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Maximising the potential for engagement with the European Scientific Advice Mechanism: A small state perspective from Ireland

Sinéad Riordan[1]

Abstract

This article addresses a largely neglected dimension of European science–policy scholarship, namely the relationship between national science advisory structures and a state's capacity to contribute to, absorb and engage with supranational science advisory structures such as the European Commission's Science Advice Mechanism. Despite an extensive body of scholarship on best practice in science–policy interactions and science advisory models, little attention has been paid to the effects of structural asymmetries in absorptive and translational research capacity in the context of state-supranational advisory systems. National science academies play a central role at national level and within Europe's Science Advice Mechanism, acting as both bridge and translator between the national and international science and policy communities. Drawing upon the participation of the Royal Irish Academy, Ireland's national academy for the sciences, humanities and social sciences, in the European Commission's Science Advice for Policy by European Academies initiative, this paper traces the post-2018 evolution of Ireland and

[1] Sinéad Riordan was Head of Policy and International Relations at the Royal Irish Academy from 2010 to 2025. She is currently pursuing doctoral studies at University College Dublin.

the European Union's science advisory architecture, and discusses the challenges and opportunities posed for small states by the growing appetite for evidence-informed policy. It argues that the participation of national experts in international science advisory systems creates a meaningful route through which small states can help frame and inform international policy agendas and enhance national policy-making. Finally, it argues that attention to this issue will contribute to the future inclusivity, effectiveness and legitimacy of Ireland's science advisory system.

Keywords: academies, evidence review, Ireland, science advice, Scientific Advice Mechanism, science policy.

Introduction

As policy challenges become more complex, transnational and politically contested, many governments have moved to establish formalised systems to integrate scientific expertise into policy decision-making (Gluckman et al., 2022; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2015). However, concerns persist about issues of fragmentation, limited uptake of the evidence offered, independence and quality. A 2024 global survey of science policy specialists in *Nature* reported widely held views that national science advice systems remain patchy and inconsistently used (Graham, 2024).

In 2015, the established a new scientific advisory infrastructure, the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM), to strengthen the quality, transparency and coherence of scientific input into European Commission policy-making and regulation (European Commission, 2015). Replacing the previous single Chief Scientific Advisor model, the SAM offered a plural, multilayered structure designed to balance scientific independence with political relevance, disciplinary breadth with scientific rigour, and academic and sector engagement (Butler, 2014; Reillon, 2015; Pštross et al., 2025; Gravnis et al., 2025). Over its first decade, it has cemented its position as a distinctive model of evidence synthesis and scientific opinion formation within the wider ecosystem of scientific and technical advisory bodies of the European Union (EU) (European Commission, 2020).

Existing analyses of SAM primarily focus on its institutional design and processes, normative foundations, interactions with the wider EU ecosystem and impact upon policy and regulation (Gravanis et al., 2025; Pštross et al., 2025). Less attention has been paid to the mechanisms connecting SAM with national policy debates and scientific expertise. This paper argues that SAM has considerable

potential as a strategic epistemic resource for smaller states, supplementing domestic advisory capacity, enhancing policy legitimacy and strengthening anticipatory governance. However, these benefits are not automatic and depend upon national engagement capacity, institutional coordination and the ability to translate supranational scientific opinions and advice into domestic policy processes (Panke, 2019).

Science advice, legitimacy and epistemic governance

Early models of science–policy interaction treated the use of evidence as a largely linear process: scientific knowledge was produced, transmitted and shared with policymakers, and then applied in policy-making (Weiss, 1979). Decades of research have shown that this is rarely how the science–policy interface works (Pštross et al., 2025). Evidence rarely determines decisions directly; rather it must interact with political priorities, institutional incentives, socio-cultural norms and values and stakeholder pressures (Nutley et al., 2007; Jasanoff, 1991). The application of scientific expertise is thus shaped by its social and political context. Speaking in 2021, Professor Heather Douglas, a then serving member of the European Commission's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, observed that scientific advice and the process through which a problem is framed, the choice of methods for gathering evidence and the type of evidence considered credible all involve judgements (Wardman, 2021). Science–policy advice structures such as the SAM operate in environments where authority cannot be assumed: it must be earned and maintained (Reillon, 2015). Rather than claiming neutrality, modern science advisory structures seek legitimacy through transparent procedures, interdisciplinary participation and clear communication of uncertainty. The emphasis has shifted from presenting definitive answers to offering conditional, evidence-informed judgements that acknowledge trade-offs and limitations in knowledge and certainty (OECD, 2015; Gluckman et al., 2022). This broader perspective can be understood through the concept of epistemic governance, that is, how institutions organise, validate and legitimise the use of knowledge in decision-making (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). In this sense, science advisory systems do more than provide information. They shape how problems are defined, how uncertainty is interpreted, and which forms of evidence are treated as authoritative (Gravnais et al., 2025).

