advisor” of the conference “Science advice under pressure” co-organised by the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors to the European Commission and the SAPEA consortium of European academies.
- 27.04.2022 Informal ESAF dinner and discussion during the conference “Science advice under pressure”, with two ESAF members, ESAF secretariat and two guests from Finland (Jaakko Kuosmanen and president elect of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters Kimmo Kaski).  
*This meeting inspired Finnish colleagues and the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters to decide to be more actively engaged in the building of the national science advice system. The driver of the relevant analysis and task group Jaakko Kuosmanen has his affiliation in the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters.*
- 28.04.2022 The Chairman participated as a discussant at the satellite event of the conference “Science advice under pressure”: Special Question-Time Debate “If Covid-19 is the 9/11 Moment for Global Science Advice, What Needs to Happen Next?” organised by the International Network for Governmental Science Advice (INGSA) and The International Science Council (ISC).
- 13.05.2022 The Chairman had a short physical discussion about future plans of ESAF with the German representative Prof Gerald Haug and about functioning of the science advice system in the Czech Republic with the member of the GCSA and the President of the Czech Academy of Sciences Prof Eva Zažímalová.
- 14.05.2022 The Chairman had a longer physical meeting with the Austrian ESAF representative Prof Anton Zeilinger, now the 2022 Nobel laureate in physics. The topics included discussion about the possible change in the Austrian representative after the end of the Presidency of prof Zeilinger of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

- 16.08.2022 Discussion with the President of INGSA Remi Quirion and Vice President Claire Gregg over Zoom. We agreed that INGSA and ESAF have formally similar but partially conceptually different aims: INGSA members advice while ESAF members have mandate to shape the science advice systems. An important barrier to joint advice are the issues of culture and language when giving science advice that often is non-translatable.
- 21.09.2022 The Chairman contributed to the workshop on Rebuilding Research, Education, and Innovation in Ukraine (21–23.09.2022) organized by U.S. National Academies of Science, National Research Council and Royal Society.
- 12.–13.10.2022 The Chairman chaired the annual meeting of European Members of the International Science Council (ISC). It was agreed that the main target for the chairmanship period by the Estonian Academy of Sciences could be cooperation with ESAF towards inspiring and engaging to more actively participate academies of sciences in shaping and structuring the national science advice systems. 26.10.2022 Enric Banda represented ESAF at the launch of the EC Staff Working Document “Supporting and connecting policymaking in the Member States with scientific research”.
- 03.11.2022 The Chairman contributed to the session “Winning from greater inclusion: Relation between diversity and academic culture” of the Triennial Conference of the InterAcademy Partnership and the Worldwide Meeting of the Young Academies (Biosphere 2, Oracle, Arizona, 01–03.11.2022) “Inclusive Excellence: Harnessing knowledge for sustainable societies”  
The main message: science advice should (and can) not be limited to socio-economic aspects only. In crisis times it must be expanded towards policy shaping, including shaping international policy. [The example of Russian invasion into Ukraine was provided as an example.]
- 09.11.2022 The Chairman discussed in the headquarters of the U.S. national academies of sciences options of collaboration towards post-war rebuilding of Ukraine, including possibilities of structuring the national science advice system in Ukraine. Vaughan Turekian and Franklin Carrero-Martinez will share their thoughts with us today.

## **Session 1. The role of science advice in rebuilding the society**

### **Keynote 1. Science in Ukraine: survive, transform, take the lead**

**Dr Oleksiy Kolezhuk** (Head of the Scientific Committee of the National Council of Ukraine on Science and Technology Development)

**Dr Oleksiy Kolezhuk** gave an overview of the main problems in the Ukrainian research system before the beginning of the war as well as of those that have emerged in the course of the war, and he outlined the steps that would need to be taken to rebuild the Ukrainian research system. In a situation where 15% of Ukraine’s scientists have emigrated, 30% have relocated within Ukraine and nearly 15% of the research infrastructure has been destroyed, the combination of all the factors means that about 73% of Ukrainian scientists are currently unable to perform their primary work.

