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"Impact of scientific excellence on society and science-advised policy"

*Discussion breakfast: Teaming of Excellence - Discussion on Success
Factors and Evaluation*
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I am very pleased to welcome you to our breakfast today hosted with the Foundation for Polish Science. The Foundation has been operating since 1991 and has since strived to support science by encouraging distinguished scholars and research teams, modernising research facilities and assisting in the commercialisation of scientific discoveries. I am very happy to be tackling the topic of scientific excellence and science-advised policy with you this morning.

Before we kick-off our discussion, I would like to make two brief points. One concerns scientific excellence, the other the channel through which science informs policy.

In the world of today, we have noticed a changing relationship between science and society. There was a time when science determined its own priorities and worked largely independently of society. Over the years however, we have witnessed a democratisation of science, which has turned the latter into a core societal tool, a tool which develops social, environmental and economic well-being. These principles are also at the heart of the Horizon 2020 programme and illustrate how research and innovation are at their best if they serve the needs of society's present and future.

We must remember that science does not make policy, but rather that it informs policy formation. In this context, there are some concerns that excellence could at times not be consistent with the most useful policies for our societies, and lead to an introverted approach to science.

More specifically, I would like to raise the following question: Can scientific excellence make science less responsible and is it always sensible to aim for excellence? This tension was captured nicely by a piece in the Economist last fall concerning the launch of a space mission to Mars in India. The publication wondered at the time 'how a country that cannot feed all of its people can find the money for a Mars mission'.

Science and innovation are inevitably linked to social choices and there are certainly good arguments in favour of investing in ambitious hi-tech programmes, as there are in advancing public health concerns. Still, in the world of today we continue to be struck by disparities between scientific research and human needs. Moreover, we must remain objective when thinking of excellence and also consider the flipside of the argument, namely that excellence can sometimes be judged by peers and backed up by numbers, which in turn make for an inward approach to science, one that can ignore societal challenges.

This is why it is pivotal today to find new ways for measuring how science makes a difference in the world. We need multidimensional measures, which allow us to identify the grand challenges and to make funding choices accordingly.

Let me now turn to the channel via which science informs policy. Good science needs to be independent and of the highest possible quality. What are some of the building blocks for a sustainable channel?

Effective advice should be built on a two-way street, policy makers and science advisors need to be in touch on a constant basis to better understand each other's views.

Advice given needs to be relevant (address the right policy questions), credible (be scientifically sound), legitimate (have emerged through a fair process) and timely.

And on this note, I would like to hand over to Mr Zylicz to hear more about excellence and ways to achieve in a constructive manner via teaming.