

A message of Season's Greetings from our Hub Director, Professor Ole Petersen



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This will be the last Season's Greeting from the Academia Europaea (AE) – Cardiff University (CU) Knowledge Hub, as this Hub will not continue its existence beyond 2025. Due to the serious financial problems faced by virtually all UK Higher Education Institutions, CU has decided not to continue its support for the AE-CU Hub, and it is therefore now closing after 10 years of high and rewarding activity. Ironically, this happens following the award of the so far largest grant from the European Commission (EC) for our work on the EC's Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) via SAPEA (Science Advice for Policy by European Academies). In this new grant period (1st January 2025 – 30th April 2029), CU is an independent beneficiary and therefore not directly dependent on being part of the AE organisation. So all our work specifically related to SAM continues whereas, unfortunately, the many other activities carried out by the AE-CU Hub will come to an end. CU's continuing work for SAM is of course not unrelated to that of AE and co-ordination and co-operation with the AE Leadership will therefore be critically important. As a long-standing MAE and the responsible holder of the new EC grant, this will be an important priority for me.

After the completion of the Evidence Review Report on **Solar Radiation Modification**, at the end of 2024, we organised a number of well attended webinars promoting the work done. These events dealt with Europe's future strategy in this field, the societal aspects and the new technologies and their risks. During 2025, we also provided significant input to the Evidence Reviews on **Advanced Materials** and **AI and Crisis Management**. An increasing proportion of our work for SAPEA is constituted of Literature Reviews, including the production of such reviews also for the increasingly important European Group of Ethics. The EC is keen on being provided with Literature Reviews for every new SAM project. In this respect, our continuing collaboration with CU's Library and specifically with its SURE (Specialist Unit for Review Evidence) is a major strength. This year, SURE celebrated its 25th Anniversary and it was a great pleasure for me to participate personally in the dignified celebration, held at the Senedd (the Welsh Parliament) in Cardiff in October.

The AE-CU Hub has consistently supported Ukraine throughout the crisis following the outrageous attack and invasion by Russia. We organized a well-attended webinar 'Stand with Ukraine: Support the next generation of medical professionals' in collaboration with Odesa Medical University. It provided several young investigators in Odesa, one of the hardest hit cities in Ukraine, with an opportunity to present their research to an international audience and also resulted in several concrete offers of help from West-European research groups, including cost-free attendance (remote) at courses of high relevance for the Ukrainian students. I was also happy to personally contribute to a substantial Essay Collection 'Reclaiming Europe' that was published this year by the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and generated by the Young Network TransEurope. Katalin Solymosi from the Budapest AE Hub played an important role in masterminding this project.

Although dominated by the situation in Ukraine, it also ranged more widely with my own contribution focusing on 'Scientific Freedom in a Difficult World'.

The AE-CU Hub has been involved in Peter Hegyi's (MAE) initiative on Translational Medicine since AE's work on this topic started at a meeting in 2019, held at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This year, it resulted in the publication of AE's guidelines for the visualization of clinical outcomes in the top journal *Nature Medicine*. This is undoubtedly now the most immediately visible AE activity. We have been keen to support this extremely important initiative taken by Peter Hegyi and I have personally been happy to be involved in this continuing project, as member of AE's Translational Medicine Working Group. In April this year, a happy event occurred at Al-Ahliyya Amman University in Jordan, where Honorary Degrees were conferred upon Peter Hegyi MAE, Shahrokh Shariat MAE and myself. We all gave lectures about various aspects of Translational Medicine.

Finally, I want to thank the extraordinarily effective Cardiff Hub team. The reputation of our Hub Manager, Louise Edwards, continues to soar, in Brussels and indeed throughout Europe. Louise has driven forward all our projects with incredible energy and efficiency. Juliet Davies has been a tower of strength in the organisation of our many successful events as well as managing our very lively website, with Alice Sadler making outstanding contributions. I am very grateful for the great support the Hub has enjoyed from the Chair of our Steering Group, Sir Mark Walport FRS MAE, as well as the former Chair of the Steering Group, Sir John Skehel FRS MAE. Many individual Steering Group members, in particular Pearl Dykstra MAE and Valerie O'Donnell OBE MAE have also been incredibly helpful. Finally, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the crucial roles played by the former AE President Sierd Cloetingh MAE, the President of the Learned Society of Wales, Hywel Thomas FRS MAE, and the former Vice-Chancellor of CU, Colin Riordan CBE MAE in initiating and sustaining the AE-CU Hub.

I wish you a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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Professor Ole H Petersen CBE MD FRCP(Hon) MAE ML FRS