Dr Kolezhuk emphasised the imperative of any support to scientists being able to continue their work. Otherwise, Ukraine will no longer have any scientists with whom to rebuild the

research system after the war ends. It is important to support young scientists, help research groups continue their joint work regardless of whether they are located in Ukraine or have emigrated and support Ukrainian scientists in joining international research networks.

Main challenges before the war:

- Lack of vision and development strategy
- Weak connection between science and the economy
- Problems of governance and policymaking
- Problems with human capital and Research infrastructure

New legislation on science (2016): two new institutions

- *National Research Foundation of Ukraine* (independently governed, competitive grant funding, international experts)
- *National Council on Science and Technology Development* (advisory body for the government, ½ are independently elected scientists, ½ are government managers, head = PM)

Challenges inflicted by the war:

- Direct damage to ~15% of research infrastructure
- Indirect: disruption of research (materials, internet, electricity, etc.)
- Displaced researchers/educators/students (7–15% fled Ukraine, 30% moved inside Ukraine), broken research teams
- Budget cuts, freeze of funding for ongoing projects, job cuts → very limited funding and career opportunities
- Psychological impact (survey: 73% unable to perform research)
- Travel restriction for men 18–60 limits international cooperation

Some suggestions for short-term measures:

- Support of researchers inside Ukraine (~85%) focus on enabling researchers (selected by merit) to remain in science, even if they are limited in their ability to perform research
- Continue supporting Ukrainian researchers outside Ukraine, but emphasize perspectives of their re-integration (e.g., include opportunities to cooperate with Ukrainian teams to preserve research groups and increase funding chances)
- Support integration of UA science into European networks
- Support matchmaking for the international transfer of expertise: development of digital instruments e.g. within the National Electronic System of Scientific and Research Information (URIS)

Recommendations of the G7 Expert Conference (Berlin 25.10.22) summarized the recommendations based on the situation described as following:

- Research and innovation should be embraced as a core pillar of a sustainable economic recovery and future growth of a knowledge-based economy, that harnesses the power of Ukraine’s human capital, and requires a major policy shift and fundamental transformations in this sector. It is thus advisable that the platform/agency coordinating the donor help has a dedicated supervision team for this sector.
- In the short term, donor help in the research and innovation sphere should be focused on retention and development of human capital (e.g., via supporting researchers, embedding them into ongoing activities via non-residential fellowships), deepening global integration of Ukrainian science via support of international research networks and doctoral schools, and strengthening ties between research and business. Longer-term support should flow into new structures and instruments that will define the vector of transformation, such as joint centres of excellence and innovation hubs.

## **Keynote 2. The role and the critical part of science advice in helping in rebuilding societies.**

**Vaughan Turekian** (Executive Director of the Policy and Global Affairs Division US National Academies of Sciences) and **Franklin Carrero-Martinez** (Senior Director, Global Sustainability and Development & Science and Technology for Sustainability Policy and Global Affairs, U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine) gave an overview of what the US Academies of Sciences have done to support Ukraine during the first year of the war. In cooperation with various academies and supporters, the programmes RESET Ukraine<sup>4</sup> (Rebuilding Engineering, Science, Education and Training in Ukraine) and SEED<sup>5</sup> (Scientists, Engineers in Exile and Displacement) have been launched. These programmes have helped find professional occupation for hundreds of scientists who have emigrated from Ukraine and provided other support to them. In cooperation with the European Federation of Academies, ALLEA, a ten-step roadmap, was developed at the beginning of summer 2022 for rebuilding the Ukrainian research system.<sup>6,7</sup>

SEED program “Scientists, Engineers in Exile and Displacement” aims to maintain those scientists, engineers and medical professionals that are in conflict areas, or displaced for whatever reason. SEED will help them to remain connected with their professional identity. Things like doing a short stay in a research lab, facilitating the connection with their Research Institute, connect them with other organizations that provide longer term support.