The Scientific Advice Mechanism: Institutional design

The establishment of the European Commission's SAM coincided with a wave of political and scientific optimism emphasising knowledge and innovation as the principal drivers of European economic and social growth and prosperity (Regulation (EU) No. 1291/2013) and which simultaneously sought to organise and legitimise the use of scientific expertise at EU level. The SAM design reflects learnings from earlier controversies surrounding EU science advice (Pearson, 2014) and parallels international trends toward the formalisation and pluralisation of advisory systems that draw upon a more diverse range of disciplinary and methodological inputs within a system that allows for the reflection of legitimate scientific disagreements (Wilsdon & Doubleday, 2015). Particular care was taken in drafting its mandate to position it as a complementary source of scientific advice that would add value to, rather than duplicate, existing Commission scientific advisory in-house services (Reillon, 2015). This proximity facilitates relevance and awareness of the policy context for requests for scientific advice, while preserving formal autonomy in the conduct of the evidence review and preparation of scientific opinions.

The SAM replaced the previous single Chief Scientific Advisor model with a multidisciplinary, cross-European plural structure with a clear distinction between scientific evidence synthesis and the issuing of a scientific opinion. A Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (GCSA), seven eminent scientists appointed through an independent, competitive process are charged with the formulation of the scientific opinion. The Science Advice for Policy by European Academies (SAPEA) platform undertakes the process of scientific evidence review. The SAPEA platform is convened by five European academy networks whose membership spans the full range of academic disciplines and are drawn from national academies across Europe specifically: the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC), the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities, Academia Europea, the European Council of Academies of Applied Sciences, Technologies and Engineering (Euro-CASE), the Federation of European Academies of Medicine, and the Young Academies Science Advice Structure. Appointments to the GCSA and SAPEA expert groups are managed through competitive, open calls co-ordinated through the member academies thus ensuring that nominating opportunities are shared across all EU Member States and

the wider Council of Europe region. Institutionally, SAM is funded through the Commission's Horizon Europe research and development (R&D) programme, and is embedded within the Commission ecosystem, supported by a secretariat which links the GCSA and SAPEA to the Commission, and relevant scientific and technical agencies and bodies such as the Joint Research Centre (Reillon, 2015).

This new structure reflects a key EU principle namely that of proportionality and subsidiarity and addresses concerns surrounding the narrowness of discipline perspectives within science advice, the need to separate the process of evidence review from the formulation of the scientific opinion, a lack of connectivity to in-house Commission expertise, and a desire for greater transparency and rigour in the processes used to gather and review the quality of evidence informing scientific opinions (Reillon, 2015; OECD, 2015; European Commission, 2015, 2020).

Box 1: The European Commission's Scientific Advice Mechanism: The process for the formulation of a scientific opinion

A scientific opinion is the principal means through which the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (GCSA) of the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) gives advice to the European Commission. It gives 'systemic, transdisciplinary and unbiased advice, and takes into account political viability, trade-offs and unintended consequences'. Its preparation requires the distilling of policy recommendations from scientific evidence presented in the form of evidence review reports and an awareness of and responsiveness to the relevant European Union (EU) policy context, EU treaties and wider geopolitical developments.Any European Commissioner may request scientific advice from the SAM at any time, on any policy field that is of interest to the Commission, the European Parliament, or the Council of the EU. Such a request is issued to the Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, who conveys it to the GCSA. Once accepted, Commission services in the relevant area develop a scoping paper in consultation with other relevant parts of the Commission, and the SAM Secretariat in consultation. The final decision to adopt a scoping paper and proceed to the next stage of the scientific evidence review process is taken by the Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation in consultation with the GCSA. Evidence reviews are prepared by expert groups appointed and co-ordinated by the Science Advice for Policy by European Academies (SAPEA) consortium and populated through a competitive nomination process in which candidates are

