INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THE SECOND REPORT:

Work Programme 2008

Rapporteur: Andy Stirling, 26th June 2007

Timetable and Transparency

The attached paper is the second of a series of Annual Reports from the independent European Commission (EC) Science in Society Advisory Group (SiSAG). It offers advice concerning emerging directions and specific initiatives for ‘science in society’ research and actions under the EC Seventh Framework Programme. The requirements of the EC in this regard are for a single SiSAG Report addressing each annual Work Programme.

Under the process adopted in the two annual cycles completed thus far, timetabling constraints have meant that SiSAG Reports have been drafted in parallel with the production of the Work Programme on which they are advising. This presents certain challenges for timetabling and transparency, in that the evolving Work Programme typically addresses by the time of its publication a large number of points raised in the draft SiSAG Report. If the final SiSAG Report were amended to recognise these changes, then it would effectively be a new and different Report, and risk concealing or misrepresenting the advisory process. Yet simply to publish the Report without qualification, risks confusion concerning over the extent to which points raised have already been addressed in the Work Programme.

For future Reports, then, SiSAG has decided to adopt a process that will avoid this dilemma. Drafting of the Work Programme will take place as before on the basis of the circulation of a Concept Note for comment and discussion among the Group. But this will occur at an earlier stage in the process, so that SiSAG’s Report can include full reflection on those aspects of its advice that have (and have not) been adopted – together with the associated reasons. This should also allow for more considered reflection of broader and longer-term strategic issues of a kind that we hope will be useful to EC staff in preparing subsequent Programmes.

For the cycle of consultation leading up to the publication of the 2009 Work Programme, therefore, a Concept Note prepared by EC staff will be discussed at the next SiSAG meeting on 22-3rd November 2007. Members will then circulate further individual detailed comments that will be compiled as in previous years and taken into account drafting over the early part of 2008. The second SiSAG meeting of the cycle will then be held in spring 2008 and focus on discussion of more strategic and longer-term issues as informed by the process.

1 For the 2008 Work Programme, a Concept Paper was circulated on 21st March 2007 and discussed at the Advisory Group meeting of 27-28 March. Following a series of individual contributions circulated by email, the draft Advisory Group Report was produced on 29th May 2007. The 2008 Work Programme itself (including many points drawn from the individual contributions) was circulated on 31st May 2007 and discussed at the Advisory Group meeting on 4-5th June 2007. A final Report is required from the Advisory Group by late June.
thus far. In this way, SiSAG’s Third Report will be able to reflect broader and deeper discussions, and benefit from a realistic period for review by members before submission.

**Short Commentary on the Second Report**

Unfortunately, the schedule for the preparation of the attached Second Report on the 2008 Science in Society Work Programme does not allow time for redrafting to take full account of the broader issues that have (and have not) been addressed in the draft Work Programme – nor for members to review and approve this in advance of submission Accordingly, the present introductory note will end by summarising a few key points arising in reflections on this issue in SiSAG at our final meeting before submission of our Second Report.

The first and most important point to make, is to express the strong appreciation of the Group for the strenuous efforts that have evidently been made by EC staff in addressing under pressing conditions so many of the specific points that we raise. The draft 2008 Work Programme that we have now been able to review represents in many respects a significant improvement over the Concept Note to which the attached Report is primarily a response. This said, it should be clarified that the discussion in the attached Second Report still remains – in our view – highly relevant. A number of the areas that we consider to be relatively neglected have been partly addressed by activities and initiatives in the draft 2008 Work Programme. But none of these have been finally resolved. And there remain a variety of areas, which we feel remain to be addressed in the requisite substance. We therefore stand by the broader strategic questions and criticisms raised in the attached Second Report.

One specific issue that we now feel in a position to further clarify, concerns the nature of the distinction between what we refer to (in shorthand) in our Report as ‘one way’ and ‘two way’ communication of science. This should not be taken to imply that communications activities oriented towards enhancing public understanding of science are necessarily always ‘one way’ in nature. Reciprocal dialogue is, of course, an important part of any effective educational discourse of this kind. Nor does this mean that the format of initiatives (for instance) in the printed press or broadcast media should be held necessarily to display an exclusively ‘one-way’ structure. Considered in context and over time, such channels form just a part of wider societal discourses and involve a number of feedback processes.