With the help of this program by December 2022, in total 227 Ukrainian scientists have been placed in Poland through collaboration with the Polish Academy of Sciences and new calls are on the way. New call will be focused on teams of researchers in order to maintain the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/rebuilding-research-education-and-innovation-in-ukraine-a-workshop>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/scientists-and-engineers-in-exile-or-displaced-seed-program>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2022/06/action-steps-for-rebuilding-ukraines-science-research-and-innovation>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.add4088>

integrity of the team. It is understood that in order to make sure that research remains viable all members of the scientific ecosystem need to be included. Lead scientists, but also students and postdocs.

In addition an overview of US National Academies of Sciences – background and activities today was made. The crucial developments of the US National Academies of Sciences happened over the critical changes that took place in US society – civil war in the 1860s when academy was created, in the end of II World War and after the end of Cold War in 1990s. Today the National Academy of Sciences is a self-governing and self-constituted body that receives funds from government when government calls academy to provide advice to Government on a wide variety of topics. Everything from elements of the Apollo program to advice around climate change, agriculture, rebuilding communities in the Gulf of Mexico region, a whole wide range of topics in that space. The National Academy of Sciences in 1999 was asked by the US Department of State to think about the role of science and technology as a driver for US Foreign policy. In addition academy members often go into government and rotate into government as official government advisors.

On the recommendation of academies Secretary of State created the institution Science and Technology Advisor to the Secretary of State. It was noticed that link between the policymaking community, and the science community does require people who are able to serve as translators between the two communities. For example, as important as it is to be able to bring information into the Foreign Ministry, it is as important to go and speak to the science community as a scientist, and explain what foreign policy is about, and where their research is relevant to the issues that foreign policy has to deal with. Translation back and forth, being a trusted broker in those two communities, serves as an important bridge.

### **Remark from the Chair:**

Activities like giving science advice for the Secretary of State Department of US is something we are actually not doing in Europe. This is a good practice from United States and this is something we should work on in the future in Europe.

About keeping scientists in academia in difficult times: We do have experience in the Baltic States as we lost more than half of our scientists. As most of them never returned, never came back to academia, brain potential was lost. To some extent we train the scientists and engineers for the future challenges. So it is important to note that rebuilding a country does not mean rebuilding the old structure, it means providing something qualitatively different. For that international and transcontinental experience is really important.

### **Remark from DE:**

The efforts to rebuild the Ukrainian science are gigantic, because Ukraine is a very big country. And we are trying together with the colleagues from Kyiv, from the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine to put together numbers to have a dimension, or at least some kind of numbers, what this means. Ukraine is also candidate country for the European Union with major changes on the way for science and higher education in Ukraine. None of us has the magic recipe. We need to assemble a group of friends of Ukraine, because this task is very big. I can speak at least for Germany that we are definitely friends of Ukrainian in this. And we need to be very solidary now and in the future with our colleagues from Ukraine.

## **How to advise your government on the challenges of a tilting world order?** **Anne-Greet Keizer** (Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, WRR<sup>8</sup>)

WRR has started a new study that was inflicted by Russian invasion to Ukraine and also other conflicts in the world. The ambition is to broaden the perspective of the government in different way than WRR has usually done.

1. The study will focus on the long term by proposing to the Government different scenarios to make sure policymakers do not just focus on what they have to do today, but also be prepared for what's coming up.
2. The message will be given that when power is in focus it does not mean military is the only field to deal with. Other arenas of power also need to be identified. In the first phase of the project a list of other arenas of power to focus on was drafted like information, food supplies, migration, technology and digital infrastructure.
3. New international developments must be taken into account, that means also to be open to change the dominant traditional perspectives. For example the traditional perspective is that the Netherlands is a small to medium sized country with certain, historically strong allies. As we're dealing with a tilting world order, we might also have to rethink who the allies are or who should be.
4. To address the role every country can fulfil. Part of the WRR project will be to explain to their government what current international developments mean for the Netherlands as a country and what role the Dutch government can play on the international stage.

### **Connection with ESAF:**

- ESAF can have enormous value for national organizations such as WRR. ESAF can be a gateway to relevant knowledge with so many members from different countries. There is an opening for a new way to find relevant knowledge and information, both in sense of literature, but also in the sense of experts from other countries that can really help each other to do the advisory work for our national governments better.
- It is also important that ESAF can be a gateway to other political or societal perspectives. It's so important that we can provide to our governments and to our policymakers all these different national perspectives and we should learn from other perspectives.
- It can also be a source of inspiration for advising our governments on the role they can take in such a conflict. We are science advisors, we advise the government, we don't tell them what to do. But if we present to them different perspectives, different knowledge, then at least they are able to make informed decisions and be active player in international conflicts.

