

PRESS RELEASE

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First EASAC “Science into Policy” Summit demonstrates importance of independent science-based advice in sustainable policy making

Budapest meeting points to impact of recent reports on issues such as extreme weather, GMOs and DTC genetic testing

The inaugural “Science into Policy” Summit organised in Budapest jointly by EASAC, the European Academies’ Science Advisory Council and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, is being held amidst a climate of growing agreement across the EU that independent science-based advice has a key role to play in sustainable policy making.

In addition to leading scientists from Europe’s national science academies, the Budapest Summit gathers together key stakeholders in the policy making arena, including representatives from the EU, member state governments and regulatory bodies. Allied to general presentations on the role of science in policy making, the meeting will present and review the impact of three recent EASAC reports. Extreme Weather Events sets out clear evidence that the number of floods, droughts and heat waves are increasing and that more preparedness is essential. In the field of agricultural biotechnology, EASAC’s “Planting the Future” shows that there is a consensus among experts that GMOs and New Breeding Technologies are safe for the environment. Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Testing concludes that such tests are not useful – and may even be harmful – without an exchange with and interpretation by an expert healthcare professional.

“Increasingly we find politicians turning to us for answers,” says Professor Jos van der Meer, President of EASAC. “However, we as scientists are well aware that the topics we provide advice on are often controversial. Therefore we think meetings such as the Budapest Summit are vital to establish both ground rules and trust. EASAC was set up as a source of independent science advice and we guard this independence fiercely.”

This sentiment was echoed by Hungarian Academy of Science’s President and EASAC Vice-President, Professor József Pálincás, : “I am delighted to host this summit and note the progress we have made in recent years in raising the importance of scientific advice for policy making at both EU and national level. The three reports presented here demonstrate what can be achieved together by the National Science Academies of EU Member States.”

EASAC also revealed that new reports on the Nuclear Fuel Cycle, Space Exploration and Marine Sustainability are planned for publication in 2014, along with events on the just-released report on Crop and Plant Pests and Diseases.

Copies of all EASAC reports with executive summaries can be downloaded from the EASAC website www.easac.eu

EASAC is formed by the national science academies of the EU Member States, to collaborate in giving advice to European policy-makers. EASAC provides a means for the collective voice of European Science to be heard. Through EASAC, the academies work together to provide independent expert, evidence-based advice about the scientific aspects of European policies to those who make or influence policy within the European institutions.

Founded in 1825 the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) is committed to the advancement, shaping and serving of science in Hungary and worldwide. With its dual mission of a learned society and the largest research performing organisation in Hungary it has a unique role among science academies in Europe. As a learned society it has 800 members and integrates over 13000 researchers in 11 scientific sections in its public body. Keeping the criteria of excellence in the forefront, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences administers 15

large research institutions that focus their activities on discovery research. Its unique status in Hungary is also reflected in the fact that among all Hungarian public institutions it is the Hungarian Academy of Sciences that enjoys by far the greatest degree of public confidence. With its widespread membership in international scientific organisations, the Academy plays an active role in European and international science policy making.

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