proposed by member national academies. The costs of participation in the review process are funded through SAPEA. The evidence review identifies the most important and relevant evidence and empirical findings pertinent to the policy issue under scrutiny and provides 'an honest assessment' of the robustness and limitations of the evidence and empirical findings. Evidence reviews are subject to peer review. The finalised evidence review informs the next stage of the GCSA deliberations as the group moves to formulate an agreed scientific opinion. The GCSA's draft recommendations are scrutinised prior to finalisation by a third level of independent scrutiny carried out by a group of experts not previously involved in the evidence-gathering or analysis, representatives of organisations concerned with the recommendations in the opinion, and Policy Officers from relevant European Commission Directorates-General and agencies. Supplementary modes of evidence gathering, including the use of sectoral workshops and input from other nodes of expertise such as the Commission's Joint Research Centres may also be used during the review process to strengthen quality control and transparency. A typical timeline for the completion of this overall process is between twelve to eighteen months. Since 2020, the growing demand from the Commission for short- and medium-term SAM inputs has led it to expand its range of outputs beyond the traditional scientific opinion to include workshops, publish literature reviews and follow-up statements to previously issued opinions. The finalised evidence reviews, scientific opinions, statements, literature reviews and other similar outputs are publicly available.

Sources: Scientific Advice Mechanism to the European Commission (2026); European Commission Staff, 2025; European Commission decision of 16.10.2015.

The model outlined in Box 1 institutionalises three key values within the SAM: independence, rigour and transparency. Independence is supported through open competitions for the GCSA and the SAPEA expert group appointments and by procedural 'firewalls' (Pearson, 2014) between evidence production by SAPEA, the preparation of a scientific opinion by the GCSA and policy drafting by the Commission. Transparency is promoted through open calls, published documentation, and additional opportunities for stakeholder engagement. Rigour is embedded through multiple review stages and explicit attention to uncertainty and limitations. Yet, desirable as these processes are, they do not guarantee systemic impact. The broader significance and potentially, long-term legitimacy of the SAM depends not just on its impact at the Commission level but arguably, on the interpretation and use of its outputs by EU Member States.

Science advice, small states and multi-level governance systems: Ireland

The SAM operates within the EU's system of shared decision-making between EU institutions and Member States: its outputs circulate across national administrations, agencies and advisory bodies whose resources and institutional arrangements vary significantly (Panke, 2019; Hooghe and Marks, 1996). Small-state scholarship highlights the impact of structural constraints in influence, administrative capacity, and agenda-setting power (Panke, 2019). Smaller Member States within the EU often operate with leaner civil services and fewer specialised analytical units than larger countries. Even where national research systems perform strongly, the mechanism for systematically integrating evidence into policy may be limited (Hanney et al., 2020). Small states may seek to compensate for these limitations through strategic behaviour: building science–policy coalitions, specialising in niche policy areas, and prioritising early engagement in policy development processes (Thorhallsson & Wivel, 2006).

What role can supranational advisory mechanisms such as SAM play in this context? Most significantly, it may serve as a capacity multiplier, providing access to high-quality, publicly available evidence syntheses that small, national administrations can draw upon without having to bear the full cost of commissioning equivalent reviews domestically (European Commission Staff, 2022). Beyond analytical support, small states may also derive legitimising benefits for domestic policy decisions from the SAM evidence reviews and scientific opinions. In politically sensitive areas such as climate mitigation, public health or artificial intelligence governance, referencing independently produced, international scientific assessments can potentially strengthen domestic policy justification (OECD, 2015). Such engagement may help demonstrate that national policy decisions are grounded in broad expert, international consensus rather than narrow parochialism (Huszár, 2024). Additionally, engagement with the SAM can enhance anticipatory capacity at the national level. As the SAM often addresses emerging regulatory and technological issues, systematic monitoring of its outputs can inform national foresight planning and horizon scanning processes. For small states with limited internal foresight capacity, this can help identify future policy challenges earlier (Huszár, 2024): however, these benefits are necessarily dependent upon domestic institutional arrangements capable of translating supranational advice into actionable national strategies.

