

# D3.4: SWOT WORKSHOP REPORT



Task 3.3 SWOT session  
within SCAR  
Conference 2017  
February 2018



**EUROPEAN UNION**

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**Written by: Dr Laura Devaney & Dr Maeve Henchion, Teagasc**

The overall objective of CASA, a Coordination and Support Action (CSA), is a **consolidated common agricultural and wider bioeconomy research agenda** within the European Research Area.

CASA will achieve this by bringing the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), which has already contributed significantly to this objective in the past, to the next level of performance as a research policy think tank. CASA will efficiently strengthen the strengths and compensate for the insufficiencies of SCAR and thus help it evolve further into “SCAR plus”.

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## Background Context

The SCAR 2017 conference was held during the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia. Entitled "*Research and innovation policy, state-of-play and the role of SCAR in the European Bioeconomy*", the conference was attended by 68 participants from 28 countries (see Appendix 1) mostly from national ministries responsible for agriculture and food (with some forestry and fisheries also) as well as representatives from a number of research institutes and funding bodies. The hosting of the SCAR Plenary on the 6<sup>th</sup> December in Tallinn further ensured commitment and attendance from high level SCAR representatives from a diverse range of national contexts.

A full report of the conference will be published on the conference website<sup>1</sup>, highlighting the diversity of speakers and topics discussed over the two days. This included a focus on: the impact of SCAR outcomes at European and national scales; representativeness and inclusiveness in the SCAR; the structure and role of the SCAR within the research and innovation (R&I) policy landscape; and increasing visibility of SCAR objectives, activities, benefits and outcomes for member countries. On the first day of the conference, Session 3 was dedicated to a series of group discussions on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the SCAR as well as considerations of its next steps in the future. Results from a recent review of the European bioeconomy R&I policy landscape were initially presented to provide broader context for these discussions. Preliminary results from a SWOT analysis of the SCAR were then detailed and the session invited comments and feedback through tailored group activities. Key aims of the workshop included confirming and elaborating preliminary SWOT results to work towards recommendations for improved SCAR functioning and organisation in the future. An outline of the workshop is presented in this SWOT Workshop Report. Full results will be presented in CASA D3.2 related to the SWOT of the SCAR.

## Workshop Format

### Introduction

Commencing at 13.30 on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017, Rolf Stratmann (Projekträger Jülich) introduced the SWOT workshop while also giving a brief overview of the CASA project. This included an outline of the five CASA work packages that focus on SCAR representativeness (WP1), added value and greater impact (WP2), strengthening strategic advice (WP3), SCAR communications (WP4) and overall project management (WP5). Maeve Henchion (Teagasc) presented next, outlining headline results from a recent review of the Bioeconomy Research and Innovation Policy Landscape completed as part of CASA WP3 (full report available for download [here](https://scar-europe.org/index.php/home-scar/events/conferences)). Through this presentation, the range of relevant bioeconomy R&I policies and programmes nested within different Directorate Generals (DGs) were highlighted (including DG Agriculture, DG Grow and DG R&I) with many reported to be attempting to address the range of structural innovation system failures facing the European bioeconomy (e.g. infrastructural, capability, network and institutional failures). Persistent gaps in R&I

<sup>1</sup> <https://scar-europe.org/index.php/home-scar/events/conferences>

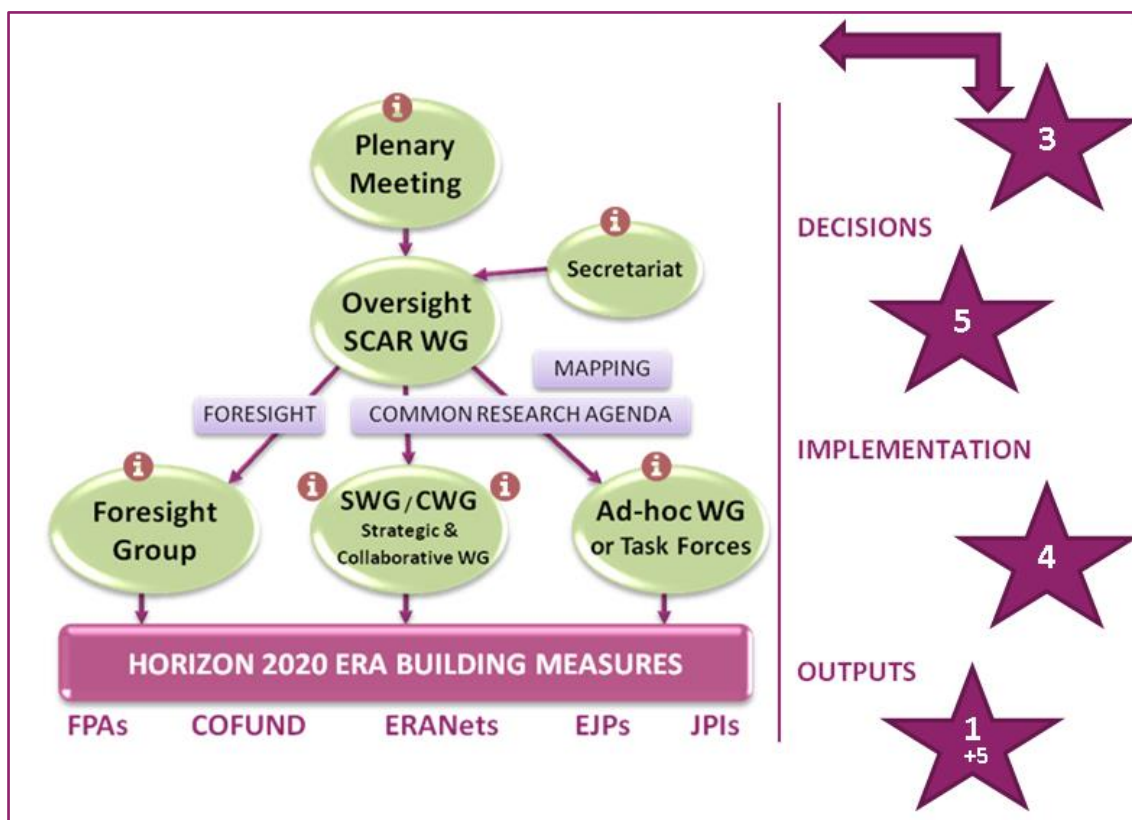


policy addressing transformational system failures were nevertheless also outlined, including in terms of policy coordination, bioeconomy directionality, demand articulation and reflexivity. Setting the wider context for the SWOT workshop, examples of each initiative and failure were provided in this introductory presentation and can be further assessed in Devaney and Henchion (2017) and the workshop slides located in Appendix 2.