### **Independent expert report: Strategic crisis management in the EU.<sup>9</sup>**

**Dr Maarja Kruusmaa** (member of the EC Group of Chief Scientific Advisors<sup>10</sup>, member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences)

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.wrr.nl/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/bd11a590-70ee-4721-94b7-562c5e03e488\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/bd11a590-70ee-4721-94b7-562c5e03e488_en)



### Main suggestions:

- To re-think the crisis management on a strategic level. To have more horizontal and quick mechanisms to quickly work across the silos to prevent some escalating or if they already hit then how to manage them faster. The ways that crisis were managed in the European Union is still reflecting the good old times where we had a luxury of only handling one crisis at a time, but today the crisis do not come alone and we don't have a luxury to manage them one after another. One isolated problem is not a crisis.
- Some of the crises management recommendations were connected with risk management and resilience. The topic of uncertainty was specifically addressed. How make decisions under high uncertainty. Crises are more and more characterized by a high level of uncertainty at a time when you have to make decisions very quickly. For a decision maker there is a difficult situation, you have incomplete information, you have contradicting information coming in from different sources, but you still have to make decisions, because not making a decision is a decision as well and it also has a cost. Lot of effort was put into recommending how to better share knowledge and how to better explain what this knowledge means. One thing is to have information, the other thing is to present it to the decision makers in the explainable format, easy to understand format without too much additional load for the decision makers.
- There is a chapter about how to communicate with civil society and how to communicate with the private sector. The situation has changed a little bit from the time when foundations of the classical crisis management were laid. The citizen does not want to be simply saved by civil protection, he/she wants to have a say on how she will be saved, when she will be saved. And she/he also wants to be part of the decision making and help out in saving others. Collaboration with civil society and building mutual trust in times of crisis is something we need to put a lot of effort to understand.
- One of the recommendations was that trust just isn't, trust can be actively managed and there are ways to effectively manage trust and to build trust in difficult times with crisis with civilian society.
- There was also lot of discussions about values behind the decisions. One of the recommendations is always when you communicate decisions that you're making as a policymaker, you should also communicate values behind it.

Those recommendations are definitely usable also when there is no crisis.

## **Session 2. Recent developments**

**Science for policy: developments in Finland, Dr Jaakko Kuosmanen** (Finnish Academy of Sciences)

Recent developments in Finnish Science for Policy Ecosystem:

- Science for Policy Platform at the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters operations have been made permanent after Sofi<sup>11</sup> (Science Advice Initiative of Finland) in 2022. At

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<sup>10</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/support-policy-making/scientific-support-eu-policies/group-chief-scientific-advisors\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/support-policy-making/scientific-support-eu-policies/group-chief-scientific-advisors_en)

<sup>11</sup> <https://acadsci.fi/sofi/in-english/>

the moment scaling is in progress. Main activities: Scientific red teaming; Evidence synthesis work; Evidence gap maps; Impact training modules.

- National Foresight Activities: there will be a Government Report on the Future out in early 2023, development work on methods for drafting Ministry Future Reviews are done and piloting of digital expert platforms for foresight work is happening.
- Review of the Strategic Funding Instrument:
  - Instrument was established in 2015 to fund research consortiums contributing to strategic policy topics.
  - Research themes are co-designed.
  - A review was concluded by a group of scientists in September 2022
  - A draft legislation is going through the parliament that commits future governments to €260 million annual R&D budget increases until 2030 (€1,8 billion increase in total).

After the presentation there was lively discussion on the situation in Science Advice in Finland and possible future developments.

