

NANORIGO

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Executive Summary D4.3 Virtual NRGC workshop no.1 and proceedings

On 8 June 2020, a group of 26 stakeholders and experts from regulation, industry, NGOs and science were invited to participate in a virtual workshop to reflect on the purpose of the Nano Risk Governance Council (NRGC) and its overall mission, vision and tasks. The workshop is part of a series of four workshops in the European project NANORIGO, one of three H2020 funded projects collaborating to design and form a European Nano Risk Governance Council (NRGC).

After the welcome and the introduction, workshop participants discussed four ideas regarding possible purposes of the Council, which could act as a platform to (a) share information on risks and benefits, (b) help stimulate safe and sustainable innovation, (c) serve to explore the future of engineered nanomaterials, and (d) help monitor, evaluate and communicate matters related to safety and sustainability.

In the second step, the workshop participants were invited to reflect on two sets of questions: 1. Why would we need a new Nanotechnology Risk Governance Council? What are the gaps and deficits in the current landscape of European institutions, which the Council could serve to bridge without overlapping and competing with other institutions? 2. What could be the vision pursued with the Council, its mission and objectives, expected impact and outcome? Concretely, what would the Council do?

The discussion during the workshop was very constructive to evaluate some of the ideas suggested in order to develop them further. Participants generally agreed that the four presented ideas for various purposes of the Council were valid suggestions. They emphasised the priority to work about the implementation of safety and sustainability in the innovation process. Discussed key aspects included that

- the Council could start by looking at the many contested risk assessments developed by various scientific and other organisations,
- produce reliable and trusted information, translate and communicate it in a meaningful and useful way to the various stakeholder groups, including society.

Participants recommended that the suggestions for a Council discussed should be connected to the actual needs so that they fill gaps or remedy and complement rather than compete and duplicate. For example, the Council is not viewed as tasked with the development of regulation, because existing organisations already do this. Even the production of guidance and advice should be clearly defined, in complementarity to what others are already doing.

Most participants recommended that the Council should be designed in a way to have real impact and deliver useful services and to be more than being simply a platform for provision and sharing of information. There would be added value in considering a Council that would deal not only with engineered nanomaterials but also with advanced materials or converging technologies that include a nano component. There would also be value in considering a role in relation to responsible research and innovation to help balance innovation and precaution.

Success will depend on the legitimacy of the institution, which the Council should receive through an official mandate provided by the EU or by the inclusion and representativity of legitimate stakeholders. So even if the Council would act as an independent bottom-up body, it should have an official EU mandate to provide recommendations to the EC.

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