Laura Devaney then presented preliminary SWOT results to emerge from an initial round of semi-structured interviews conducted with thirteen key informants relevant to the SCAR. It is widely accepted that one of the most reliable methods for ascertaining people's opinions, motivations, perceptions and attitudes is to simply ask them. Thus, the qualitative interview, simply defined by Berg (2009, p101), as a "*conversation with a purpose*", is regarded as an important and reliable source of data collection (Yin, 2003; Bell, 2006; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Contributing practical knowledge, personal experiences and historical context, interviews were thus conducted with participants from across the SCAR steering group, various strategic, collaborative and foresight working groups, European Research Area building initiatives and a number of EC delegates. As highlighted in Figure 1, the diversity of interviewees obtained for this preliminary analysis of the SCAR ensured a significant geographical reach across Europe. Each star in Figure 1 represents an individual interviewee and their associated country. Figure 2 meanwhile demonstrates the range of interview participants across professional affiliations including the decision making, implementation, output and overview tiers of the SCAR itself. The numbers on the right in Figure 2 indicate the exact number of interviewees per SCAR tier.

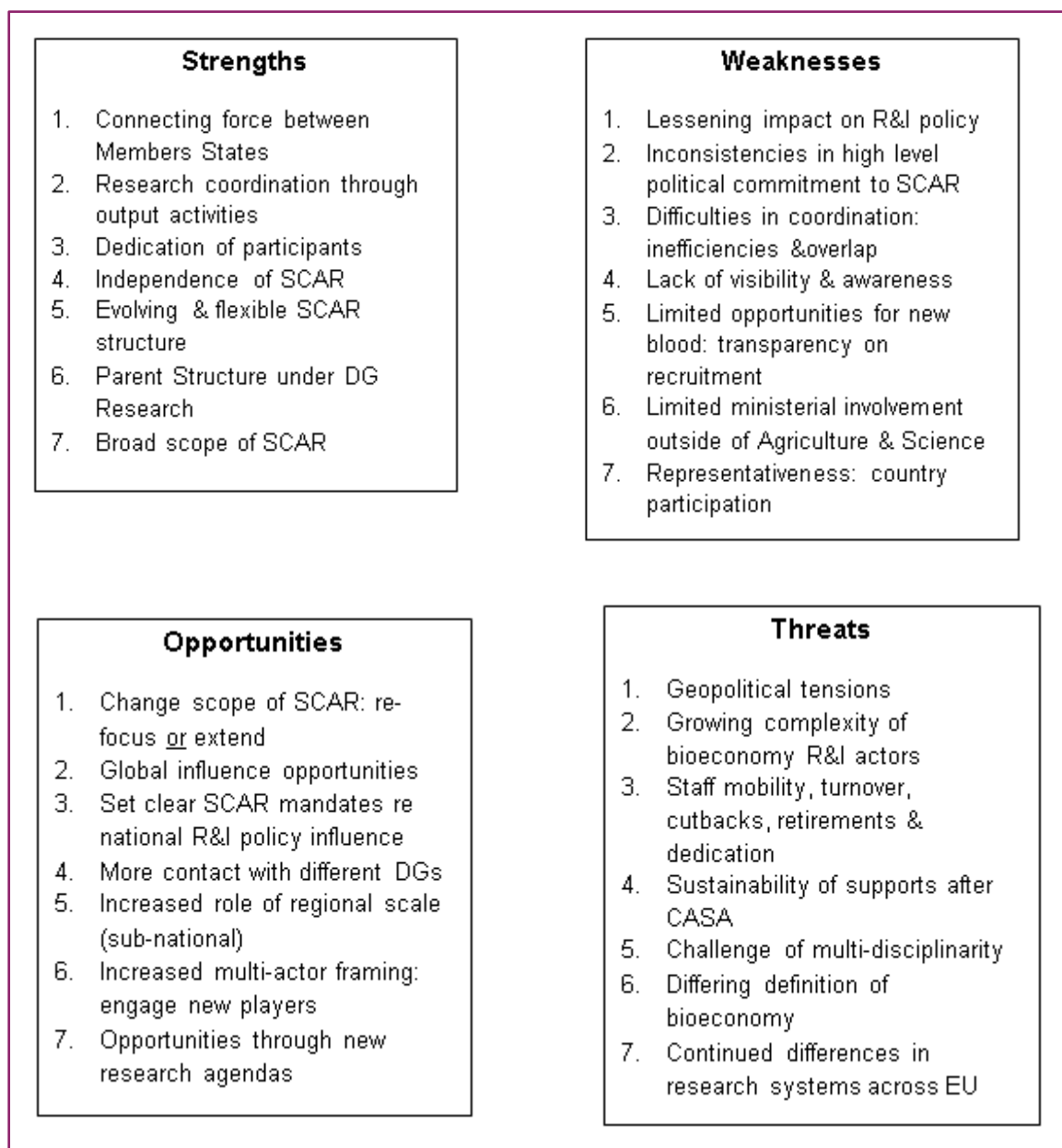


**Figure 1 Key informant interviewee profiles: geographic diversity**



**Figure 2 Key informant interviewee profiles: mapping onto current structure of the SCAR**

Headline preliminary results from the key informant interview phase were presented to the SCAR 2017 conference workshop participants with the intention of discussing and elaborating the results further through tailored workshop activities (Phase 2 of the SWOT of the SCAR research process). The apt combination of one-to-one interviews and SWOT workshop activities allowed for a greater depth of information to be uncovered through the former and increased breadth and consensus through the latter. An overview of the initial results presented to workshop participants is provided in Figure 3, highlighting seven strengths, seven weaknesses, seven opportunities and seven threats associated with the SCAR in its current configuration. Such a framework allowed workshop participants to engage in both an internal reflection regarding the SCAR structure and organisation (S, W) as well an external horizon scanning deliberation to help predict changes in the future (O, T) (Ghazinoory et al., 2011). These results are also further elaborated in the workshop slides in Appendix 2.



**Figure 3 SWOT of the SCAR: preliminary interview results**

### Breakout Activities

Following the introductory context, SWOT workshop participants were split into their pre-assigned discussion groups in keeping with a previously designed Table Plan that ensured a mix of country profiles and affiliations per group. In total, eight groups were formed with approximately eight individuals per discussion group. A volunteer 'Table Host' was nominated in each group to ensure that discussion was kept on point (host aids and prompts were provided), everybody in the group had their say and to assist the facilitators with time-keeping and feedback activities. Participants were then introduced to the breakout workshop activities by Laura Devaney.

### Breakout Activity 1

Breakout Activity 1 involved a 'sense check' of the preliminary SWOT results presented, probing areas of agreement and disagreement amongst the 68 delegates present with the statements outlined in Figure 3. The exercise allowed for any miscommunications, factual inaccuracies and/or missed opportunities to be highlighted with regard to these preliminary interview results. Participants first worked in pairs to confirm or deny each SWOT element (7 in each SWOT category) before contributing to a group consensus poster (one for strengths, one for weaknesses, one for opportunities and one for threats in each group). On this A3 poster, each pair were asked to either assign a ✓ (agree), X (disagree) or ? (unsure) depending on their level of agreement with the SWOT element in question. Further post-its were added by participants to elaborate any areas of disagreement or missed opportunities deemed important to include in the final SWOT results. Image Set 1 provides examples of the flow and evolution of Breakout Activity 1 amongst participants.