### **Session 3. The mandate and the future of ESAF**

**Introduction of European Commission Staff Working Document (SWD): Supporting and connecting policymaking in the Member States with scientific research<sup>12</sup>.**

**Kristian Krieger** (European Commission, Joint Research Centre),

**Jacques Verraes** (European Commission, DG Research & Innovation)

The presentation explained the challenges that brought up the need to create the SWD and types of EU support to address the challenges. Science-for-policy networks that could be used to address the challenges of poor coordination and fragmentation, missing professional competences and good governance of evidence use are:

- Sectoral: EU-Agencies Network for Scientific Advice (EU-ANSA)
- Parliamentary Advice: European Parliamentary Technology Assessment (EPTA) network
- Academies of science: SAPEA, ALLEA, EASAC, and more
- Government science advice: European Science Advisors Forum (ESAF)

**The presentation was followed by a discussion on** how can ESAF, as a network whose members represent bodies that inform national policies with scientific evidence and shape national science advice systems, undertake to address the challenges identified in the SWD and what kind of resources, support, and networks do ESAF and its members need to help address the challenges from the European Commission, within each Member State and from other Member States and ESAF members.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/file/staff-working-document-supporting-connecting-policymaking-member-states-scientific-research\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/file/staff-working-document-supporting-connecting-policymaking-member-states-scientific-research_en)

### **Some of the ideas and arguments expressed during the discussions:**

**Lucian Brujan**, German Academy of Science Leopoldina. The diversity of scientific advice systems in Europe is big and this is great asset. The COVID-19 pandemic showed very clearly that the most essential issue in Scientific Advice is the way how we communicate with our governments. It also taught us that we have a totally new dimension of scientific advice – indirect scientific advice through the media, social media and other public communication channels. The importance of this aspect was something that we as scientific community were completely unprepared. There are very few top scientists who master the communication on digital channels. We must be honest to ourselves as scientific communities, on the limits of what we can and what we cannot do.

And COVID was a perfect example to show the limitations and the possibilities we have with keeping up with old ways of Communication with our governments. We can brief the governments at the meetings, put together different recommendations, but the politicians take their decisions based on information coming from different sources. Recommendations from Academy are only one of these. This is neither good nor bad; it's just how things are. We have also seen that some scientists when they are part of scientific advice considered themselves in the role of political decision makers, which they are not. We have to work with our governments, differently in each country.

My first message is that ESAF is a good opportunity to have a sincere discussions and reflection on the limits of what we can do and what we cannot do. And this is a message to European Commission as well, because I know that your concerns are to make ESAF more impactful. And this is an absolutely legitimate target or aim. The problem is that ESAF is probably the best example of what works well – unity and diversity. From the German point of view we would see ESAF as a forum to maintain exchange on practical issues. But we should extend the practical definition, for example, including communication, citizens' emergency response, including things like limitations of scientific advice. And this practical experience is very important.

My second message is as follows. What we saw during pandemic was quite unexpected – almost all measures that were taken against pandemic were taken locally, the response was national, each EU country on itself. Which is perfectly legitimate if you consider that we in ESAF have first of all obligation towards our national governments. We don't have obligation towards the European Commission, even if the European Commission is the one who created ESAF, but we have obligations towards our democratically elected governments. And we saw that European unity really did not work. The forward from here is closer cooperation in the meaning of talking to each other, between all structures created to support scientific advice at the European level. My proposal is to create a system of trilogies between SAM, ESAF and STOA. This will make the scientific advice ecosystem stronger.

**Anne-Greet Keizer**, Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy. I am one of the few here that was already there in 2016 when we discussed if there should be a network, how it should be called and how we should set it up and in 2017, when we really restarted ESAF. What you have done with the staff working document is actually very much illustrating that we are not in the same position as we are in 2016 or 2017. Especially I think the credit should go to the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors who were just set up then but are now a stable,

influential organization. And the JRC has really done great work of the last years within a very inspiring workshop series.

So, the situation is different than it was in 2016 or 2017. I think that's good news. Because in 2017, we formulated quite ambitious goals, if you connect it to the fact that ESAF wants to be an informal network without a formal budget and everything. A consequence of this informality and the fact that there's no budget is that it's hard work. As these features are the basis of this network, they also make it vulnerable. But if we then put it next to the SWD, I think the good news is that we don't have to do it all as ESAF and do it on our own. I think we can find a new match between what's already happening on the European level, and where ESAF can contribute.

