

NANO RIGO

DELIVERABLE No.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY D 4.5 / MS15
DELIVERABLE TITLE	Virtual NRGc workshop no.2 and proceedings
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On 30 September 2020, a group of 32 stakeholders and experts from regulation, industry, NGOs and science participated in the second virtual workshop to reflect on the purpose of the Nano Risk Governance Council (NRGC) and its overall mission, vision and tasks.

The workshop was part of a series of four virtual workshops of the European project NANORIGO, which is 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 perceived needs and possible gaps in the current landscape of European institutions which the Council could serve to bridge without overlapping and competing with each other.

In the second step, the workshop participants reflected on four possible scenarios and different services of the future Council: the European Intergovernmental Panel on Nanomaterial (1), the European Scientific Advisory Committee on Nanomaterials (2), the European Centre on Risks of Nanomaterials (3) and the European Roundtable of Nanomaterials (4).

The discussion during the workshop was very constructive, and participants generally agreed that the four presented scenarios with its different services of a new Council formed valid suggestions. The majority of participants liked the most government-led scenarios (scenario 1 and 2) because the structure is better defined and would be by financed by public government funds. In this perspective, the Council could work independently and will be better accepted by the community than, for example, an industry-sponsored Council which would set its agenda.

However, some participants preferred the bottom-up approach, which is represented by the Roundtable and the European Centre. The approach could gather information about emerging risks, especially for advanced materials, deliver better services in dialogue and transfers of information compared to the top-down approaches. However, the participants noted that the weak points of a Roundtable would be the possible lack of funding and the missing link between science and decision-makers. Participants recommended that the Council could not be limited to environmental sustainability only, but focused issues should include human health too.

In the last part of the workshop, the participants discussed important success factors that would ensure sustainability. Success and sustainability will depend on the legitimacy of the institution and financial viability, which the Council should receive through an official mandate and funding provided by the EU or by the inclusion and representativity of legitimate stakeholders. So even if the Council would act as an independent and neutral bottom-up body or governmental body, it should have an official EU mandate to provide recommendations to the EC.

Several participants added some conditions to the Council, especially concerning the financial viability and diversity of stakeholders who could participate. They indicated that it is essential to integrate a variety of types of stakeholders as a group of people from the industry, regulatory bodies, science/academia and civil society/NGOs and other stakeholders. The Council would get a high impact on public support and funding opportunities. However, they noted that a membership fee could be a limitation for stakeholders to participate in the Council because some members could not afford it.

The workshop participants agreed that the Council should be sustainable and not duplicate already existing efforts and strategies but should produce added value to the current existing governance practices and processes.

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement n°814530 This document reflects only the author's view and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.