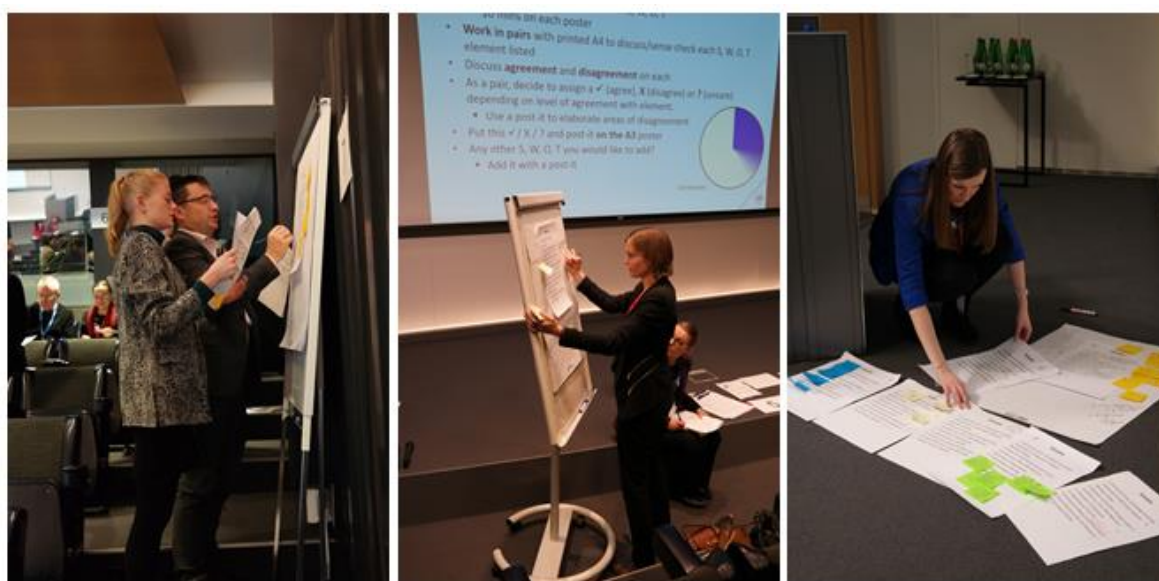


**Image Set 1: Breakout Activity 1: pair work, group consensus and post-it additions**

With 10 minutes assigned to each SWOT category, Breakout Activity 1 was utilised to confirm (or deny) preliminary strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats derived from the key informant interviews to ensure that they are agreed by all. This is an important quality control check within the CASA research process that works to increase trustworthiness of the previous targeted data collection phase and to help to ensure buy-in by stakeholders to any ensuing changes in the SCAR. Allowing time to discuss areas of disagreement in particular helped to probe and clarify reasons for



disagreement where it existed. The diverse range of national contexts present (28 countries) ensured lively discussion in Breakout Activity 1, whereby some features of the SCAR were more obvious and relevant for some participants than others (e.g. according to their participation rate in the SCAR or experience in utilising its results). This level of cross-national learning represented an additional bonus of the workshop activities. All feedback from breakout activity 1 was collated by the table hosts in each grouping (for example, the ✓, X or ? ranking plus post-its from each pair) and thereafter gathered by the workshop facilitators for further analysis at a later date (for example, see Image Set 2).



**Image Set 2: Breakout Activity 1: example table host and facilitator results collation**

### Breakout Activity 2a

Following a short coffee break, Breakout Activity 2a in the SWOT workshop involved a ranking prioritisation of identified SWOT elements. This allowed for discussion and assessment of the priority strengths and principal weaknesses of the SCAR as well as key opportunities and fundamental threats for the standing committee in the future. After all, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats represents step 1 of any SWOT exercise. The next step requires prioritisation of these elements and developing a common vision for the future. Each group in the workshop was assigned one SWOT quadrant with which to work (i.e. SCAR strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats) and asked to rate the seven elements presented in each in order of importance. This allowed for more in-depth discussion on each individual SWOT element (seven per group) while also obtaining group consensus as to the relative importance of each element in relation to each other. Participants were provided with hand-outs of the workshop slides that outlined more detail on each element (and thus facilitated discussion and clarification further), along with seven

laminated tabs to physically order on provided flip charts and/or wall space (for example, see Image Set 3).



**Image Set 3: Breakout Activity 2a: ranking prioritisation exercise with SWOT laminated tabs**

Group discussion was actively encouraged amongst workshop participants during Breakout Activity 2a including consideration of the strongest and most important SCAR strengths, the most prominent and important weaknesses and the probability and importance of opportunities and threats occurring. For participants, this allowed discussion of not only what is desirable for the SCAR in the future but also what is realistic in terms of achievement. The discussion around prioritisation was also framed to allow the table hosts to feed back the ranking prioritisation agreed by the group along with the key sentiments behind the final ranking agreed (e.g. reasons for prioritising the top 2 elements and rationale for the bottom 2). The ranking prioritisation activity lasted 20 minutes in total, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data.

#### Breakout Activity 2b

The final exercise conducted by the SWOT workshop participants focused on developing a vision for the future of the SCAR and next steps towards achieving this. A 'Postcard from the Future' exercise was utilised to capture this feedback from the 68 participants who were asked to write an individual postcard to the SCAR in ten years from now reflecting on what a (more) successful SCAR would look like. Participants were assigned 10 minutes to complete this task using the template detailed in Image 4.

Writing to SCAR from a decade in the future, participants were encouraged to consider three distinct elements:

1. What would you congratulate the SCAR on? What changes have occurred?
2. What was a crucial step in achieving this change?
3. What is the measure of success?



**Image 4 Postcard from the Future template**

Representing a renowned social science methodology, the postcard from the future format allows participants to free themselves from current constraints (Jungk and Mullert, 1987; Davies et al., 2012), imagining first an ideal vision for the future SCAR and then, crucially, tracing back the steps required to achieve that change (a form of ‘backcasting’ (Davies et al. 2014)). Centring on the year 2027 was also envisaged to be enough time for quite radical changes to come into the SCAR, if required. This was based on the decade of change recently witnessed within the organisation since its re-launch in 2005. Imagining what could happen in the next ten years was thus an inspirational and positive point on which to conclude the SWOT workshop activities at the SCAR 2017 conference. Participants were encouraged to also sign off from their respective countries to highlight any differences in vision across regions, geographic contexts and representativeness in the SCAR.

