



European Risk Forum Conference

In collaboration with the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

‘Scientific Integrity, Public Policy, and Better Regulation’

**Brussels
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Main Messages

1. One of the principal objectives of the EU’s Better Regulation Strategy is to strengthen the role that evidence plays in informing decisions, at all stages of the policy cycle.
2. When making decisions about the best way to manage risks to human health, public safety, and the environment, one of the EU’s most important policy domains, scientific evidence provides decision-makers with unique insights.
3. Unlike opinions or values, scientific evidence enables the EU’s institutions to identify the existence of hazards and their causes; to determine which hazards pose the greatest risks; to reduce uncertainties; to characterise risks; and, because it is able to identify the potential benefits of government action, to allocate resources rationally.
4. Public policy interventions based on poor quality scientific evidence are highly likely to result in regulatory failure, leading to welfare losses, reduced protection for citizens and the environment, weakened incentives to innovate, and an erosion of trust in government.
5. Despite major improvements over the past two decades, significant weaknesses remain in the way in which the EU institutions collect and use scientific evidence to assess and manage risks. Outcomes are inconsistent and unpredictable on too many occasions; scientific assessments do not always meet global standards of excellence; and too much of the evidence used by regulators fails to satisfy the standards of the “scientific method”.
6. Action is needed to complete the process of reform, so as to ensure that decisions are based on the best available science, and to protect the integrity and quality of the scientific evidence used to inform decision-making.
7. Delivering reforms that ensure legislative and regulatory decisions are based on the best available science is a natural complement to the EU’s Better Regulation Strategy. It is one of the most important ways of ensuring high standards of protection for Europe’s people and environment, whilst at the same time helping to stimulate risk-takers to invest in the innovations needed to restore growth and prosperity.
8. Legislative and regulatory decisions based on the best available science and expert assessment of risk establish a context within which businesses can invest effectively in the innovative products, processes and services needed to up-grade productivity and to create a sustainable future.

9. The following reforms will, if implemented, trigger substantive improvements in the way in which the EU's institutions use the best available science to guide decisions throughout the policy cycle:
- Collectively the EU institutions should, through a revision of the Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making, make a formal commitment to make and implement laws on the basis of high quality evidence, using globally-accepted standards of regulatory management and good administration.
 - Building on its support for research integrity, the Council of EU ministers should affirm the requirement to use the best available science as the pre-eminent input to inform and guide risk management decisions to protect health, safety, and the environment, by, for instance, adopting dedicated Conclusions. As well as recognising the unique characteristics of scientific evidence, the Council should highlight the importance for innovation of using the best available science to guide risk management decisions.
 - In response to this political commitment, the European Commission should take all necessary steps to ensure the integrity and quality of scientific evidence used to inform decisions at all stages of the policy cycle. These should include the following reforms:
 - A central oversight body with responsibility for ensuring the effective functioning of the entire scientific advisory system should be set up. It includes overseeing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of scientific evidence and advice used to guide and inform decision-making in all parts of the EU's executive government, including agencies. It should be adequately staffed with relevant experts and be given strong powers to ensure compliance with common policies and guidelines by all directorates and agencies. It must, moreover, be independent of the JRC, EU agencies, and policy DGs;
 - A new Commission decision should be developed and adopted setting minimum standards for the quality, collection, validation, and use of scientific evidence that all directorates and agencies must respect. These standards should be based on global best practices;
 - Technical guidance, designed to support the integrity and quality of scientific evidence, should be drawn up by eminent scientists and adopted by the Commission. To begin with, guidance, and supporting principles, should deal with the following:
 - Characteristics of best available science;
 - Design and use of Systematic Evidence Reviews;
 - Nature and use of epidemiological evidence;
 - Procedures for managing conflicts of interest, and their resultant biases, when selecting scientific experts.