The unique feature of ESAF is the reflection on how we do our work, how we can do it better, how we can learn from each other, because we're all dealing with the same challenges, but in different countries and different systems. The diversity is a very strong feature, but this also makes it hard to get a close network. It is hard work, but it has added value to all the other networks that were mentioned in the presentation. I can also say this on behalf of the Royal Academy of the Netherlands, they are part of many other Academy networks. But those are not focused on science advice. Of course, it's part of what they're doing, but they're doing so much more. What's unique about ESAF is the focus on science advice and a conversation about how do we do this and how can we improve this. I think we should try to find with JRC and SAM the ways how we can connect even better with what's already going on there.

**Prof. Tarmo Soomere** reflected on the discussion by noting that a common platform of the EU and all Member States is that it is of paramount importance nowadays to consider the scientific perspective in the decision-making process.

However, there are several core differences in how science advice functions in the European Commission and in the national governance systems of Member States. Seven such differences have been identified in the ESAF discussions.

While such advice at EU level is normally requested from the European Commission in accordance with the top-down approach and the evidence reports are then occasionally worked out by contributing academy networks, national academies largely provide advice on a proactive basis from bottom-up.

While the advice provided to the European Commission is always public and is usually widely discussed in the academic community all over Europe before it is formulated, the governance system of many Member States operates in a way that the government meetings are usually behind closed doors. For example, the Constitution of Estonia states that government meetings are private unless the government decides otherwise. Among other things, this means that the material submitted for decision-making and its supporting documentation are not necessarily accessible to the public.

While the science advice system of the European Commission follows a specific structure and has been centralised since 2012 when the first Chief Scientific Adviser to the President of the European Commission was nominated, national science advice systems are often of a varied nature and/or operate on ad hoc basis with convened or nominated experts or expert groups, or even based on personal contacts.

While the advice to the European Commission is provided in one of the working languages of the Commission, is homogenised in regard to terminology and is immediately accessible to

virtually all EU members, advice on a national level is provided in the local language, with its own system of meanings and nuances. As it is based on the semiotic system driven by the local cultural background, including expectations of how society may react to it and the level of trust within society to the government institutions in the particular country, it is often untranslatable to even slightly different cultural environments.

Furthermore, while the European Commission almost entirely looks for strategic advice, operational advice is frequently requested from national advice systems. This kind of advice must take into account the capacity of the particular country and therefore is often not transferable.

The officials of the European Commission who decide how to implement the advice are permanent; this is in contrast to policy-makers at national level, who depend on the outcome of the next round of elections. This difference generates extensive variations in how the advice is used in decisions, which should be taken into account in preparing the advice.

Finally, while the officials of the European Commission are accountable to the Commission, the Commissioners and members of the European Parliament are effectively accountable to their nominators or electorates, that is, to the Member States. This feature implies that advice to the European Commission needs to be at least to some extent synchronised with the positions of the Member States. This kind of synchronisation is much less necessary for advice at a national level.

### **Recap of the main points of the discussion:**

The main topic was the ESAF's role in the provision of scientific advice in Europe – the question of whether the structure of the ESAF should be changed to strengthen that role and which changes need to be made to the underlying documents of the ESAF.

Main outcome of the discussion:

- The ESAF's strength is that it is aimed at Europe, while every member operates on the basis of their own national regulations and are nationally driven – this brings diversity into the system.
- ESAF cannot address nor solve all the issues Science for Policy is facing in Europe. ESAF's role and strengths lie elsewhere;
- We understand that the main concern of EC is to have a working science advice system in every country. It is very difficult to achieve it from outside. The system of each country is based on local laws and customs. There are no countries where one person alone is responsible for the Science Advice. This means that EC could support the countries where system is missing or needs strengthening.
- There is no specific need to change ESAF just for the sake of it, but it would be good to open trilogies between ESAF-European Parliament (STOA<sup>13</sup>) and European Commission (SAM, GCSA). STOA and EP have not been involved in these discussions until now.

