

Trans-European on-line seminar on science-based policy advice in agriculture, food, climate and environment

Time: 16 – 17 March 2021 – noon to noon

Venue: ON-LINE seminar

Registration: <https://events.au.dk/seminaronpolicysupportmarch2021>

Website: dca.au.dk/en

European governments are facing critical decisions on agriculture, food, climate and environment. Science-based policy advice is in high demand, but varies across Europe. The aim of the first trans-European seminar in this area is to facilitate the exchange of experiences, challenges and best practices as to provide science-based policy advice.

Governments in Europe have adopted ambitious goals on reducing greenhouse gasses and environmental pressure from agriculture and food production and on improving healthy diets. At the same time, an efficient and competitive agricultural sector is essential for rural economy and future food supply.

Decisions are complicated and sometimes conflicting. Agriculture, food, climate and environment are debated issues on both political and public agendas in Europe. In this situation, science-based policy advice is in high demand, but often also subject of heated debates.

Diversity in the organization of science-based policy advice

The term “Science-based policy advice” covers a variety of arrangements with the objective of providing political decision makers and their public servants with updated, verifiable and evidence based information and advice on issues relevant for regulation and policy making.

The organization, funding and responsibility for providing science-based policy advice differs between countries and across subject areas/sectors. In some countries, the organization and long term funding of institutions responsible for providing scientific evidence in specific policy relevant areas is under pressure.

Regardless of the type of organisation, science policy advice should be based on a number of principles to ensure quality and trustworthiness. Thus, the principles of independence of science from the actual decision makers and transparency as regards the advice given and its scientific basis are key to the credibility. Other principles regard the scientific rigour and clear distinction between evidence and normative claims as well as consistency and timing of the advice given. While the weight given to different principles may vary with different settings, they are necessary preconditions for discussing the operational aspects of science policy advice and when exchanging experiences and developing best practices.

Forum for exchange of experiences, challenges and best practices

There is a need for a forum for the providers of science-based policy advice in the area of agriculture, food, climate and environment. The forum should facilitate exchange of information, experiences and challenges and provide inspiration for the future development of best practices with the aim of strengthening evidence-based policy formulation across Europe. On this background, Aarhus University together with

ESAF (European Science Advisors Forum) invites to the first trans-European seminar in this field as a webinar on 16 – 17 March 2021.

The expected outcomes of the workshop will be:

- Exchange of information of national practices: good experiences, mutual learning in areas of organization, good processes vis-à-vis basic principles including practices for quality assurance, consistency of advice over time, recruitment and training
- Building stronger networks among peers and organizations across Europe
- Ideas for continued collaboration between interested institutions

PROGRAMME

16 March 2021

12:45 Web test and registration

13:00 – 13:30 OPENING SESSION

- Welcome by Aarhus University: *Dean Eskild Holm Nielsen, Faculty of Technical Sciences.*
- Welcome by ESAF: *Tarmo Soomere, ESAF Chair, President of the Estonian Academy of Sciences.*
- Welcome by Head of Unit *Renzo Tomellini, Scientific Advice Mechanism, DG Research & Innovation, European Commission*
- Presentation of the idea behind the seminar and today's programme. *Director Niels Halberg, Danish Centre for Food and Agriculture, Aarhus University*

14:00 – 15:30 SESSION 1: PRINCIPLES AND ORGANISATIONS

Principles for science-based policy advice in the area of agriculture, food, climate and environment and examples of organization, funding and linkages between research and policy in participating countries

- Principles of Science Policy Advice and their Application in Different Organizational Settings: Advantages and Challenges for Evidence-Informed Policy Approaches.
Prof. David Budtz Pedersen, Aalborg University, Denmark
- From research to policy: how to provide scientific insights to policy makers dealing with controversial issues.
Prof. Frank O'Mara, Director of Research, Teagasc, Ireland
- Motives and challenges for engaging in science-based policy advice in modern knowledge institutions.
Dr. Patrick Flammarion, Deputy Director General in charge of Expertise and Public Policy Support, INRAE, France
- Motives and challenges for engaging in science-based policy advice in modern knowledge institutions.
Dr. J.A. (Bram) de Vos, Managing Director, Environmental Sciences Group, Wageningen University & Research, Netherlands

- The Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) of the EC: its principles and working practices.
Head of Unit Renzo Tomellini, Scientific Advice Mechanism, DG Research & Innovation, European Commission

Group session with input from participants on the principles, structure and function of science-based policy advice in their country/institution, and discussions of weaknesses, advantages and challenges. Rapporteurs in each group to take note of national practices, differences, advantages and challenges for day 2.

