



OECD *GLOBAL SCIENCE FORUM*
**SCIENTIFIC ADVICE FOR POLICYMAKING :
LESSONS LEARNED FROM RECENT CRISES**

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BACKGROUND

- The Global Science Forum (GSF) of the OECD is a venue dedicated to international science policy.
- Project on scientific advice proposed at a GSF meeting in Stockholm (October 2012), following the conviction of scientists in connection with the L'Aquila earthquake
- Project approved in spring 2013 with two focuses:
 1. Organisation and procedure of scientific advice, interface between science and policy
 2. Potential responsibility and liability of scientific advisers and of advisory structures
- Expert Groups composed of over 25 experts from 16 countries and international organisations, co-chaired by:
 - Track 1: Japan and the Netherlands
 - Track 2: Germany and Italy



PROJECT OUTLINE

- Interviews with over 60 advisory experts, legal experts and decision-makers from 22 countries and international organisations
- Review of the literature and of existing frameworks and ToRs
- Tokyo workshop (October 2013)
 - Focusing on the diversity of arrangements and practices
- Berlin workshop (February 2014)
 - Focusing on responsibility and liability of scientific advisers
- Final report expected early 2015



Advisory Systems

- Different scientific advisory structures coexist in many countries, with different role :
 - Science Policy advisory structures
 - Permanent (or ad hoc) scientific/technical advisory structures
 - Academic institutions
 - Individual scientific advisors and counsellors
- Many countries do not have transparent or clearly defined advisory structures or procedures and still rely on ad hoc mechanisms
- International organisations or dedicated structures play an increasing role in scientific advice on global/complex issues



Advisory Processes

- Framing the question:
 - Involve all key stakeholders; define output (assessments, recommendations, options...)
- Selecting the advisors:
 - Minimize conflicts of interest
 - Open and transparent selection procedures
 - Independence of experts and of the advisory body by appropriate statutes
 - Need for growing cooperation between multiple disciplines
- Producing the advice:
 - Assessment and clear communication of uncertainties
 - Recording minority views
- Communicating and using the advice:
 - Clear processes and responsibilities for communication to decision-makers and to the public
- Principles/guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of scientists are needed



Providing Advice in Crisis Situations

Specific challenges:

- Interdisciplinary nature.
- Scientific output and advice from many different sources (official and non-official, solicited and unsolicited).
- Communicating to the decision-makers and to the public when uncertainties are high.
- Clarifying responsibilities (who is in charge of what ?).
- International coordination and coherence.



Providing Advice in Crisis Situations

- **Established processes** and ideally **permanent structures** are essential.
- Identification of a **mandated and respected science institution or spokesperson**, who can deliver authoritative advice to decision-making bodies, is important.
- Need to have **a predefined communication strategy** that identifies responsibilities.
- International coordination of scientific advice is a particular challenge in responding to major crises. **Trans-national networks of national advisory bodies** could facilitate effective information exchange and coordination.

Responsibility and Potential Liabilities

- There is a danger that, in the light of recent cases and in the face of growing risks of prosecution, scientists will change their behavior.
- Challenges:
 - Different potential liability exposure for different advisory structures.
 - Different legal responsibilities for individual experts and advisory structures (institutional and personal responsibilities);
 - Differences between civil and penal liability.
 - Different rules and protection between experts (different status), and between institutions (different statutes).
 - Different laws (national and international).
 - Possible confusion of the responsibilities when the boundaries between advisory and decision-making processes are unclear.

Responsibility and Potential Liabilities

- Steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of litigation:
 - The legal liabilities and risks of all advisory bodies and individuals serving on those bodies should be **clearly recorded and understood**.
 - **Clear procedures and guidelines** for the operation of advisory bodies should be developed.
 - Procedures for declaring and dealing with **conflicts of interest** should be implemented.
 - Individuals serving on bodies should receive **training in communication skills**.
 - There should be a clear understanding of the responsibilities of the experts (due process) and that of the decision-makers.



Emerging Issues (1)

- International Dimension
 - Increasing number of global issues that require scientific advice, but specific challenges associated with global issues: complexity, multi-disciplinarity, international policy processes...
 - Challenges for scientific advice at international level:
 - Need for political, scientific and public legitimacy
 - Need for validation processes
 - Need to evaluate the impact of the advice
 - On issues that require a concerted global effort, a better coordination of science advisory structures across different scales (local-global) may assist concerted policy actions.



Emerging Issues (2)

- Growing Involvement of Civil Society
 - Scientific expertise is increasingly complemented by representatives from civil society in scientific advisory structures, often at the request of the decision-makers.
 - The rapid development of ICT and social media has opened up exciting new possibilities (and challenges) for soliciting and disseminating scientific views.
 - Issues raised by such involvement:
 - Responsibilities (between scientists and non-scientists; between advisory bodies and decision-makers; of the scientific advisory bodies on non-scientific issues)
 - Transparency (stakeholder and public consultation)
 - Quality (what is the value of “non-scientific” advice ?)
 - Public reporting and communication