EASAC/IAP Project Science and Policy Dialogue

Breakout Groups in Workshop 2 – Record from Flipcharts and notes

**Annex 3 Breakout Group Summaries**

**Session 1: Review of the Draft Guidance**

**Points on which participants agree with the draft**

* Draft is comprehensive: the key subjects are covered.
* Choosing topics is a key challenge – need to have right connections.
* Timing of topic: how it works at national/EU level – need to be proactive too
* Good to have hands on advice – for academies trying to operate differently
* Paragraph 4.5: working on things which are achievable on time frames – plan/coordinate with policy cycle
* Plurality of approach: can be successful in different ways: adapt to circumstances

**Elements missing**

* Something on very difficult issues: when the scientific debate is not settled.
* Value of day to day interactions (e.g. emails etc)
  + Personal connections
  + quiet diplomacy
* The three models discussed at first workshop: including co-production / dialogue with the public.
* Good graphics
* Executive summary

**Areas requiring further elaboration or modification**

* Membership issue: “can of worms” – rephrase so as not to antagonise: address this issue with caution.
* Re: conflict of interest: academies to seek views from different interested parties.
* Tension (IPCC review as example): scientific expert v stakeholder views
  + Stakeholder inputs v stakeholders as working group members
  + Approach according to the situation
  + If working group members, stakeholders need to represent broad perspective, not particular interests.
* Media: say something more:
  + For example, people with high media profile can be way of getting attention.
  + Could this be a topic for a follow on project?
* Interaction gives a better understanding of issues/needs.
* More on role of secretary (need for good support):
  + coordination
  + Skill – writing (needs a scientist)
  + Delivery
* Resources: people to pull it together – different people/skills.
* Potential need for revised academy mission: need appropriate structures.
* Balance between asked for/non-asked for advice: how to decide what is appropriate.
* Build in examples – where successful.
* Issue of follow up to advice:
  + championing advice
  + Wash up reports
  + Evaluation.

**Implementation challenges**

* Prize for most successful advice
* Getting Council endorsement – get into mission statement
* How get guidelines adopted

Group 1 notes (JM)

Agree/disagree

* Useful as it is generally applicable
* Records what should be “normal”
* But – need more t be applied in specific cases
* 4.4 “Options for engagement reduce as policy cycle advances” hope this is not so – needs further analysis
* 4.9 “handover point” too sharp – need process or multiple points – iteration needed If policy really is cyclic engagement is continual.
* But have to be clear about roles
* Have to respect idea that decisions also reflect political realities
* 2.1 Is it always possible?

Emphasis/Elaboration/Missing

* Key points to be highlighted
* Taking account of local factors (cultural environment)
* Map out how sci/pol interface is working now in different countries and for different areas of policy
* How to get to parliamentarians
* Locating the dialogue (Geographically)
* Process for handling conflicting advice (apart from more research/efficiency
* Need for digest
* Bias – strengthen the handling options and dealing with lobbies/industry
* Indirect route to influence via raising public awareness

**Session 2: Key Issues Selected by Workshop Participants**

**Questions 1: How should topics for science-policy dialogue be chosen?**

* In many cases a systematic approach will not be possible; topics will arise from scientific analysis or there will be an urgent need for response to policy makers needs
* Differences in views on where in process to engage with policy makers
* Academies as neutral debating places