The key issue referred to in the ‘one way’ / ‘two way’ shorthand is therefore less about the nature of information exchange, as about the underlying power relationships. Attention is not so much on the communication processes themselves, as on their rationales, motivations and the issues on which they focus. The response should thus not simply be to substitute terms like ‘dialogue’ or ‘interaction’ (instead of ‘two way communication’). These simply reproduce the same misleading implication. The resolution lies in a rather different contrast. This relates in each case to communication (both one- and two-way): on the one hand over dissemination and understandings of the outputs of science and; on the other, over the driving purposes and framing assumptions that comprise the inputs to science. It is in this more precisely-specified respect that we continue to find – despite best efforts – a mismatch in the activities set out in the Work Programme. In more detailed terms, the major challenge in this regard, is to develop operational ideas for more symmetrical attention to communication activities under Action Line 3 that reflect the governance issues that are currently quite well addressed under Action Line 1.

A further important strategic point that emerged during our most recent discussions and which is not fully reflected in the attached Second Report, concerns contrasting
understandings of the possible value of adopting gender mainstreaming principles not just as a focus of research, but in the appraisal and evaluation of research initiatives in the course of the administration of the Science in Society Programme itself. The background to this, is that criteria of this kind that were reportedly widely applied under Framework Programme 6, have apparently subsequently been dropped as a requirement under Framework Programme 7. The question is therefore over the extent to which selective application of evaluative procedures concerning gender balance in specific activities of the Science in Society Programme might serve positively to promote such practices more widely? In this regard, however, there is a concern that the existing sometimes favourable gender balance in this specific area (when compared with other areas of EC research) might actually lead to perverse outcomes. Where (as is sometimes – unusually – the case in this area) it is men who are proportionally under-represented, the consequence of such gender mainstreaming might be the encouragement of involvement of men rather than women. Discussions on this point highlighted the need for more substantive research evidence on whether (or to what extent) this kind of perverse outcome might be identified in other broadly comparable areas. The present focus on medical research under Action Line 2 and as a cross-thematic area under Action Line 1, might offer the basis for a further additional research question on these lines.

A further point that emerged during discussion on this same gender mainstreaming issue is the need to ensure that initiatives in this area pay effective attention to the full range of possible mechanisms underlying gender imbalances in particular disciplines. Research in other areas opens the possible interpretation that gender imbalances in mid and later career may partly, or at least potentially, relate to the prior constraining of later (more fine-grain) career choices by non-discipline-specific factors at an earlier stage in the biographies of young people. These might include, for instance, alternative prioritisations of aims like making money, becoming famous or effecting social, political or environmental change. If so, it may be that at least some discipline-specific gender imbalances reflect underlying and more general asymmetries at these earlier stages. The Programme should therefore encourage gender research focused on disciplinary structures, also to engage with the wider literature on choices made in earlier education.

Finally there is the issue of research governance at the level of the university. Discussions within the Group concerning security-focused research highlighted the need to complement an existing predominant focus on exclusively technological framings and economic appraisals of the issues in question. The Group formed the view on hearing from officials concerned with the design of research in these areas that wider social and ethical perspectives and issues tend to be neglected. In this, as in other fields, then, there may be an important role to play for more engaged forms of research governance procedures responsible for setting university-specific science agendas. Indeed, the field of security, intelligence and surveillance may be an additional area in which co-operative research designs of a kind discussed elsewhere in the Report, might offer an effective instrument. One specific topic on which this comes to the fore is discussed under Action Line 4 (in relation to which no other comments are made in our Second Report). This concerns the structuring activity on ‘social impact assessment of research’. This is particularly salient with respect to research in the broad field of security, but (in whatever area it is applied) itself offers a further specific focus for the pursuit of co-operative research initiatives.
INTRODUCTION: Background to the Advisory Group Process

This is the second of a series of Annual Reports offering independent commentary on emerging directions for ‘science in society’ research and actions under the European Commission’s Seventh Framework Programme (2007-13). It is informed by individual contributions and group discussions among eighteen members of the European Commission ‘Science in Society Advisory Group’ (SiSAG). Members bring a range of professional experience from twelve European countries, all with expertise in fields related to ‘science in society’. The Advisory Group is chaired by Professor Mariachiara Tallacchini.