While European academies constitute a central pillar of the EU's science advisory ecosystem, their engagement with SAM and SAPEA is uneven and arguably equally shaped by structural and institutional constraints. Understanding these limitations is important when assessing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of EU-level science advice in the context of Member States. A primary constraint concerns organisational capacity. Many academies operate with modest permanent staff, diverse missions and strategic objectives, and limited discretionary funding. Contributing to EU advisory processes, particularly interdisciplinary evidence reviews conducted under tight timelines, requires coordination, drafting support and sustained engagement that smaller academies may struggle to provide (OECD, 2018; EASAC, 2019). Considerable variation in institutional capacity is notable across the European network of academies. Institutional research capacity, as measured by the number and disciplinary breadth of research units associated with an academy and the size of its membership, serves as an enabling condition for engagement in science advice. Academies that encompass or are closely linked with extensive research centres such as the Polish Academy for Sciences/Polska Akademia Nauk are more favourably positioned to draw upon a wider pool of domain-specific expertise, which may enhance their responsiveness and prominence in science advisory processes. This may potentially generate asymmetries in participation, with larger and better-resourced academies being potentially disproportionately represented in advisory networks.

A second limitation relates to institutional culture and expertise translation. Academies are traditionally oriented toward scholarly excellence and long-term disciplinary advancement rather than policy synthesis. Producing policy-relevant outputs requires different competencies: framing questions in decision-relevant terms, integrating diverse evidence bases, and communicating uncertainty clearly to non-specialist audiences. Where these translation capacities are underdeveloped, engagement with advisory mechanisms may remain ad hoc or reactive. Some academies such as the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences/Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (KNAW) have a statutory role in terms of advising the government on scientific practice and policy for science (KNAW, 2025a,b), and assign considerable resources to its in-house policy advisory functions. Other academies operate within well-developed science–policy interfaces. Germany has long-standing institutional systems and advisory institutions supporting science–

policy communication built upon a wide acceptance of the necessity and value of incorporating scientific evidence into political decision-making (Sokolovska et al., 2025).

Concerns about independence and reputational risk may also shape participation in science–policy advisory activities. Institutions such as academies derive authority and credibility from perceived epistemic neutrality. Close alignment with policy processes, particularly in politically contested domains may raise fears of politicisation or institutional capture (Pielke, 2012). This tension between maintaining independence and contributing constructively to policy-making is especially salient in supranational contexts where accountability lines are diffuse. This concern is reinforced in analyses of contemporary advisory systems, which emphasise that advisory bodies must maintain structural and procedural safeguards to protect their autonomy in order to sustain trust (OECD, 2015; International Network for Governmental Science Advice, 2014). Comparative work on European science advisory ecosystems shows considerable diversity in how national academies position themselves vis-à-vis EU institutions, reflecting differences in political culture, advisory traditions, and perceptions of appropriate engagement (van der Hel & Biermann, 2017). In such settings, the calculus of engagement is not purely technical but institutional and strategic: academies must weigh the benefits of influence against potential risks to perceived neutrality.

Engagement is further conditioned by national political and advisory infrastructures (Sokolovska et al., 2025). In Member States with emergent science advice systems there may be limited domestic coordination between academies and government, reducing incentives or pathways for EU-level engagement. Weak information flows and limited awareness of participation and consultation opportunities can exacerbate this disconnect (OECD, 2015). In the absence of developed, embedded science–policy interfaces, academies may struggle to systematically obtain information, for example on consultation opportunities at the EU level, or to embed mechanisms for mobilising national expertise into supranational processes. Such informational and organisational gaps may exacerbate disparities in participation.

Ireland exemplifies a small EU Member State with strong research performance but historically fragmented science–policy structures. Scientific advice for policy-making has typically been organised through sectoral government agencies linked to government departments, issue-specific advisory councils, and ad hoc expert

groups. Separate but frequent participants and contributors to debates led by the aforementioned bodies are independent research institutions such as the Economic and Social Research Institute, university-based researchers and research centres. The appointment of a part-time Chief Scientific Advisor in 2002, while broadly welcomed by the scientific community, failed to gain substantial traction in part as a result of the underdeveloped nature of the wider science–policy interface, and the parameters of the role itself which was both part-time with limited access to support resources (Royal Irish Academy (RIA), 2020). Ireland's science-advice arrangements additionally lacked a formal mechanism to support the emergence of cross-sectoral science advice or to connect the wide community of scientific expertise with the policy community. In 2021, the national academy, the RIA, and the Irish Research Council published a roadmap calling for a substantial overhaul of Ireland's science advisory structure: the need to strengthen and formalise science advice was widely acknowledged by policymakers and expert stakeholders at this time (Doyle et al., 2021).

