

Scientific Advice

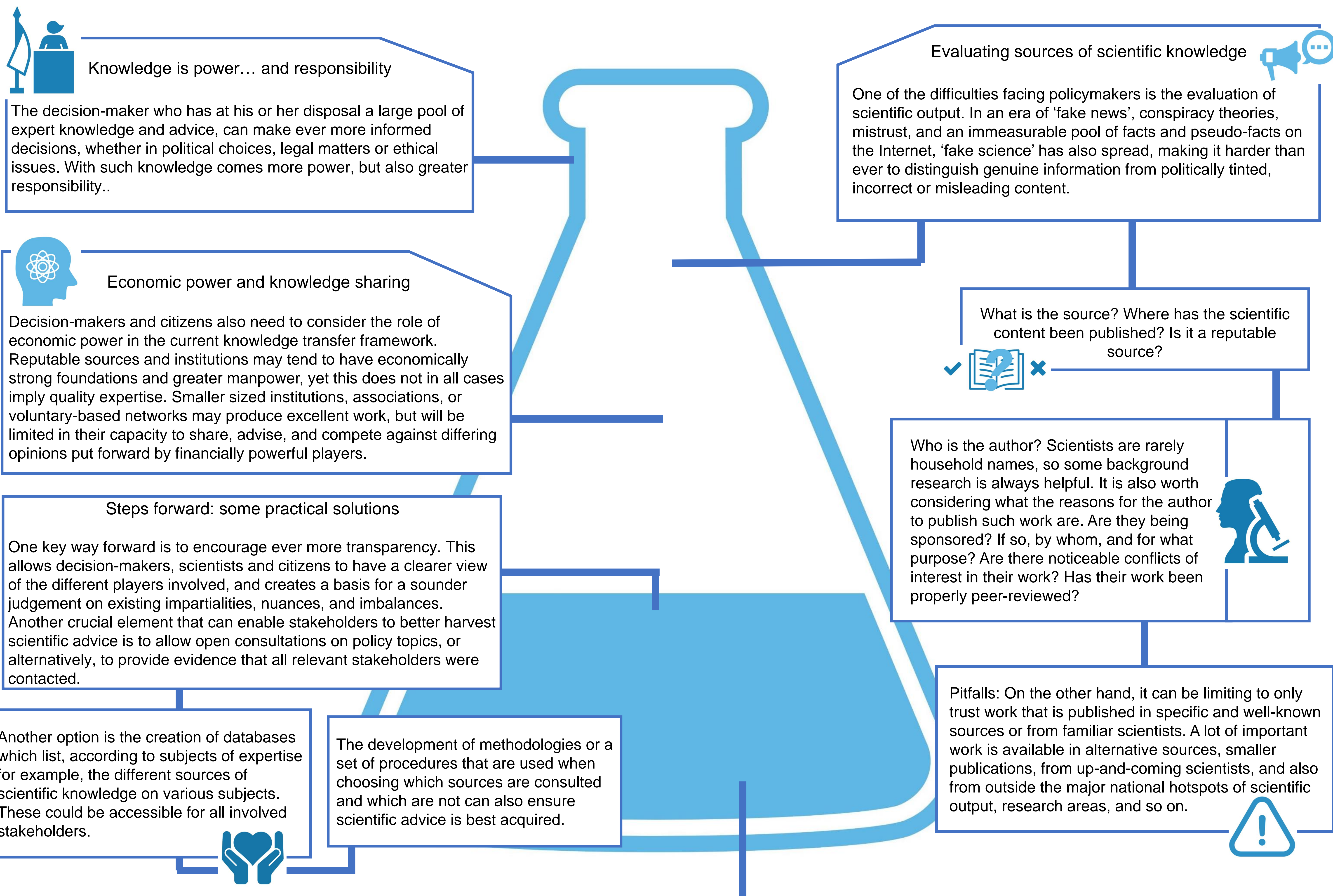
How to harvest it in the best way?

Abstract

The general view of scientific knowledge transfer is simple: scientists are encouraged to share their knowledge, evidence, advice and expertise with decision-makers, so that the latter may make informed choices in their policymaking work. But this one-direction framework presents serious drawbacks. Not all knowledge is made equally, and not all sources of knowledge are capable of supporting successful transfers of knowledge. Many scientists are not trained nor have the skills to effectively communicate with decision-makers – a fact often overlooked in this one-way knowledge transfer framework.

Scientific advice and the way it is shared is in need of a reassessment – both to encourage a level-playing field, and to enable policymakers, and citizens, to better understand the nuances and processes behind the transfer of scientific knowhow. The roles played by policymakers also needs to be reconsidered – should they themselves be more proactive in acquiring scientific advice?

This poster addresses some of these issues, and specifically, how scientific advice can best be harvested – primarily by decision-makers, but also by citizens. It aims to present the first factors that decision-makers should be aware of when evaluating and acquiring knowledge, as well as to provide some practical solutions. The poster in turn also endeavours to open up a wider discussion on the role of transparency, parity and quality in the acquisition of scientific advice, and to encourage a reassessment of the existing knowledge transfer paradigm.



Conclusion

Scientists have a duty to share their advice and knowledge with decision-makers and citizens. In doing so, they ensure that policies are guided by evidence and expertise, and that citizens are kept informed and aware of things that affect them and the world around them. But not all scientists have the skills to do this and the weight of such responsibility cannot lie on their shoulders alone.

Associations such as EuChemS – which represents chemists across Europe – play an intermediate role, communicating important scientific advice to policymakers and citizens whilst helping scientists better understand policy work. But decision-makers also need to be proactive and examine the sources of knowledge around them. Taking into account the different sources of scientific knowledge, their various strengths and limitations and properly evaluating received advice will enable sounder judgments in the future.

Various steps have been taken in this direction already, as exemplified by partnering schemes between Members of the European Parliament and scientists, or by clear and transparent stakeholder lists on European Agency websites. But these positive factors are yet to be seen on a wider and automatic level. Serious discussions between all the players involved and concrete practical solutions are needed to ensure that successful policies are guided by clear and accessible evidence and that decision-makers have access to the various sources on an equal basis.

About EuChemS

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Representing over 160,000 chemists

18 Divisions & Working Parties

Supporting youth and chemistry via the European Young Chemists Network (EYCN)

“EuChemS aims to nurture a platform for scientific discussion and to provide a single, unbiased, European voice on key policy issues in chemistry and related fields”

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