

Heated controversy around post of Chief Scientific Adviser to the European Commission intensifies

Civil society organisations send a further letter to Jean-Claude Juncker

19 August 2014 Several organisations including Testbiotech have again criticised the creation of the post of chief scientific adviser (CSA) to the European Commission. In the letter published today concerns are voiced that the position of CSA is “fundamentally problematic as it concentrates too much influence in one person”. Further they are warning that “industry lobbyists have long realised that the more you concentrate scientific advice into the hands of one person, the easier it is to control.” The position of CSA was created in 2011 by the current president of the EU Commission, Manuel Barroso. In July 2014, nine organisations sent letter to the incoming President of EU Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, calling on him to scrap the position of chief scientific adviser.



Testbiotech is concerned that the interests of the biotech industry are likely to have a substantial impact on the role of Anne Glover, who is the first scientist to hold the post of CSA. Currently no information has been made available on how and if Glover gave scientific advice to the previous President of the EU Commission, Manuel Barroso. She has, however, made several clearly biased statements in public in support of transgenic plants for use in food production, even going as far as to say that criticism of genetically engineered plants is like a “form of madness”.

Apart from these public statements, some of which Testbiotech has now documented, there are also several public activities indicting a particular direction of thought. In March 2014, Glover was the keynote speaker at the annual International Life Science Institute (ILSI) conference which is funded by industry, including the biotech-sector. In November 2014, she plans to travel to Africa for an International Society for Biosafety Research (ISBR) meeting sponsored by companies such as Monsanto, Bayer, DowAgro, Dupont, Syngenta and the umbrella organisation CropLife International. Last year Glover travelled to Africa where she spoke out in favour of promoting a broader acceptance of genetically engineered plants.

In essence Glovers´ overall message is simple and non-scientific, claiming consensus that genetically engineered plants are safe. This is very similar to the message that the biotech industry has been pushing for many years, that its products are as safe as those derived from conventional breeding. However, Testbiotech has shown that such claims are largely based on a “don´t look don´t find” approach. This was the conclusion that Testbiotech reached after detailed and extensive analysis of the dossiers presented by industry, and on evidence showing that risk research is mostly conducted by experts with close links to industry.

Testbiotech strongly supports the demand to drop the post of chief scientific adviser to the European Commission since it may arouse expectations that a single expert or institution can provide conclusive advice in political decision making on all relevant questions. In its place counter expertise independent of industry should be prioritised and facilitated. This is the only way that civil society and political decision makers can be provided with a sufficiently broad range of scientific expertise on risky and controversial technologies such as genetic engineering.

Further information: [Scientific Chief Adviser of EU Commission under public pressure](#) [1]

Attachment	Size
 Quotes Anne Glover.pdf [2]	65.35 KB
 Glover_CSA_letter_1908.pdf [3]	378.95 KB

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