### Group Feedback

To conclude the workshop activities and actively summarise and capture the main discussion points, the final portion of the SWOT workshop was dedicated to the volunteer table hosts who took it in turns to feed back the results of the priority ranking



exercise in particular (Breakout Activity 2a). Hosts were assigned 4 minutes each and actively encouraged to focus on the reasoning behind the top two rated priorities in their group as well as the rationale behind the lower ranked elements. Eight table hosts delivered these results on behalf of their groups, with two groups concentrating on SCAR strengths, two on weaknesses, two on opportunities and two on threats (see Image Set 5).



**Image Set 5 Table Host Feedback**



The nature and organisation of the feedback process allowed groups working on similar topics to directly compare their rated priorities as well as make connections to and with other SWOT elements. In this sense, it was possible to trace the inter-connected relationships between the four SWOT quadrants, with several groups for example recognising that certain opportunities can also pose challenges, many threats hold potential solutions and strengths and weaknesses can indeed be interchangeable depending on how they are executed and perceived, and by whom.

The Group Feedback session lasted approximately 30 minutes and was audio recorded by the facilitators for later analysis. Hand-written and typed notes and photographs were also deliberately taken to effectively capture the SWOT feedback session.

Following the workshop conclusion, Külli Kaare (Estonian Ministry of Rural Affairs) closed Day 1 of the SCAR 2017 conference, thanking the workshop facilitators and providing detail on the evening tours of Tallinn.

### **SWOT Workshop Conclusions and Next Steps...**

The SWOT workshop outlined in this report provided both time and space for participants and CASA researchers to deliberate preliminary results to emerge from Phase 1 of the SWOT of the SCAR. It thus represented an important secondary research phase to confirm and elaborate early findings, enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of results and explore established meanings across a diverse range of national contexts. Engaging 68 SCAR stakeholders in this process represented a significant success, working towards achieving consensus and buy-in for any future changes to the SCAR structure and organisation in the name of greater impact and inclusion. Indeed, encapsulating a good governance approach (Devaney et al., 2017), such stakeholder inclusion is vital given that these participants represent many of the individuals, ministries, research institutions, funders and countries that will be impacted by any decisions made or actions taken related to the future of the SCAR.

Results from the SWOT workshop will be further analysed as part of Task 3.2 in CASA, including further qualitative assessment and coding of workshop audio recordings and semi-structured interview transcripts, quantitative assessment of the ranking prioritisation activities and story board thematic reporting of gathered postcards. These results will be integrated with the preliminary SWOT of the SCAR findings for a concrete overview of the current structure, organisation, functions and state-of-play of the SCAR (D3.2). This will form an important evidence base on which to build future recommendations for further SCAR impact and success in the future.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the CASA team and all members of the SCAR 2017 conference organising committee in the run-up to this event. In particular, a special thank you to Külli Kaare and Helena Pärenson of the Ministry of Rural Affairs of the Republic of Estonia for their help in organising workshop materials in advance. Thanks also to Kertu Kärk and Eve Külmallik, both from the Ministry of Rural Affairs, for their excellent photography skills through the SWOT workshop and wider conference sessions.

The authors would also to acknowledge the support and contributions of all 'Table Hosts' in the SWOT workshop: Christine Bunthof, Stefano Grando, Sylvia Burssens, Bettina Heimann, Hanna Steffens, Vera Steinberg, Rolf Stratmann, Jan Van Esch and Dorri te Boekhorst

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## Appendix 1: Participant List



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
MINISTRY OF RURAL AFFAIRS



## SCAR Conference 2017

### Research and innovation policy, state-of-play and the role of the SCAR in the European Bioeconomy

4 - 5 December, 2017, Tallinn, Estonia

Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (entrance: Lauteri 2)

### Participants list

Nº	First name	Last name	CC	Organisation
1	Laurence	Bastin	BE	European Commission
2	Denise	Böhm	AT	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW)
3	Christine	Bunthof	NL	Wageningen University & Research (WUR)
4	Sylvia	Burssens	BE	Agrolink Flanders - The Flanders research institute for agriculture, fisheries and food (ILVO)
5	Eugeniusz	Chytek	PL	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
6	Mike	Collins	UK	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
7	Valérie	Dehaut	FR	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
8	Laura	Devaney	IE	The Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Teagasc)
9	Zita	Duchovskiene	LT	Ministry of Agriculture
10	Marc	Duponcel	BE	European Commission
11	Loukia	Ekateriniadou	GR	Veterinary Research Institute - Hellenic Agricultural Organisation
12	Jana	Erjavec	SI	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
13	Anett	Fekete	HU	Ministry of Agriculture
14	Canan	Göksu Sürücü	TR	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock - General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies (TAGEM)
15	Stefano	Grando	IT	Ministry of agricultural, food and forestry policies (MIPAAF)
16	Martin	Greimel	AT	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW)
17	Bettina	Heimann	DK	Aalborg University
18	Maeve	Henchion	IE	The Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Teagasc)
19	Jana	Hrenova	SK	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
20	Markku	Järvenpää	FI	Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE)
21	Iva	Jelenkova	CZ	Ministry of Agriculture

Nº	First name	Last name	CC	Organisation
22	Anikó	Juhász	HU	Research Institute of Agricultural Economics
23	Küllü	Kaare	EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
24	Erkki	Karo	EE	Tallinn University of Technology
25	Toomas	Kevvai	EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
26	Mehmet	Kilci	TR	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock - General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies (TAGEM)
27	Ákos	Kristóf	HU	Ministry of Agriculture
28	Eve	Külmallik	EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
29	Waldemar	Kütt	DE	European Commission
30	Gudrun	Langthaler	NO	Research Council of Norway
31	Rocío	Lansac	ES	National Institute for Agricultural and Food Research and Technology (INIA)
32	Els	Lapage	BE	Government of Flanders - Departement of Agriculture and Fisheries
33	Illar	Lemetti	EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
34	Laura	Liepina	LV	Ministry of Rural Affairs
35	Petra	Lindert	DE	European Commission
36	Maarja	Malm	EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
37	José	Matos	PT	National Institute for Agricultural and Veterinary Research (INIAV)
38	Philippe	Moguedet	FR	Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (IFREMER)
39	Catherine	Moreddu	FR	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
40	Vivi Hunnicke	Nielsen	DK	Aarhus University
41	Mattias	Norrby	SE	Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (Formas)
42	Andrea	Noske	DE	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
43	Helena	Pärenson	EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
44	Sirli	Pehme	EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
45	Dana	Peskovicova	SK	National Agricultural and Food Centre (NPPC)
46	Irina	Pilvere	LV	Latvia University of Agriculture
47	Vladislav	Popov	BG	Ministry of Education and Science
48	Piret	Priisalu	EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
49	Serenella	Puliga	IT	Ministry of agricultural, food and forestry policies (MIPAAF)
50	Kalliopi	Radoglou	GR	Democritus University of Thrace
51	Stefan	Rauschen	DE	Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Project Management Jülich (PtJ)
52	Eric	Regouin	NL	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
53	Bjarne	Thomsen	DK	Ministry of Environment and Agriculture
54	Monika	Rzepecka	PL	Ministry of Science and Higher Education
55	Elke	Saggau	DE	Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE)