15:30 – 15:45 Coffee break

15:45 – 17:00 SESSION 2: PROCEDURES AND METHODS

**Procedures and working methods for science-based policy advice in participating countries/institutions:
What are the critical challenges and the good experiences?**

- Organization of science-based policy advice in a sectoral research institution, how to ensure integrity, independence and consistency over time.
Dr. Pasi Rikkinen, Principal Scientist, LUKE, Finland
- Guiding scientific policy advice to ensure integrity and independence.
Dr. Lieve Herman, President of the Commission of Scientific Integrity at the Flemish Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO), Belgium
- Scientifically independent & close to politics – experiences of a federal research institute concerning communication, workflows, success factors and remaining challenges at the science-policy interface.
Stefan Lange, Research Director of Thünen Institute – Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries, Germany
- Ensuring quality, integrity and transparency in science-based policy advice via ISO9001 certified quality assurance system.
Director Hanne Bach, Danish Centre for Environment and Climate, Aarhus University, Denmark

Group session with input from participants on critical challenges and good experiences in relation to procedures and working methods, e.g. receiving tasks, delivering advice, quality assurance, collaboration with stakeholders, keeping the arms-length principle, ensuring continuity and consistency of advice over time, managing differences in scientific opinions. Rapporteurs in each group to take notes of critical challenges and good experiences for day 2

17:00 END OF DAY 1

17 March 2021

9:00 – 10:30 SESSION 3: CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL LEARNINGS

Characteristics for different national/institutional structures and practices: What are the challenges, and what are the successes?

Learnings from day 1: Rapporteurs from group sessions report the most important points from the discussions from day 1

Comments from the receivers: A panel of officials from ministries and agencies will give general requirements to science policy advice for efficient and evidence based policymaking and comment on the issues raised in the group discussions.

Panel of receivers of policy advice:

Kurt Nielsen, Vice Dean, Faculty of Technical Sciences, Aarhus University, Denmark (discussion moderator)

Kirsi-Marja Lonkila, Senior Specialist, Research & Development at Ministry of the Environment of Finland

Sonja Canger, Head of Division, Danish Agricultural Agency, Denmark

Patricia De Clercq, Secretary General, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Government of Flanders

More panel members to be confirmed

Plenum discussion on the possibilities for cross-institutional learnings

10:30 – 10:45 Coffee break

10:45 - 11:45 SESSION 4: PURPOSE AND POTENTIALS FOR FUTURE COLLABORATION

Potentials for direct collaboration between institutions in policy advice (Exchange of experience, formulating best practice, peer reviews, second opinions, exchange of staff, ...)

Discussion openers:

- Creating overview of institutions, types, processes and quality assurance schemes in European science policy advice.
Speaker to be confirmed
- Ideas for continued trans-European collaboration in science policy advice, beyond the classical scientific collaboration.
Director Niels Halberg, Danish Centre for Food and Agriculture, Aarhus University

Group discussion on the potentials for increased collaboration

11:45 - 12:00 FEEDBACK AND POSSIBLE FUTURE OF A NETWORK

Feedback from participants on the way forward and usefulness of a continuation of the network and a second workshop.

12:00 CLOSING OF THE SEMINAR

Additional information

Expected participants

Representatives of organizations - as well as scientists in their own capacity - involved in providing science based policy advice within these thematic areas from across Europe. Furthermore, representatives from the European Science Advisors Forum (ESAF) and the EC Science Advice Mechanism (SAM) will attend.

Organisers

The workshop is a joint initiative of the [Danish Centre for Food and Agriculture](#) (DCA) and [Danish Centre for Environment and Energy](#) (DCE) at Aarhus University together with the [European Science Advisors Forum](#) (ESAF).

The DCA/DCE are responsible for coordinating the science-based policy advice under a contract with the Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark, thus providing approximately 350 specific items of advice annually.

ESAF is committed to sharing relevant information, enhancing the exchange of best practices and building sustainable capacity and capability across a range of different national science advisory organizations and systems in Europe, and this workshop will be the first event focusing on a specific thematic area.

Venue

The seminar will take place on-line. A web link will be sent to registered participants shortly before the seminar. Participation without registration is not possible.

Registration

If you wish to join the seminar, please register at <https://events.au.dk/seminaronpolicysupportmarch2021>

Registration is free and without any obligations.