**Question 2: How should the guidelines reflect the different contexts in which academies operate?**

**First group**

* A key difference is between academies in E. Europe (close to Government / complex of institutes) v W Europe. Also, between academies with large / small staff.
* Report should be about what academies should be aiming for, not just about the status quo and about each national situation:
  + Introduce idea of stages of maturity – academies need to look for next step
  + Make it clear that it is not just about jumping straight to a long term ideal position, e.g. with large dedicated structures for policy advice.
* Recognise that there is more than one ideal situation.
* Don’t be prescriptive.
* Reflect value of inputs from academies in different geographic contexts (space and time) to the big (EASAC) issues.
* Also cultural contexts – specific for each academy
* Issue of continuity – e.g. role of staff v academy president
* Re specific examples: use boxes for stories – reflecting different ways of doing – e.g. large machine v small.
* Paragraphs 3.1 – 3.3 need to be more sensitive to cultural contexts.
* At section 5, one possible aspiration for an academy is to constitute a science advisory board for government.
* At paragraph 10.1: extend to scientists outside Europe, e.g. neighbouring countries and world-class experts from elsewhere.
* Paragraph 11.3: “other languages” need to write in the language of the target audience – possible role for academies in translating advice.
* Potential role for academies as knowledge brokers / mediators between policy makers and citizens.
* Need to consider that in some countries government is not ready to receive advice - evidence based policy making is not a well-established concept. Such governments are a potential audience for the guidelines.
* National academies – good to bring in scientists from other countries (EU and other) relevant other countries
* Needs a stronger emphasis in the introduction on the different issues and questions faced by different academies.
* Missing: how can we make Governments more receptive to science advice?

**Second Group**

* Specific issues will differ according to countries, but success should look broadly similar across governments – aim is the best possible advice to Government.
* Different countries have different understandings of role of science in society – one role of document is to provide ideas to start the process of considering science’s role.
* EASAC doing same in Brussels: messages from here, useful back home: make the point about the value of working at 2 levels.
* Lithuania: not fully developed civil society: Academies do not have legal basis to be advisors. But they can still provide advice.
* Academies may not be entitled to be heard.
* Also informal contacts – don’t have to be listened to.
* In Finland there are many channels – connections with other decision making levels, and with funding bodies and with government. Introduce good stories.
* Academies’ ambition – to be the voice of science. This is more important than whether or not there is a formal mandate from Government.
* Emphasise general principles: they are not country-specific.
* Need to say something about need for resources to act as advisors.
* Process of development over time – not just guidelines and done.
* Bulgaria: dual role is good for advisor role.
* Institutes designed for advice giving.
* Issue is how to protect society from incompetent politicians.
* Finland – delegation – reports from wider academies:
  + Use certain parts of guidelines
  + Do what you can do
* Principles can help to get academy members to take this seriously.
* Address issue of personal motivation of scientists to do advice giving.
* Academy role as making connections, ‘hot line’: core business: to know where expertise is and how to link to it.
* Role of EASAC to support progress up the curve of science advice giving.
* What would constitute “success”:
  + In Lithuania: advice reports according to guidelines
  + Finland: key people say “ we read that”/ “we used it”
  + Swiss: influence new laws – every few weeks
  + Bulgaria – involved in decisions on key thematic panels.

Plenary

* Add boxes to guidance information on different contexts
* Evidence based policy is accepted to different degrees in different contexts differences not only on goals but also tools and mechanisms
* Common aspiration perhaps but would take some time to converge
* Need to create an environment conducive to Academy advice

**Question 3; How should Academies engage with publics and stakeholders**

* Challenges seen in engaging with media in many countries where there is a “yellow press” interested in scandals/controversy and “bad news” and where public interest is low
* Experiences with press engagement: goes well where there are regular contacts and Academy has good relations with individual journalists
* Need to build media interaction into dialogue at the outset, avoids accusations of secrecy
* However, have to balance risks; toxic media have to be kept out as they can disrupt to the process
* Academies need to take active steps to support members in engaging with media or public; training in the use of simple language, development of empathy with lay public, understanding the questions.
* Public engagements have been tried, formally, through Citizens’ Juries, for example, or informally thorough consultations, but challenges persist in knowing how to feed results into dialogue process
* Public engagement seen as helpful as a means of setting the scene, raising issues and getting them into the policy debate
* This topic needs to be built into strategies of engagement and should be highlighted in Guidance

**Question 4: How can Academies best disseminate the output from science-policy dialogue?**

* Just sending report not enough – follow up/check (note of national academies for EASAC reports)
* Personal contacts important – Academicians networks – use them!
* Define the audience
* Explain who you are
* Role of national academies – depends on their situation
* Languages: dissemination needs national languages