On 15 September 2015, the European Parliament will open its doors to some of the EU’s leading scientists, with the aim of achieving an effective dialogue between Members of the European Parliament and the scientific community, and ultimately encouraging evidence-based policy making.

THE FIRST SUCH event to be held at an EU level, Science meets Parliaments is co-organised by the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the European Parliament’s Science and Technology Operations Assessment (STOA). While the JRC is primarily concerned with bringing European and national representatives together to share information and inform one another through the events organised under Science Meets Parliaments, STOA is using the opportunity to inaugurate a project of its own. The MEP-Scientist Pairing Scheme will be launched at the event in Brussels, forging direct links between scientists and politicians.

MEETING EXPECTATIONS
Commencing at 9.30 am, the conference’s opening session will see a distinguished panel of speakers discussing the exact requirements that EU policy makers must meet when communicating with the scientific community, and how such communication can be expedited – with particular regard to the channels through which it is mediated. JRC Director-General Vladimir Šucha and STOA Chairman Paul Ruig will moderate discussion between Commissioners Tibor Navracsics and Carlos Moedas, European Parliament Vice-President Máiread McGuinness and Jerzy Buzek, Chairman of the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.

This will be followed by a similar discussion between the national-level political representatives, including Luboš Blaha, Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic’s EU Affairs Committee and Bundestag Member Stefan Kaufmann, among others. In conjunction, these two sessions are expected not only to highlight the common expectations that policy makers at all levels share of science in the EU – but also to emphasise the points at which these expectations diverge, and conflicts can arise.

PARTNERING FOR POLICY
Finally, once these issues have been discussed, the representatives of the scientific community will have the chance to respond; a high-level panel will discuss how scientific organisations can address the needs of policy makers, and raise for consideration concrete examples of constructive collaborations between the two communities that have brought about positive impacts for citizens. The speakers will consist of representatives from some of Europe’s most prominent scientific organisations: Jos van der Meer, President of the European Academies Science Advisory Council; Torbjorn Digital of the Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering and Research; Bjorn Nilsson of Euro-CASE; President of the Federation of All European Academies; and Friedrich W Hesse, Vice President.
of the Leibniz Association. The first portion of the conference will then be concluded with closing remarks from Šucha and Eva Kaili, STOA’s First Vice-Chair, who will introduce the MEP-Scientist Pairing Scheme.

**AFTERNOON SESSIONS**

After breaking for a networking lunch, the scientists and parliamentarians will then return for parallel sessions in the afternoon. In one meeting room, a panel will be held on best practices at the national level – bringing together speakers from the previous panels including Hesse and Kaufman, but also introducing new contributors such as Executive Director of the Royal Society, Julie Maxton, and Bruno Revellin-Falcoz, Member of the French Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Choices. Delegates will also have the alternative opportunity of taking time to engage in the MEP-Scientist Pairing Scheme, which will facilitate bilateral meetings and direct discussion until the end of the day.

Science meets Parliaments builds on the successful examples that individual EU member states and STOA have already set with regard to encouraging collaboration between scientists and politicians, as well as the achievements of other similar initiatives being practiced around the world. The event is sure to be a busy day of networking and discussion for those who attend, and will also contribute – in time – to a more pragmatic approach to science and technology across the whole continent.

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**PROFILE: JERZY BUZEK**

Jerzy Buzek, who is due to speak on the first panel of Science meets Parliaments, has had an illustrious career in both politics and science. Having received training as a chemical engineer, he became Prime Minister of Poland in 1997, and went on to (in 2004 and 2009) break Polish records twice with the number of votes he received in support of his candidacy as an MEP. In July of 2009, he was elected President of the European Parliament, securing the largest majority ever; he was the first person from Eastern Europe to hold the position.

**PROFILE: STEFAN KAUFMANN**

Representing politicians at the national level in a number of panels, Stefan Kaufmann has been active in German politics since the early 1990s – and was elected to the German Bundestag in 2009. In his early career, he focused particularly on education, being recognised with an award from the Ministry of Science, Research and Arts of Baden-Württemberg for his work founding the Forum for Hochschul- and Education Politics Tübingen. He is a member of the Board of Trustees for the German National Association for Student Affairs, the Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation and the Max Planck Institute for Solid State Research.

**PROFILE: JOS VAN DER MEER**

As Professor and Departmental Chair at Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre in Nijmegen, Netherlands, Jos van der Meer is well-placed to comment on the needs of scientists. His own research career has spanned three decades, and centred in particular on the role of cytokines in inflammation and health; his group has been responsible for a number of important advances in this area. In the last 25 years, he has also conducted significant work in Indonesia towards building biomedical capacity and aiding patients in low-resource settings. He has won numerous awards for his efforts, and established a number of organisations to further their impact.