The SiSAG met twice in the first half of 2007 to discuss the Work Programme and to prepare the Draft Report. In both meetings officials from other DGs were invited to give a presentation on issues highly relevant from the Science and Society perspective, namely Health, Energy, Nanotechnology, and Security; all sectors where cross-thematic actions have already been or will be planned in FP7. The intention of the group was that of starting a systematic exploration of concrete ways to connect SiS to each of these topics. During the 3rd meeting (27-28 March 2007) the SiSAG met with officials from the DG Research Directorates responsible for health, energy, and nanotechnology. The first part of the 4th meeting of the Advisory Group was devoted to a presentation by officials from DG Enterprise and DG Research on the issue of Security. All the discussions were very informative and interesting and the SiSAG wishes to express its appreciation for the opportunity to become more familiar with the activities related to these issues. The SiSAG wants especially to express gratitude to all the EC officials who agreed to participate. A note on these discussion on security, health, energy and nanotechnology is included in a separate annex to this report.

The discussion in this draft Second Report is informed by two principal documents. The first is the 2007 Work Programme, which (though compressed timetables meant it had to be adopted in advance) does respond to a number of issues raised in discussions leading up to our First Report of 2006. The second is the Concept Note prepared by Commission staff in 2007 in advance of the upcoming 2008 Work Programme. It is on this latter Concept Note that our present discussion focuses most directly. We are pleased that our deliberations this year have taken place at an earlier stage in the preparation of this Work Programme than was the case last time. We hope this allows more time for our comments and recommendations.

2 Details of the Group and its membership may be obtained at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=eag
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=Site.FP7DetailsCallPage&call_id=33
4 A. Stirling, EC Framework Programme 7 - Science in Society Advisory Group: First Report, 29th November 2007. Available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=eag
5 As embodied in the European Commission Concept Paper entitled ‘A Science in Society perspective at the core of EU and Member States’ research policies’ (an internal draft working document circulated to members 21st March 2007).
6 It is expected that this will be published in November 2007 and will be available at:
7 Initial discussions took place at the first meeting of 2007 (held on 27-8 March), at which the Group also heard presentations from Commission officials and external advisors to the Commission, Professors Dominique Pestre and Pierre Papon. Following this, members
to be addressed. In this, we would like to thank staff in Directorate L of DG Research (science, economy and society) for their invaluable assistance in undertaking our task.

Major themes arising in the individual contributions and group discussions of the Advisory Group are summarised in the four following sections. These concern, first, general issues arising in the Programme as a whole. We then turn to specific points under each of the ‘action lines’ of the Work Programme where these occur. Action Line One concerns the more dynamic governance of the science and society relationship. Action Line Two highlights measures for strengthening potential and broadening horizons. Action Line Three is headed science and society communicate. A fourth Action Line covers strategic activities, but the Group has no particular comment on this area. Discussion in each case focuses most closely on areas of broad agreement among the Group (with attention only where necessary to any residual points of disagreement). Key points are highlighted in bold italicised text.
GENERAL COMMENTS on the Developing Work Programme

In our first report, the Advisory Group raised strong concerns over what we described as a serious mismatch between rhetoric and substance. We identified that prominent declarations of support for more effective symmetrical two-way communication between science and wider civil society (addressing the framing of research), were accompanied by a persistent emphasis on essentially one-way communication (addressing dissemination) in the more detailed research initiatives and wider activities outlined in the work programme itself. The broad thrust of our analysis and concerns were shared in other reports produced over the same period by a number of parallel high-level European Commission advisory processes and exercises, including the Gover’Science Workshop 8 and the Expert Groups on ‘Science and Governance’ 9 and ‘Historical Perspectives on Science, Society and the Political’ 10.