Nº	First name	Last name	CC	Organisation
56	Anita	Silmbrod	AT	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW)
57	Hanna	Steffens	DE	Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Project Management Jülich (PtJ)
58	Vera	Steinberg	DE	Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE)
59	Rolf	Stratmann	DE	Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Project Management Jülich (PtJ)
60	Annika	Suu	EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs
61	Matthew	Tabone	MT	Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change
62	Dorri	Te Boekhorst	NL	Wageningen University & Research (WUR)
63	Egizio	Valceschini	FR	French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MESRI)
64	Jan	Van Esch	NL	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
65	Inge	Van Oost	BE	European Commission - DG Agri Research and Innovation
66	Astrid	Willener	CH	Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG)
67	Janne	Winther Jørgensen	DK	Aarhus University
68	Anne	Zangerle	LU	Ministry of Agriculture

CC: country code

## Appendix 2: SWOT Workshop Slides



**Session 3**  
Group discussions on  
SCAR Review:  
strengths, weaknesses,  
opportunities, threats &  
next steps

Dr Maeve Henchion & Dr Laura Devaney

SCAR Conference 2017  
Tallinn, Estonia, 4<sup>th</sup> December




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## Agenda

- Introduction
- Programme for today
- Activity 1
- Activity 2

## SWOT Tasks

- Assessment and SWOT analysis of the state of play of research and innovation policy in the broader Bioeconomy area
  - Report completed and available
- Assessment and SWOT analysis of the European Bioeconomy
- Revised focus of SWOT analysis: SCAR itself
- Desk research and executive 1:1 interviews conducted
- Sense checking and next steps

## Programme for today

- ***Breakout Activity 1 – Sense Checking SWOT results (miscommunications, factual inaccuracies, missed opportunities etc.)***

Preliminary S, W, O, Ts identified

An important quality control check to increase trustworthiness of research and to help to ensure buy-in by stakeholders to any ensuing changes to SCAR.

An opportunity to disagree and to probe and clarify reasons for disagreement if such disagreement exists.

## Programme for today (after coffee)

- ***Breakout Activity 2 - Next steps What a (more!) successful SCAR would look like and how we will get there?***

Moving beyond identification of S, W, O and Ts.

Prioritisation and development of a vision for the future.

## Highlights of SWOT of R&I policy landscape

- Range of relevant bioeconomy R&I policies, programmes and practices nested within different DGs
- Many attempting to address structural innovation system failures:
  1. infrastructural failures, e.g. support for demo facilities and pilot plants
  2. Capabilities failures, e.g. boosting SME human and financial capacity
  3. Network failures, e.g. establishment of CSAs and ERA-NETs
  4. Institutional failures, e.g. Lead Market Initiative



## Highlights of SWOT of R&I policy landscape (2)

- Transformational system failures
  - Policy coordination failures, e.g. persisting challenges in established R&I supports including JPIs, EIPs and ERA-NETs
  - Directionality failures, e.g. lack of a clear bioeconomy ambition within individual DGs
  - Demand articulation failures, e.g. balancing science push with market pull
  - Reflexivity failures, e.g. accurate monitoring mechanisms and targets

## Highlights of SWOT of R&I policy landscape (3)

- Significant progress since 2012 strategy “Innovating for Sustainable Growth
- Plethora of policies, programmes and practices
- Reflexivity crucial at this stage: monitoring implementation and impact and reorienting supports to achieve the desired and required transformative changes (consider degrowth and reduced consumption)
- Policy coordination critical – EU bioeconomy strategy review, circular economy package, Food 2030, sharing-, green-.



## SWOT of the SCAR Workshop

4th December 2017  
SCAR 2017, Tallinn, Estonia  
Dr Laura Devaney & Dr Maeve Henchion  
CASA WP3




EUROPEAN UNION  
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### Standing Committee on Agricultural Research

- SCAR est 1974 for the coordination of agricultural research
  - Organising efforts; effective use of results; orientation towards CAP; pooling research facilities
  - A catalyst for the coordination of national research programmes, working towards an integrated *European Research Area*
  - Making provision for exchanges of information and reciprocal consultation on the programmes of agricultural research existing or envisaged in MS
- Re-launch in 2005, requested to advise the EC and Member States on the coordination of agricultural and bioeconomy research in Europe
  - Coupling research and innovation and facilitating public-public and public-private sectors to work together in delivering innovation to tackle bioeconomy challenges
- 2008 renewed mandate: broadening of the agricultural research field
  - 'Farm-to-fork'; research for sustainable agriculture; non-food uses; KBBE
  - Strengthening the production and sharing of agricultural knowledge in Europe and consolidating joint research programming for better governance of the European agro-food system
  - Multi-actor integration

## Standing Committee on Agricultural Research

**Today:**  
SCAR represents 37 different countries: members being ministries (or other organisations such as research councils) from all EU Member States, with Candidate and Associated Countries as observers



## Task 3.2 and 3.3 - SWOT of the SCAR

- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
- Assessing current structure, organisation, processes and influence of the SCAR to provide an evidence-base for recommendations as to how the SCAR might adapt to improve its functions, impact and activities in the future
- **Purpose:** establishing the state of play 'plus' i.e. touching on next steps that Task 3.4 onwards can take forward for improved SCAR structure and activities
- Connecting and consolidating role across CASA





## Task 3.2 Methodology

- The semi-structured interview: renowned social science methodology
- *"A conversation with a purpose"* (Berg, 2009, p101)
- *"Interviews are particularly well suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective"* (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p116)



- Key informants

- Structure of SCAR, geography, mix of actor groups, multiple 'hats'
- 13 in total; anonymity guaranteed; diversity by affiliation and country profile
- Not representative but a range of views



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## Interviewee Profiles

### Primary Affiliations:

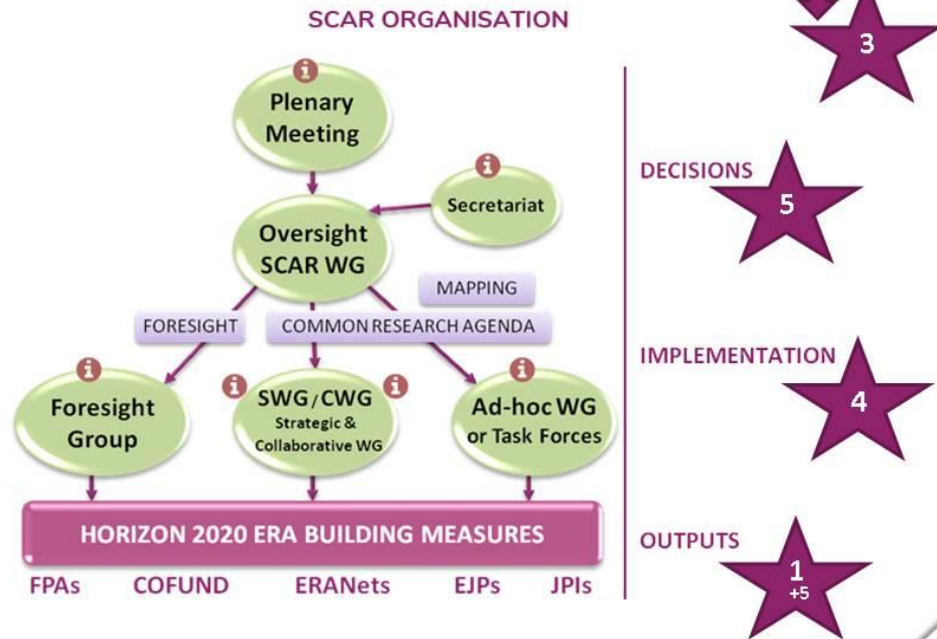
- 3 EC Delegates
- 2 SCAR Foresight
- 5 SCAR SG
- 1 (+2) CWG
- 1 (+2) SWG
- 1 (+2) JPI