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<sup>13</sup> Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA)  
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/en/home/highlights>

- One of the clear aims of ESAF is to strengthen the role of scientific advice in our countries. This is where the EC could help – with workshops, public diplomacy activities, different models to be presented to high level political decision, etc.

### **Future of ESAF. Proposal for changes in ESAF Terms of Reference and Membership agreement.**

At the end of the meeting a discussion was held about the future of the ESAF as well as the membership and activity principles set forth in its underlying documents<sup>14</sup>.

Tarmo Soomere made an introduction on changes that are needed in the basic documents of ESAF and reasons behind the changes.

Until today ESAF is a person-based network as it was started. In original formulation, its members should be in a formal and active position to provide science based strategic advice to their democratic governments. The situation has changed and the actual mandates of ESAF members vary quite a lot. Approximately 1/3 of current ESAF members are representing academic community, 1/3 representing science funding organizations who also pay for or organize science advice structures in the country, and 1/3 are person based high governmental officers or experts working in a national policy for science institutions.

He proposed that it would be good to mention in the documents that people who are in position to shape the science advice system in their countries are particularly welcome as ESAF members. With that simple change ESAF could be developed from network of people giving advice, from chief science advisors of countries to the network of persons who represent science advice system as such in the country.

In a following discussion participants said that the network today is not in a position to make any changes yet. Proposal was made to form a small working group to create the new version of Terms of Reference, or at least to create a proposal for the next Annual meeting.

People agreed that changes are needed also in the membership agreement. Maybe there could be different status of member – for example observers etc. The expertise from UK (they are the only ones with a functioning Chief Scientific Adviser system), Switzerland, but also Norway is needed. There are several questions that need to be addressed: what to do with Ukraine, what to do with Moldova, with the Balkan countries, who are in the waiting room for Europe.

The aim of ESAF members is find the ways to improve science advice systems in their own countries and the network should implicitly support that aim.

Also it was noted by participants that most of the science advice today is organized in a distributed manner. It is almost impossible to find someone who singlehandedly shapes the science advice structures or the system or even is responsible for it. More time and discussions are needed to understand how things actually work.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://esaforum.eu/about/>

Regarding the ESAF membership a proposal was made by the chair to write in membership principles is that the membership is open to present and past EU countries and to present and past countries associated with various EU framework programs.

Germany expressed strong position to keep ESAF membership connected with European Union (EU27) and allow other countries enter as observers. This also needs further discussion.

Poland supports the position of Germany and adds that ESAF should play stronger role in supporting the development and strengthening of science advice systems in countries where the systems are not in place yet.

EC representative stressed that the aim of the EU is to have high quality legislation supported by scientific evidence within European Union and this is the reason why the EC supports the development of science advice systems in the EU countries. If ESAF wants to involve other countries, then the focus will be elsewhere.

The Chair responds that from involving potential member states the EU will benefit in the future. As the membership agreement is based on out-dated definition of European Research Area, changes are needed anyway.

### **Decisions are the following:**

- The ESAF's membership principles must be changed so that all the democratic European countries can be represented in the ESAF (including Switzerland, Norway, Ukraine and the United Kingdom).
- As the definition of European Research Area has changed since the creation of ESAF Membership Agreement, it was decided to remove the reference to European Research Area. As a consequence the membership principle No 3 will change from "ESAF membership is open to non-EU countries which are associated countries of the European Research Area" to „ESAF membership is open to non-EU countries“
- For the purpose of making these changes as well as other changes in the underlying documents, a work group was formed, with representatives from Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Denmark and Slovenia. The working group will develop a document that will join two documents: "Terms of Reference" and "Membership of ESAF". The working group will send the proposal of changes to the network well before the next Annual Meeting. The proposal for changes will be further discussed and approved at the next Annual Meeting.

### **Proposal for next ESAF Annual meeting in Timișoara**

At the end of the meeting professor Octavian Mădălin Bunoiu made an offer to host next ESAF meeting in the premises of West University of Timișoara, Romania. The offer was gratefully accepted. ESAF next Annual meeting will take place in September 2023.

*Note: The agreed dates are 11–12 September.*