In this regard, the Group as a whole is heartened that genuine efforts have evidently been made to address our concerns in some of the detailed initiatives embodied in the 2007 Work Programme itself. We welcome that the present Concept Note has made some progress in further addressing this mismatch. Not least, this intention is indicated by the explicit adoption of some ideas from our own earlier report and from each of the three other independent advisory initiatives mentioned above. However, there is still concern that the disjuncture between two-way aspirations and one-way realities represents a persistent structural feature in the organisation of science communication and wider ‘science in society’ research at European and member state level. Accordingly many of the points made in our First Report remain highly relevant. In order to avoid undue repetition in the present report, subsequent sections refer to more specific operational issues.

Before moving on, though, there follows from this one specific comment on the process under which the recommendations of this Advisory Group are addressed. Whilst some aspects of the 2007 Work Programme and present Concept Note do display a welcome degree of responsiveness (for which we are grateful), these present a striking contrast with the section on science communication. On the basis of our interactions thus far on this, it is appropriate to recall that the credibility of any advisory process requires confidence that the dialogue between executive and advisory bodies is approached not only in mutual respect and good faith, but with the requisite level of attention on both sides. We look forward very much to taking our work forward in this positive spirit.

Alongside this issue of a continuing mismatch on science communication, the Concept Note does raise one further general concern. This relates to what we see as an asymmetry in the roles repeatedly implied for business and civil society. Here, many members of the Advisory Group have identified a disproportionate emphasis on narrow notions of economic competitiveness, as defined by presently incumbent industrial interests. There seems little

recognition that the key challenges in the area of ‘science in society’ lie not simply in the speed and efficiency with which established industrial agendas are pursued, but in achieving robust and democratically accountable choices between contending possible trajectories for scientific and technological progress. One specific example of the general importance of this point is underscored, for instance, by the high priority attached elsewhere by the European Commission to achieving transitions to more sustainable technologies in energy, transport, agriculture and materials production. The organisation of European research activities has a crucial role to play in this. Yet this is not generally highlighted to the extent that might be expected in the present Concept Note.

It is a major theme of all the advisory bodies referred to in the Concept Note (and mentioned above) that important knowledge about the directions for science and technology is produced not only in institutions of academic science and government and industry research, but also in wider civil society. European research activities – and science in general – serve and embody a much broader array of values than economic efficiency and competitiveness alone. Issues of gender equality, distributional equity, environmental integrity, social cohesion and quality of life all offer important complementary imperatives. In any case, even in specifically economic terms, long run success in world markets is determined not only by the aspirations of the science establishment and technology suppliers, but also by the values and priorities of end-users, consumers and citizens. It follows from all these reasons, therefore, that a more symmetrical balance is required between the influence of business and wider civil society in the governance of European research activities.

This said, it is important in the interests of transparency that we acknowledge a degree of divergence of emphasis on this point on the part one member of our Group. Under this minority view, the concern is rather the opposite of that articulated above. This highlights instead the importance of essentially one-way educational and science-advocacy activities. The contrast lies not in the shared aim of fostering improved public understandings of science, but on the additional objective of engineering support (or at least compliance) with the existing agendas, priorities and interests that drive this science. Instead of calling for enhanced sensitivity to the values and concerns of wider civil society, this viewpoint urges greater public respect for the authority of government and other currently influential actors in determining the present directions pursued by science and technology.

One general concern that is shared across the Advisory Group, however, focuses on the presently rather fragmented, redundant and sometimes incoherent generic structure prescribed for the Work Programme. Partly as a consequence, the Concept Note sometimes gives the impression of a series of disjointed actions, rather than conveying a truly integrated agenda for research. Several members make contrasting specific suggestions as to how this structure might be improved to provide greater clarity, efficiency and integration. In particular, it is observed that the activities enumerated under Action Line 3 might more appropriately be addressed as subordinate to the imperatives discussed under Action Lines 1 and 2. Indeed, Action Line 1 seems to many to articulate the overarching framework for the Work Programme as a whole in a way that is currently not fully realised in the format.