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## Interviewee Profiles



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## Interview Objectives

- 4 objectives of interviews:
  - To improve the overall organisation, communication and dissemination of SCAR activities, outputs and outcomes for greater impact by conducting a SWOT analysis of the current SCAR structure, influence and coordination mechanisms
  - Investigate the legitimacy, influence, relevance and political impact that arise as a result of the SCAR's internal structures and entities
  - Acknowledge and horizon scan for threats and opportunities to SCAR in the future
  - Consider the evolution of SCAR in the evolving agricultural and bioeconomy landscape – what changes to SCAR structure and organisation will be required to meet new demand
- Internal reflection (S, W) and external horizon scanning (O, T)

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Preliminary Results....

## SWOT of the SCAR



## Preliminary SWOT Results

### Strengths

1. Connecting force between Members States
2. Research coordination through output activities
3. Dedication of participants
4. Independence of SCAR
5. Evolving & flexible SCAR structure
6. Parent Structure under DG Research
7. Broad scope of SCAR



### Opportunities

1. Change scope of SCAR: re-focus or extend
2. Global influence opportunities
3. Set clear SCAR mandates re national R&I policy influence
4. More contact with different DGs
5. Increased role of regional scale (sub-national)
6. Increased multi-actor framing: engage new players
7. Opportunities through new research agendas



### Weaknesses

1. Lessening impact on R&I policy
2. Inconsistencies in high level political commitment to SCAR
3. Difficulties in coordination: inefficiencies & overlap
4. Lack of visibility & awareness
5. Limited opportunities for new blood: transparency on recruitment
6. Limited ministerial involvement outside of Agriculture & Science
7. Representativeness: country participation

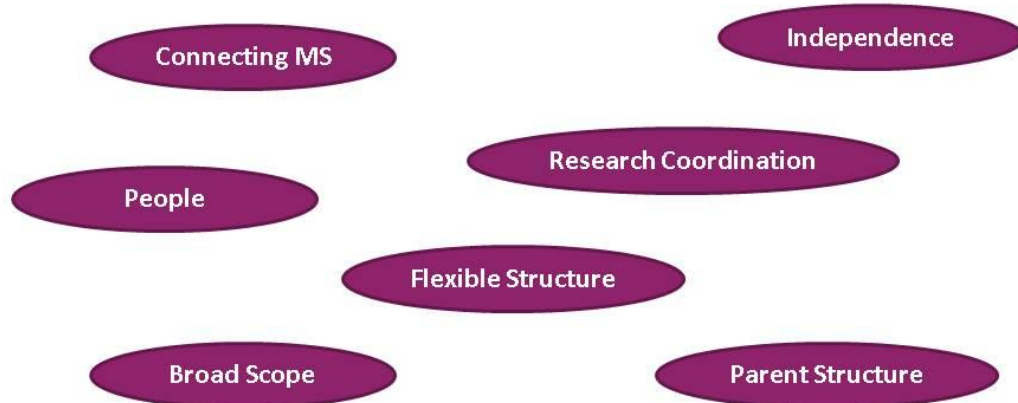


### Threats

1. Geopolitical tensions
2. Growing complexity of bioeconomy R&I actors
3. Staff mobility, turnover, cutbacks, retirements & dedication
4. Sustainability of supports after CASA
5. Challenge of multi-disciplinarity
6. Differing definition of bioeconomy
7. Continued differences in research systems across EU

## Preliminary Results: Strengths

To be explored in each group....



## Preliminary Results: Strengths



- **Connecting force, knowledge exchange, networking and collaboration between Members States**
  - Successfully brings MS together (rare); valuable lessons from one another; knowledge transfer at policy/programme level; Vast information & knowledge
- **Research coordination through output activities (e.g. JPIs, ERA-Nets etc)**
  - For many where SCAR's true impact lies - towards European Research Area
- **Dedication of participants**
  - Committed & enthusiastic individuals (majority); People power; connections
- **Independence of SCAR**
  - Crucial in political landscape to fulfil think-tank duties – not as embedded in EC which gives it freedom



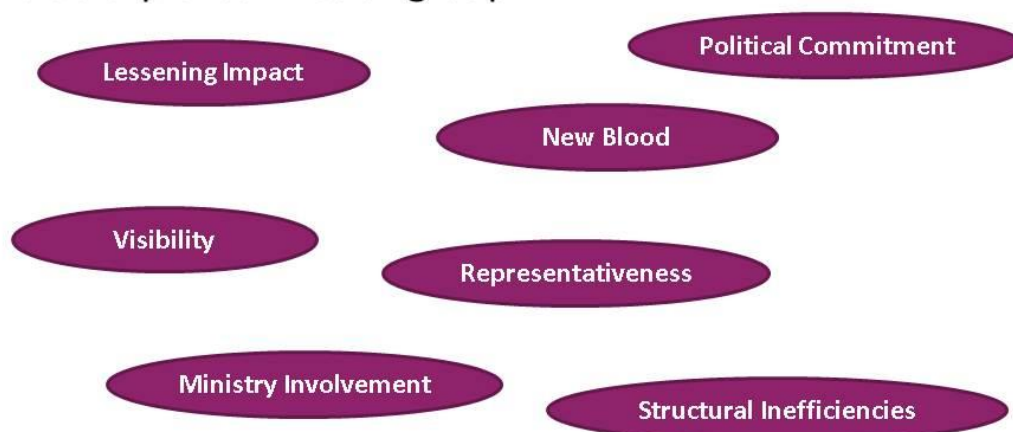
## Preliminary Results: Strengths



- **Evolving and flexible SCAR structure**
  - Evolved as such but serves its purpose and considered well organised by many
  - Inner Framework of SCAR thought to work well: sense that structure of SCAR is flexible so can adapt to any new role in the future – ability to add more WGs or remove as needs be
  - Steering Group as the effective 'engine' of SCAR
- **Parent Structure under DG Research** (with support from DG Agri)
  - Appropriate to nest under DG Research – dormancy under full ownership of DG Agri but continued support and coordination
- **Broad scope of SCAR**
  - Increasingly wide remit of SCAR – evolving as agriculture evolves

## Preliminary Results: Weaknesses

To be explored in each group....