Considerable change has occurred since the publication of the roadmap. The OECD's 2023 review of Irish public governance identified the growing use of foresight, evidence synthesis and collaboration with external expertise, including academia, as a positive development in strengthening public policy capacity (OECD, 2023). In 2023, the Irish Government approved the position of Government Science Advisor to provide multidisciplinary advice on critical issues to government with support from a secretariat based within the Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and a multidisciplinary National Science Forum (O'Sullivan, 2023). Complementary initiatives such as the establishment of a government Evidence for Policy unit and cross-departmental Civil Service Research Network and the publication of areas of research interest statements by government departments, signal growing institutional maturity and greater transparency in the process of linking scientific advice with policy-making (Doyle et al., 2021). Considerable investment has been made in capacity-building activities to bridge the institutional misalignment between the logic governing the activities of the academic scientist and policymaker (EASAC, 2019) through the national R&D strategy, *Impact 2030* (Government of Ireland, 2022) and the *Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy* (Government of Ireland, 2021; Daíl Éireann, 2023a). Enhanced mechanisms include the provision of dedicated national

R&D funding for science–policy activities, training and skills-based activities such as Research Ireland's Public Service Fellowships, sector-specific knowledge brokerage activities linking policy actors with research communities, and university-led training to enhance the capacity of researchers to engage in science–policy activities. Ireland's evolving science–policy ecosystem demonstrates many characteristics associated with an 'evidence-informed' small state and as the 2023 OECD review noted is comparatively open to international policy learning and external knowledge mobilisation.

Ireland and the European Science Advice Mechanism

Engagement with SAM has primarily occurred through the national academy for the humanities, sciences and social sciences, the RIA as the national member of the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities and the European Academies Science Advisory Council, two of the five contributing academy networks within the SAPEA platform. By virtue of these memberships, the RIA may, on behalf of the all-island research community:

- Nominate scientists and experts for consideration for membership of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors.
- Nominate Irish scientists and experts to participate in SAPEA expert evidence review groups.
- Nominate Irish scientists and experts to participate in SAPEA peer review processes.
- Support the communication and dissemination of SAPEA findings nationally.
- Inform the shape and direction of SAPEA's strategic development plan.

Participation at an EU level requires sustained staff time, coordination, drafting capacity and administrative support, and the national academy's institutional capacity to engage in these activities is limited. Irish experts have made significant contributions to multiple SAPEA evidence reviews and working groups on issues, including the future of ageing, food from the oceans, sustainable food systems and making sense of science for policy, although representation at the GCSA level has yet to occur. This engagement has been mediated through the national academy in the first instance by communicating opportunities and proposing candidates for consideration. Resource and capacity constraints within the national academy form a key

limitation in terms of communication and dissemination of SAM outputs at the national level and in foresight capacity to identify potential topics for consideration by the SAM. Agenda-setting arenas such as the opportunity via SAPEA to propose topics for consideration by the GCSA offer a strategic point of engagement and influence for small Member States such as Ireland but require greater connectivity and co-ordination across the policy and research communities and national academy.

Turning to specific examples of Irish engagement, the 2019 SAPEA evidence review report, *Transforming the Future of Ageing,* co-chaired by Irish experts Professor Rose-Anne Kenny and Professor Richard O'Reilly, offers an interesting illustration of an output which traversed a citation heavy, public discourse oriented impact pathway. The evidence review sought to reframe public discourse on ageing, arguing that it should be understood as a life-course policy challenge that would benefit from earlier intervention such as preventative public health measures, age-friendly environments and technological adaptation. Its findings on social and technological adaptation received considerable public attention, including 35 individual pieces of media coverage (www.scientificadvice.eu) amplified in part by the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic which brought renewed media attention to the issue of preventative and protective healthcare of the elderly (Kenny, 2020) and a series of public roundtables on its findings convened by the national science academies of Ireland, Spain, Israel, France and Romania. It was cited within the European Commission's green paper on ageing (2021), in the 2019–21 UK Parliament Science and Technology Select Committee's inquiry into ageing, and in Swedish, Turkish and German government discussion papers on long-term care, research and deep technology. Through their participation, the Irish researchers contributed to a reframing of European policy debate on ageing, and brought the attention of Irish policymakers to these issues.