Of course it must be acknowledged that this framing structure of the Work Programme is a result of the process of high-level legislative negotiation under which it was first formulated. The formal status of this resulting overarching structure (and the associated itemised numbered bold-faced headings) is therefore not something that the European Commission
has the authority to alter: however it might be advised. Despite these constraints, however, the Advisory Group nonetheless recommends that more might be done to integrate discussion in the Concept Note across the different action lines, such as to better explain the hierarchical structure of the imperatives and arguments and the cross-cutting nature of many important themes.

Examples here include: (i) the persistent mismatch noted above between the emphasis on two-way dialogue under Action Line 1 and one-way communication under Action Line 3; (ii) the discussion of the role of universities (under Action Line 1) and the roles of young people in science (under Action Line 2); (iii) references in a variety of different places to the interlinked themes of ethics and scientific integrity; (iv) the artificial decoupling of treatments of ethics and equality from the discussion of gender mainstreaming; (v) the linkages between the presently rather low profile attention given to Action Line 4 and other areas of the Programme; (vi) the opportunity to use presently neglected cross-cutting priorities (such as gender mainstreaming or the implementation of the precautionary principle in research governance) to help interlink these different areas; (vii) the related potential for cross-linking disparate themes under different Action Lines by more explicit treatment of specific scientific, technological or sectoral priorities – such as nanotechnology; (viii) a final benefit of this kind of cross-linkage is the identification of synergies and avoidance of possible redundancies across different Work Programmes – for instance in relation to parallel work on health.

**ACTION LINE 1: More Dynamic Governance of the Science and Society Relationship**

Turning now to more detailed and operational suggestions falling under Action Line 1, the members of the Group identified a number of specific gaps. One of these concerned the missed opportunity to fully articulate gender mainstreaming with wider equality agendas – as well as relating these to issues of integrity and ethics. Here, the further highlighting of gender issues offers one possible axis for enhancing thematic integration.

*Another potential gap centres on the treatment of scientific integrity*, which – though appropriately prioritised in a number of places – remains unduly separate from the discussion of relationships between science and wider civil society. At present, scientific integrity is framed in what one member describes as a rather ‘solipsistic’ way – as a matter of self regulation within the scientific community. By linking research in this area to broader questions of communication, engagement and accountability in the wider governance of science, the Work Programme might set out a more fruitful basis for productive research.

Related to this, is the present gap in research focusing on the many diverse discourses and configurations for *opening up* scientific advisory bodies and processes to greater participation by ‘stakeholders’, ‘non-specialists’, ‘lay members’ or ‘citizens’. What are the driving imperatives and implications of these different architectures? What are the contending strengths and weaknesses in different contexts? How might we ensure effective learning across experiments at different levels and in different areas of science governance? What is the efficacy of different instruments for training and capacity building? These issues span a range of different bulleted items and extend also into the Strategic Issues addressed in Action Line 4. One specific area in which they might usefully be addressed is in the field of
animal welfare (with a Directive on Animal Welfare reportedly currently under revision) – where the salient issues extend well beyond the currently arguably privileged disciplinary preoccupations of veterinarians and academic ethicists.

Another potential gap in the Concept Note concerns the relatively neglected linkages in democratic governance between ethics advisory processes and the production of legislation on regulation and innovation. Specific issues in this regard centre on the ways in which interventions framed in terms of ethics can effectively target (and limit) the behaviour of citizens, whilst leaving market actors relatively unconstrained. These issues extend far beyond the particular issue of ‘concepts of bodily integrity’ problematically singled out under item 2.3. An example of an alternative possible focus of research in this area, might be the way ethics provisions seem to apply disproportionately to donations by citizens of biological materials. How about similar attention to the marketing of these same materials by private enterprise? Likewise, there is important neglected potential in this area for examining the role and implications of different intellectual property regimes in the shaping in particular areas of alternative directions for research and innovation.

