



Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks

SCENIHR

6th Meeting of the Working Group on Synthetic Biology (Audio)

Venue: HITEC building, Rue Eugène Ruppert 11, L- 2453 Luxembourg

Meeting room: 02/280

Meeting date: 8 May 2014, between 15:00-17:00

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

DHoU welcomed the participants; there were 10 attendees and 8 apologies. The Chair, the Vice chair and one member of SCCS attended the meeting and 3 representatives of the SCs Secretariat.

2. Adoption of the agenda

Adopted as presented

3. Declaration of interests on matters on the agenda

The Chair requested participants to declare any interest on the matters on the agenda. No declarations of any conflict of interest were made by the participants.

4. Discussion on the SCCS reaction to the Opinion 1 – Definition

- The aim of the meeting was to discuss the comments received from SCCS on the First Opinion, Definition, and the responses prepared by the WG;
- The Chair of the WG briefly presented the nature of issues raised by SCCS and, then, gave the floor to the relevant member of SCCS to introduce his comments about the Definition part;
- The main point of the discussion was the meaning of Synthetic Biology and if SynBio is equivalent to Genetic Modification
- The concern raised by SCCS was that, once a general definition will be formulated (as it is now formulated), it would be difficult to identify how to approach the risk assessment methodology in the second opinion without specific criteria identified

and stated in the definition. Whatever will be developed within the first opinion, it will have an impact on Opinion 2 and 3;

- It is necessary to clarify the relationship between SynBio and GMO (cfr. Mandate);
- In this moment, the definition, as it is formulated in page 26 in the draft Opinion 1, is focused on organisms; it is said being too broad. Two ways to be followed have been identified so as to be clearer in the approach used by the WG:
 - To cover all GM scenario or,
 - To approach all elements of Syn Bio, i.e. distinguish synbio from GMO
- The WG should be clear in defining Synthetic Biology because based on the current definition is not possible to distinguish a GMO product from a result of Synthetic Biology;
- SCCS was asked to submit a draft of the definition to the WG members by 14/05 in the afternoon;

5. Response from the WG members to SCCS comments

- SCENIHR will work on the clarity of the document: e.g. on discriminating biotechnology versus synbio in the beginning of the document as well as clarifying that cells/tissues are or not included in the organisms;
- The WG will discuss the new proposals during the audio meeting scheduled on 15/05 (during the 2nd hour of the meeting);
- The SCs Secretariat reminded the participants that, should the conclusion of the definition part be that SYN BIO cannot be clearly distinguished from GMO, the 1st opinion may be the "end point" of this exercise. There is no need to go on with opinion 2 and 3 if there is no difference identified (as GMO already covered by existing legal framework).

6. Any Other Business

- Next audio meeting scheduled on 15/05.