## Preliminary Results: Weaknesses



- **Lessening impact on R&I policy and programmes at EU and national levels**
  - Implementation deficit: knowledge exchange needs follow up implementation to action SCAR results across scales
- **Inconsistencies in high level political commitment to SCAR (national & EC)**
  - Lack of politician engagement: governmental hierarchies often not willing to invest in a knowledge exchange, discussion platform like SCAR; lessening resources
- **Difficulties in coordination vertically and horizontally within structure: inefficiencies and overlap**
  - Perceived inefficiencies in Steering Group meetings
  - Duplication & overlap between SWGs, CWGs & ERA-building measures (ERA-Net, JPIs etc.); often the same people; duplicating work programmes; weak cooperation
- **Lack of SCAR visibility and awareness**
  - Limited awareness of SCAR outside of those involved
  - Limited online presence; persisting traditional communications; limited outreach

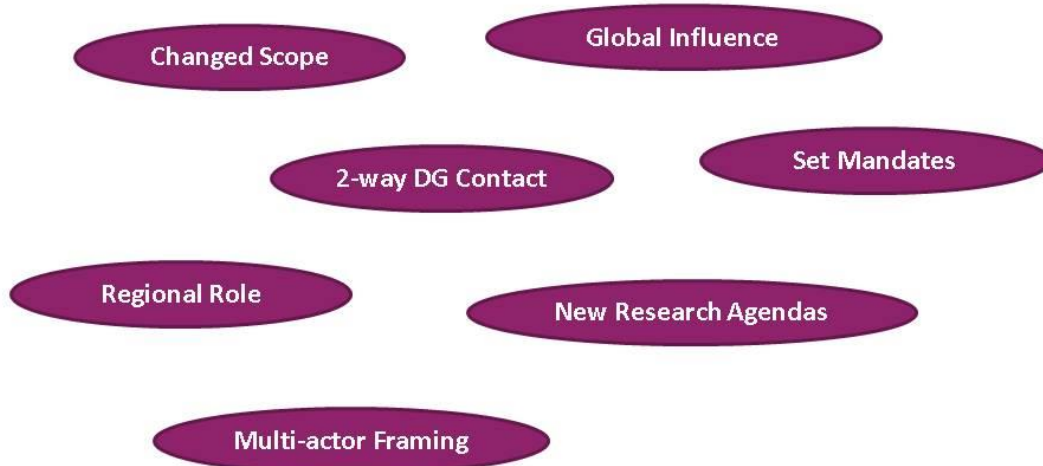
## Preliminary Results: Weaknesses



- **Limited opportunities for new blood with lack of transparency in “recruitment” process**
  - Lack of clarity regarding plenary /SG delegations and selection process for WG experts beyond personal contacts and connections
  - Desire for inclusion of newer generations: for improved outreach & continue breaking language barrier
- **Limited ministerial involvement outside of Agriculture and Science limiting bioeconomy potential**
  - Legacy of DG Agri parental structure resulting in primarily Agricultural representatives attending SG
  - Problematic in holistic bioeconomy (e.g. conservative forestry and marine discussions) and national R&I policy often created by Ministries of Science
- **Representativeness limitations regarding country participation**
  - Frustrations re inclusiveness - issue of ‘high potential’ (low participating) MS

## Preliminary Results: Opportunities

To be explored in each group....



## Preliminary Results: Opportunities



- **Change the scope of the SCAR: to re-focus or extend**
  - Option to re- focus on original SCAR remit (establish ERA) & coordinate agricultural research
  - OR To fully extend, bridging land and sea divide, aligning all biomass resources and production & consumption considerations for European bioeconomy development
- **Global influence opportunities**
  - Potential to influence global bioeconomy agendas (e.g. SDGs) - belief that strong foundation in SCAR and structure to work off – science that is open to the world
  - Potential SCAR role in International Bioeconomy Forum
- **Set clear SCAR mandates regarding national R&I policy influence**
  - Need for measurable targets and deliverables to improve knowledge transfer efficiencies
- **More direct contact with different DGs: two way interactions**
  - Wider opportunities to work with other policies and DGs more closely (fisheries, environment, climate change, circular economy etc.), not just R&I policy to build ERA - beyond Horizon 2020
  - 2 way communications e.g. SCAR representatives out to ministries and DG Mare, DG Env, DG Grow etc attend SCAR meetings and present latest DG thinking, strategies and developments

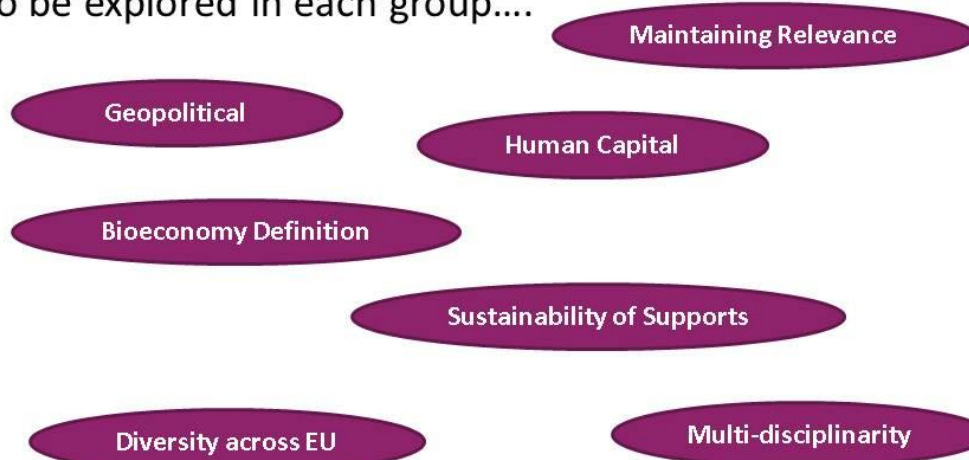
## Preliminary Results: Opportunities



- **Increased role of regional scale in SCAR (sub-national)**
  - Potential for regional representatives in SCAR SG rather than just national
  - Particularly re bioeconomy focus – for regional representatives to then bring back SCAR thinking for regional R&I funding policy and developments (policy & practice)
- **Increased multi-actor framing**
  - Potential to engage new players with increasing influence in research arena – MNCs, NGOs, cities, regions and researchers
  - HOW to engage them in transparent way and how SCAR structure would need to change to accommodate this (if desirable)
  - Opportunity for new fora for engagement and truly open up European science
  - Increased connections with other bioeconomy organisations e.g. BBI
- **Opportunities through new research agendas: Food 2030, FP9 mission-orientations and social value-added research**
  - Changing research landscape and how SCAR (and its structure) might adapt to this

## Preliminary Results: Threats

To be explored in each group....





