



**Deputy Director-General Joanna Drake**

**Erasmus University Rotterdam's Strategy Days**  
**21 March 2024, 10.00-11.00**  
**Palais des Académies, Rue Ducale 1, 1000 Brussels**  
Fondation Universitaire, 11 Rue d'Egmont, 1000 Bruxelles.

## **Speaking points**

### **Introduction**

- It is a pleasure to be here today at the Erasmus University Rotterdam's Strategy Days to reflect with you on how and why universities like yours can have an impact on, and engage with, policy and society in Europe.
- I would like to thank in particular the Rector Prof Annelien Bredenoord for the invitation, and for her active engagement in informing and shaping EU R&I policy through her membership of our Horizon Europe High Level Group.

### **Importance of science for policy**

- I don't need to convince this audience of the importance of science for policy and scientific advice.
- If we want to address the great challenges we are confronted with –from the preservation of our European democracies to the protection of our planet and environment, or a better health for everyone, it is essential that scientific evidence and advice reach policy makers in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Science plays a fundamental role at the heart of democratic policymaking

- As the world grows more complex, European societies are increasingly called upon to make informed choices on topics such as climate change, energy security, infectious diseases, food supply etc.
- But for research and innovation to deliver benefits to citizens, scientific knowledge and results should be shared beyond academic and research communities.
  - They should be part of wider public debates and find their place at the heart of policy making.
  - Good quality, accurate and reliable science communication therefore has a key role to play in engaging citizens, policymakers and society as a whole.
  - This supports evidence informed policies and a broader societal debate around science and technology.
  - And in this way, it can help address public concerns and enhance trust to both science and democratic governance.
- We, at the European Commission, have been pleased to see Science for Policy gaining broad support both among Member States and internationally, for example with the G20 and the UN taking steps in discussing future directions.
- The European Commission is already leading bringing scientific evidence to policy makers through instruments such as the Scientific Advice Mechanism and the Joint Research Center (JRC).
- We also have a “Feedback to Policy” mechanism in place to ensure that EU-funded research results are fed back into EU policymaking processes.
- But as show in our 2022 Staff Working Document on “Supporting and connecting policymaking in the Member States with scientific research”, the Science for policy ecosystem in Europe is still fragmented, and more can be done to strengthen it.
- In recent years we have worked hard to put science for policy on the political map, and I am delighted to see it featuring prominently among the interests and political priorities of past, present, and future Council Presidencies.

- This was clearly recognized in the recent Council Conclusions on “Strengthening the role and impact of research and innovation in the policymaking process in the Union” adopted last December during the Spanish Presidency.
- The current Belgian Presidency is continuing the momentum by organizing on 6-7 May a Conference on evidence-informed policymaking, with a specific focus on the role of multidisciplinary research and social and human sciences in addressing complex societal challenges.
- The Commission is now actively working with Member States to promote the development of a European Science for Policy ecosystem; aiming to promote cooperation between scientific communities and policymakers in various policy domains within the context of the European Research Area.

### **RTD work on the S4P ecosystem**

- So how can we strengthen and support Science for Policy in Europe?
- Through coordinated action on all relevant fronts, addressing both the demand and supply of science for policy.
- What is currently missing, is **a coherent policy on Science for Policy**.
- If we are to fully realize the benefits of scientific knowledge and expertise in addressing our societal challenges, we need to create the appropriate channels.
- It is clear that the current setup of the R&I system doesn't make this policy engagement easy. From RTD side, we are working on better aligning R&I policy with science for policy.
- We need to enable the research sector to effectively engage with policymaking for the betterment of society:
  - By continuing supporting excellent science, as it is the bedrock of scientific advice and science for policy.

- By recognizing that societal goals are at the core of the scientific endeavour.
  - By ensuring the highest ethical standards in research, its transparency and trustworthiness.
  - By valuing and rewarding policy engagement, not just knowledge production for its own sake.
  - By creating clear career paths and opportunities for those researchers who have the potential and inclination to engage with policymaking.
  - By continuing engaging with our counterparts in the national administrations to co-create this change
- In short, we need to update the social contract between science and society, and rethink our R&I system to ensure we fully deliver the societal benefits of scientific research.
  - We have been working with Member States and stakeholders through the European Research Area Committee (ERAC) and the ERA Forum, developing a proposal for an ERA Policy Action on 'Supporting the uptake of science into policymaking through the establishment of a European Science for Policy ecosystem'.
  - Additionally, we plan to engage in and advocate for the regular exchange of best practices among Member States on science advice through Mutual Learning Exercises utilising the Policy Support Facility;
  - We envision this ecosystem as a complex of organisational structures with entities, processes, capacities and networks that interact to support the mobilisation, acquisition, synthesis, translation, presentation, and application of scientific knowledge in policymaking processes.

### **Role of Universities in developing the S4P ecosystem**

- We invite you to play an active role in the development of the S4P Code of Practice that my services are initiating.
- Soon we will issue a call for expression of interest to establish a Community of Practice aimed at co-creating the Code with us.

## **Conclusion**

- Dear friends, our journey towards building better science for policy ecosystems in Europe is both ambitious and necessary.
- It requires unwavering commitment, collaboration, and innovation, and I very much look forward to embark upon it with you all.
- Together, we will create a future where science is not just a source of knowledge but a powerful catalyst for positive change in our societies and the world.