The pathway to impact followed by the SAM Opinion, *Cancer Screening in the European Union*, released in March 2022, offers a different perspective (European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation and GCSA, 2022). The Opinion recommended the extension of cancer screening programmes to include other cancers such as lung, prostate and gastric cancer (European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, 2025, p. 23). A 2025 review of the EU's *Beating Cancer Plan* noted that the Chief Scientific Advisors' opinion was key in

informing the subsequent decision in December 2022 by the EU Council to recommend the extension of cancer screening programmes (European Commission Staff, 2025, p. 17). Turning to Ireland, issues such as the extension of screening programmes and use of risk-based screening were equally evident in domestic cancer healthcare policy discussions during this period. In February 2023, speaking during a Dáil Eireann debate on health strategies, the Minister of Health noted that the National Screening Advisory Council would consider the European Council recommendation on cancer screening and advise the Department of Health on the evidence as it applies to Ireland (Dáil Éireann, 2023b). This illustrates an important pre-existing limitation upon the impact of European-level scientific advice within EU Member States in general. While the EU may propose ambitious objectives and action as is the case with the *Beating Cancer Plan*, many policy areas, including healthcare, remain the sole domain of national governments. EU scientific advice is one of numerous inputs that a national government must consider along with national-level social, political and economic imperatives.

Conclusion

SAM's first decade demonstrates that supranational science advice can be institutionalised in ways that balance independence, pluralism and political proximity. Yet its broader significance lies in its interaction with Member State systems. For small states, engagement with supranational advisory mechanisms represents both an opportunity and a strategic choice. The pattern of Ireland's involvement in the SAM reflects both opportunity and constraint: participation is feasible, but strategic coordination remains limited as does national awareness of SAM and SAPEA. Improving engagement by smaller Member States such as Ireland with the SAM requires more than encouraging individual participation. It involves strengthening institutional coordination, enhancing agenda-awareness, investing in rapid mobilisation capacity, and embedding EU-level advisory engagement within national science–policy infrastructures. For smaller academies in particular, strategic coordination and coalition-building at the national level can compensate for limitations of scale. Future research might explore comparative patterns of SAM engagement across Member States, examining whether variations in domestic advisory institutionalisation correlate with differential uptake of EU-level advice.

For Ireland, deeper institutionalisation of SAM engagement could begin with enhanced efforts to improve national level coordination and communication on SAM: the timing is currently opportune to achieve this given the numerous steps taken since 2023 to formalise the national science–policy architecture. Allowing for the still relatively early status of these initiatives however, continuing attention needs to be placed on literacy and capacity measures and the promotion by national policymakers of SAM-generated evidence use would be beneficial. Literacy measures intended to improve researchers' awareness of and capacity to partake in SAPEA evidence reviews could include delivery by the national academy of online training and information workshops to explain the SAM mechanism, and how to get involved. Enhanced measures to support better national coordination and avoid fragmentation at the sectoral level could usefully include a biannual EU science advice meeting bringing together Ireland's Permanent Representation to the EU, Chief Science Advisor, university leads in science policy activities, the Civil Service Research Network, and the national academy to support better understanding of active SAM evidence requests, to co-create science–policy research agendas and policy topics for consideration by the SAM, co-ordinate nominations and share intelligence.

After ten years, the Scientific Advice Mechanism stands as a consolidated and normatively sophisticated model of supranational science advice. Its layered architecture reflects contemporary understandings of epistemic governance, embedding independence, transparency and interdisciplinarity within EU policy-making. Yet SAM's systemic significance extends beyond the Commission. Within an asymmetric multilevel governance system, it constitutes a strategic epistemic resource, particularly for smaller Member States. When integrated into domestic advisory routines, it can supplement capacity, enhance legitimacy and strengthen anticipatory governance. When treated as peripheral, its potential remains unrealised. Understanding SAM's first decade therefore requires moving beyond institutional description to consider how supranational science advice is mobilised across governance levels. For small states such as Ireland the question is not whether EU-level expertise matters, but how it is strategically engaged and connected through to inform domestic and European policy discussions.

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