## Preliminary Results: Threats



- **Geopolitical tensions**
  - e.g impact of Brexit; threat of other countries follow
- **Growing complexity of bioeconomy R&I actors: maintaining relevance**
  - Danger of SCAR becoming redundant or irrelevant: risk for SCAR to become one of many players in the field vs JPIs etc with research agendas
  - Established in different time -needs to evolve and has done but more required
- **Staff mobility, turnover, cutbacks, retirements and dedication**
  - Vulnerability of human capital reliance for SCAR success – including budget constraints at MS level impacting on core membership of SCAR
  - Reliance on enthusiasm/dedication of chairs and members for WG success
  - Importance of identifying right people internally and externally for greater impact
- **Sustainability of supports induced by CASA**
  - Worry of over reliance on CASA for support of WGs in particular; concern for sustainability when project finishes

## Preliminary Results: Threats



- **Challenge of multi-disciplinarity**
  - Challenge of retaining depth of expertise (and quality) vs breadth and broad brush stroke required of multi-disciplinarity to connect the dots and see the bigger picture
  - Challenges too for SCAR members to remain updated of all developments in era of information overload
- **Differing definition of bioeconomy may pull SCAR in different directions**
  - E.g. biotechnology vs bioresource pathways
  - New and different communities of experts, policies and policy frame – needs space for discussion but increasingly complex number of elements involved and alters according to definition chosen
- **Continued differences in research systems and associated supports across the EU**
  - Diversity highlighting a need to invest more to support SCAR participation





### Workshop Aims

1. Sense-check SWOT results
  - Clarify any factual inaccuracies
  - Discuss areas of disagreement
  - Identify any missing elements
  - Eradicated miscommunications
2. SWOT Prioritisation
  - Priority Strengths; Principal Weaknesses
  - Emergent Opportunities; Fundamental Threats
3. Next steps for SCAR....

## Activities/Time Schedule

- Activity 1 – Sense-check SWOT Results
- 15.00-15.30: *Coffee break*
- Activity 2 – Ranking Prioritisation & Future
- Activity 3 Group Feedback – table hosts
- Workshop summary/conclusions (c.16.45)
- Tallinn tour..... 😊



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## Logistics

- Volunteer Table Hosts
  - To keep discussion on point (table prompts available)
  - Ensuring everybody has their say
  - Time-keeping
  - Table Feedback
  - ..... any volunteers??
- Additional commentary:
  - [laura.devaney@teagasc.ie](mailto:laura.devaney@teagasc.ie)
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## Breakout Activity 1

- **Breakout Activity 1 – Sense Checking SWOT results (miscommunications, factual inaccuracies, missed opportunities etc.)**

**Objectives & Rationale:** Confirm preliminary S, W, O and T derived from key informant interviews to ensure agreed by all. This is an important *quality control check* to increase *trustworthiness* of the previous data collection phase and to help to ensure *buy-in* by stakeholders to any ensuing changes to SCAR. Allowing time to discuss areas of disagreement in particular will help to probe and clarify reasons for disagreement if such disagreement exists.



CASA, Support to SCAR

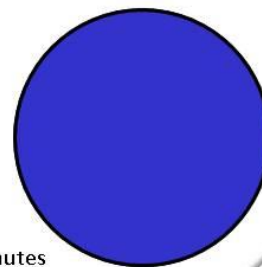
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## Breakout Activity 1



### Activity 1 (45-55 mins) – Sense Check

- 1 A3 poster in middle of table with S, W, O, T
  - 10 mins on each poster
- **Work in pairs** with printed A4 to discuss/sense check each S, W, O, T element listed
- Discuss **agreement** and **disagreement** on each
- As a pair, decide to assign a ✓ (agree), X (disagree) or ? (unsure) depending on level of agreement with element.
  - Use a post-it to elaborate areas of disagreement
- Put this ✓ / X / ? and post-it **on the A3** poster
- Any other S, W, O, T you would like to add?
  - Add it with a post-it



10 minutes

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## Breakout Activity 2

- **Breakout Activity 2 - Next steps, what a (more!) successful SCAR would look like and how we will get there?**
  - **Activity 2a (20mins) - Ranking Prioritisation**
  - **Activity 2b (10mins) - Postcard of Future**

**Objectives & Rationale:** Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is step 1 of any SWOT exercise. The next steps requires prioritisation of these and developing a vision for the future

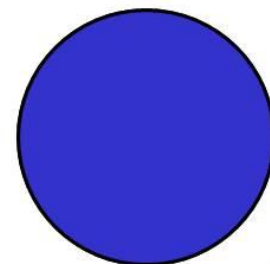
## Activity 2a: Priority Ranking



### Priority Ranking Activity (20 mins)

- Each table assigned one quadrant (i.e. S W O or T)
- Each element from each quadrant separately laminated (i.e. if there are 7 strengths there are 7 laminated elements for the table dealing with strengths)
- ❖ **Quantitative Ranking:** asking for **group consensus** as to **relative importance** of each element in relation to one another (e.g. strongest & most important strength, most prominent and important weakness to consider, probability and importance of opportunities & threats etc.)
- ❖ **Group Discussion** e.g. this is a key strength of SCAR, is it important that SCAR is good at this? Importance and probability of opportunity/threat occurrence?
  - ❖ Discussion around prioritisation to allow table host to feed back ranking agreed by table and key sentiments behind it (top 2 elements, rationale for bottom 2)

20 minutes



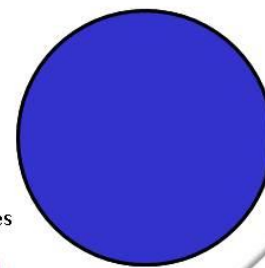


## Breakout Activity 2b: Postcard from the Future

**What does a (more!) successful SCAR look like?**  
(10mins)



- Writing to SCAR in 10 years....
  1. What would you congratulate SCAR on? What changes have occurred?
  2. What was a crucial step in achieving this change?
  3. What is the measure of success?
- Sign off from your country



10 minutes



CASA, Support to SCAR

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## Activity 3: Group Feedback and Discussion

**Feedback from Group Discussions (c.30 mins)**

- Table host to explain results of priority ranking exercise
  - c. 4-5 mins per table host
  - Host to explain the top 2 elements of relevance to the group
  - Equally, outline the rationale behind the bottom 1-2 elements that were deemed of least importance
- Workshop Conclusion (16.45)



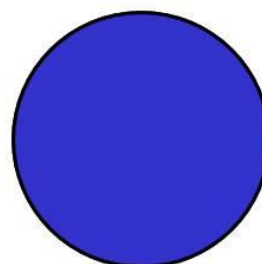
CASA, Support to SCAR

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## Priority Feedback: Top 2, Bottom 2



4 minutes



# THANK YOU

Any Additional Commentary:

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