Extending the high-level policy focus of these themes of wider engagement in ethics and science advice, there is important (and presently relatively under-represented) scope to explore the implications for governance processes at the level of the university and other individual research institutions. Here again – in a fashion that relates also to Action Line 3 – research has an important role to play in comparing experience under contrasting imperatives and perspectives, with different instruments and in different settings.

Finally under this Action Line, there are a couple of more specific suggestions. The first is to refer explicitly to deliberative processes such as consensus conferences and citizens’ platforms in discussing the public understanding of science under item 3.5. Relating generally to issues of inclusiveness in science governance, the second is to issue a call to examine the user-friendliness of the SINAPSE platform – for instance examining issues of accessibility for users with visual impairments.

ACTION LINE 2: Strengthening potential, broadening horizons

The Advisory Group is very supportive of the enhanced treatment in this paper of the distinct needs to strengthen the role of women in science and science governance; to attend to the gender dimension of research; and to mainstream gender issues throughout European Community research activities. Here, it is an intrinsic consequence of mainstreaming, that measures should be funded from the sectoral programme budgets themselves (rather than the far more constricted Science in Society budget). This would enable the mapping of gender issues across the totality of research fields, as well as in the specific areas highlighted in the Concept Note.

In particular, the Group welcomes the specific attention to gender pay gaps and the priority attached to a media campaign. In this latter regard, the suggestion was made that attention might go beyond narrow considerations of ‘women in science’ and tackle in addition the role of gender in the organisation of science and its associated methodologies,
practices and epistemologies. This broadening out would also have the benefit of creating space for enhanced engagement by civil society organisations in ‘co-operative research’ of the kind experimented with in the 2007 Work Programme. Likewise the focus on individual men might also be broadened out, to address more institutional issues. Work on university curricula should take care to avoid implicitly adopting gender stereotypes, such as those sometimes heard in this area concerning ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ sciences. One proposed measure on these lines on which concerns were raised, however, was the suggested use of cost-benefit analysis. The Group judges this to be an inappropriate methodological framework for examining an issue of this kind and recommends the adoption of more qualitative appraisal methods.

With respect to the measures addressing young people and science, the portfolio of actions was again broadly welcomed. However, there is a general need to broaden the scope to address the wider social dimension of science. Here, as emphasised in our First Report, there is a potentially important role for research into the scope for – and implications of – extending the profile in educational curricula of ‘science in society’ studies. Important questions that presently remain neglected in this agenda concern the ways in which more reflexive attention to context and to practical applications and social benefits can actually help stimulate interest in science. There may also be important synergies across the specific action items on this theme that might be taken into account in the design, appraisal and evaluation of projects – such as the linkage between fostering “key analytical skills from the earliest age: learning to learn science” (item 6.1) and “enhancing creative scientific thinking” (item 6.3). There is also a lack of clarity in the term “gendered quality control”, which should be further explained.

Some questions were raised over the feasibility and modalities for proposed research on unemployment among young scientists. This – and the challenge of operationalising career diversity – may benefit from further critical scrutiny. Indeed, this links to another point made in the First Report of this Group but not thus far addressed, concerning the need for further research into cross-cutting questions over the characterisation of diversity in science and science governance. Research on unemployment should also pay explicit attention to gender and address other age groups.

Individual members of the Group expressed some quite precise preferences concerning the list of measures under the item on new methods of science education (item 6.3). First, however, it is necessary to pose some more far-reaching questions than presently appear to be addressed in this research agenda, For instance, ‘what is the purpose of science education itself?’ In the spirit of the opening paragraph of our First Report, this may alternatively be to raise awareness as an end in itself, mediate other social values or change attitudes and behaviours in a more instrumental way. Likewise, before embarking on research into issues of design, it would be desirable to achieve greater precision in distinguishing between different target constituencies: age groups and formal and informal settings. Each of these deserves concerted attention as a focus of research in its own right.

ACTION LINE 3: Science and Society Communicate

As mentioned in the general comments section above and discussed at length in our First Report, this remains the area of the Work Programme, where the Advisory Group identifies the most serious problem. This is, the absence of measures implementing the stated commitment to two-way communication – addressing the framing (as well as the
dissemination) of science. In our First Report, we discussed this problem at some length and suggested a range of practical instruments that might help to address it. We stated there, for instance, that:

“There is no shortage of potential instruments for supporting this complementary channel in genuinely ‘two way’ science communication. Rather than simply making the case for existing commitments, media initiatives could instead be aimed at catalysing debate over alternative directions and implications of research. Perhaps building on recent experience in ‘foresight’ and ‘science shop’ exercises, the internet could be used in innovative ways to foster public interaction in setting future research priorities and agendas. Prizes might be awarded not just for enhancing ‘public understanding’ of traditional modes of research (as at present), but also for success in the identification of missing opportunities or excellence in non-traditional forms of innovation”

It is a matter of regret that these kinds of initiative continue to be neglected. In addition to our reiteration of this message, we note the potential for increasing technology-focused attention to digital media, whose continuing rapid uptake serves to assist experimentation in these more ambitious exercises in more engaged communication. The development of an initiative specifically on the potential presented by digital TV and other ICTs – together with associated training needs – would provide another way of approaching this crucial issue.

At a minimum, however, we feel that the commitment should be made to award the next prize under item 11 to an exercise in two-way communication concerning the framing of research reflecting the general discussion elsewhere in this commentary – and elaborated also in our First Report.

Discussion on security issues, Advisory Group meeting, 4 & 5 June 2007.

The discussion on the present and potential interactions between the Security and the Science in Society issues stimulated a most lively dialogue and deserves comment. The presentations focused on the Security and Social Sciences and Humanities thematic programmes under FP7. Information was also presented on relevant actions in the Science in Society WP, social sciences 'pioneer projects' on conflicts and security under FP5 and under FP6. It was noted that the Science in Society WP has a limited budget compared to the amount available under the Security Programme which includes an area on 'security and society'.

The representative of DG Enterprise and Industry stated that on one hand the Security programme has an overall technological / economic / industrial slant with research targeted on issues driven by industry, and on the other hand the enhancement of the security of the European citizen. Therefore, it is essential to develop security technologies in combination with organisational processes and human intervention and to mainstream the issue of security and society throughout all activities. In addition, one of the 7 activities of the security theme of the cooperation specific programme called “Security and Society” allows specific research oriented towards the citizens and the security. Synergies are developed between the Security theme and the related Commission services in charge of the policy in the concerned areas. The DG Research representative informed the group that the SSH Programme tackles the 'deep roots' and longer-term causes associated with conflicts and security issues, as well as implications for human rights; issues of security/insecurity and liberty and democracy, as well as notions of who defines threats and enemies could be included.

The SiSAG expressed its appreciation of the fact that within the Security programme attention will be given to societal, ethical and human rights aspects and that coordination will take place between DG Enterprise and DG RTD, but it also expressed its concerns about the predominantly technological/economic and industrial framing of the Security Programme. A huge market has been created now that also might cause a reverse effect on our security on the long run. The consequences of such an approach of technology supply-driven security policy for our human rights and the cultural development of society need to be followed on a critical basis to prevent excessive control or even political overcontrol of society with long term risks for its basic security and cultural identity. Europe has to examine its own position regarding these issues. Overall it is better to “fight” causes of threatening behaviour and unsafe situations that endanger our security than to react to the threatening behaviour and the situations when they have evolved, especially if this latter is done with an overkill of technology that cannot give absolute security unless it completely restricts our freedom. Nevertheless one cannot deny the need and value of technological approaches for these unsafe situations if they occur. A balance and a harmonisation therefore have to be established between a broader social and cultural framing and a narrower technical approach. In order to find this balance the idea of security in a wider sense should be further explored, and alternative and complementary security research should be funded and developed. An authentic European way and perspective should be elaborated that takes...
into account causal relationships, ethical principles, fundamental human rights and liberties, and democratic values.