

Appendix 2

Interview guide Germany and UK (English version)

A translated version of this interview guide was used for interviews conducted in German language

Theme 1: Background

- What is your academic background and your previous positions?
- What was your role in national expert committees or as an independent advisor that advised the government during the COVID-19 crisis?
- What was your motivation to be part of a science advisory committee during COVID-19 (Swiss COVID Taskforce, ExpertInnenrat, SAGE expert panel)?
- Have you already worked in a crisis situation prior to the Covid-19 pandemic? If yes, have you relied on this experience to guide you through decision-making during the current crisis?
- Have you already participated in a crisis simulation exercise or a crisis training? If yes, could you rely on this training to guide you through this crisis? Especially during the decision-making process?
- Were there pandemic plans you could rely on and by whom were they prepared? To what extent were they used? Would you say that they fit reality or that they were not helpful? Did you use them evenly throughout the crisis (1st wave, 2nd wave)?
- Have you already worked with experts before (can be civil, academia, etc)? If yes, could you rely on this experience to guide you through your interactions with them?

Theme 2: Policy Advisory System

- How would you describe the way in which experts are usually (= under non-crisis conditions) integrated in policymaking? What is your experience from your everyday work? In your opinion, what should be changed in that regard?
- How did the sources of expert advice change in the COVID-19 pandemic? From which sources did you get expert information? How would you evaluate that?
- How were experts integrated in the policy-making process, in the decisions on the pandemic? How would you evaluate that?
- Were some experts more included than others? Why?
- Which existing bodies of expertise were relied upon during the pandemic? Which not? Why?
- Which advisory bodies and/or bodies of decision-making were newly created during the pandemic? How did they fit the existing structures? How did you exchange with them (how often, on which basis, through verbal or written communication)?
- How did the collaboration with experts change in the COVID-19 pandemic? Was it in any way comparable to earlier crises (financial crisis, swine flu, etc...)?

Theme 3: Norms and ethical considerations of Scientific Policy Advice

- What differences in norms and values did you notice between the political sphere and the scientific sphere? How were these differences handled?
- From your perspective, what role should scientific experts play in policy making in a crisis situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic? To what extent was this met during the COVID-19 pandemic - can you give positive and negative examples?
- How did you perceive the interdisciplinary collaboration within the expert committee? Did you notice any epistemological differences? How were differing opinions on policy recommendations handled?

Appendix 2

- On a general level: What were the key ethical questions or issues during the pandemic response in your view? What do you perceive as ethical conflicts in how COVID-19 policies were made? Do you have concrete examples?
- Which role did ethical consideration play during the policymaking process in your view?
- What were the ethical questions with which you struggled most? Can you explain why?
- How did you try to answer these ethical questions?

Theme 4: Use of Policy Advice for Policy Responses

- Did experts specifically recommend policies? All of them or only some?
- To what extent did policy reactions follow the advice given by these experts?
- What were the rationales after which you decided to pursue one policy strategy and not another (i.e. development of the pandemic's parameters, unanimous recommendation by experts, public pressure, etc.)
- How did you make these trade-offs?
- Do you think that political reasons have priority over ethics to adopt a measure?
- Would some form of ethical support or guidance have been useful to you? If yes, which form would that be?
- What was the main challenge in the cooperation with experts?
- How was the personal relationship between actors from politics and science?
- How important were trust, uncertainty and time constraints in this relationship?
- What was the greatest challenge in the communication of policy responses to the public?
- Do you think it is helpful or detrimental if experts publicly communicate and comment on the decisions taken by policy-makers?
- To what extent did you rely on expert information in the public communication of your policies?
- What lessons have you learnt for the relation between politics and science for future crises? What would you do differently?

Theme 5: Science Communication and Mass Media

- How did you perceive communication from scientists and academic experts to the public during COVID-19? Do have positive and negative examples? How should scientific experts communicate to the public in crises situations?
- What are your perceptions on the media coverage regarding the role of expert committees in COVID-19 policy making? Can you give concrete examples? What about social media?
- How do you think media coverage shaped your work as a scientific advisor, the work of the scientific advisory board, and the interactions with policymakers?

Appendix 2

Interview guide Switzerland (English version)

A translated version of this interview guide was used for interviews conducted in German language

Introduction

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you were member of the Swiss National COVID-19 Science Task Force. How did you perceive your role in scientific policy advice? What motivated you to work there?
 - 1.1. Has your perception of your role changed over time?
 - 1.2. Did you perceive this role more as a commissioner or as an independent expert body setting its own agenda? Do you have any examples?

Relationship science and politics

2. What was the biggest challenge in the relationship and collaboration between science and politics?
3. What role do you think scientific experts *should* play in policy-making during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic? Why?
 - 3.1. Do you see the role rather in the provision and translation of new scientific findings? Or also the formulation of clear recommendations on how politicians should decide?
 - 3.2. To what extent have scientific advisory bodies abroad and their understanding of the role of scientific policy advice influenced your work or your understanding of your role?
 - 3.3. In your experience, how did the politics/civil service perceive the work of the Task Force?

Communication and media coverage

4. How did you experience the relationship and communication of scientific experts with the public during the COVID-19 pandemic? Are there positive and negative examples?
 - 4.1. How *should* scientific experts communicate with the public in crisis situations? What are their responsibilities and where do you see the limits of these responsibilities? (e.g. in deriving concrete recommendations for action, influencing policy, etc.)
 - 4.2. Do you see differences in the role depending on the communication channel (policy brief, media conference, internal discussions with politicians/administration, public communication...)?
5. How was the relationship between journalists / the media and science experts? How did you perceive the media coverage of the role of scientific policy advice during COVID-19?
 - 5.1. How do you think might the media coverage have influenced the work of the Scientific Advisory Board and the interaction with political decision-makers?
 - 5.2. How do you think did the public / people perceive the work of the Task Force?
 - 5.3. What about social media?

Organisation and interdisciplinarity

6. How was the task force organized in the section in which you were operationally active?
7. How did you perceive the interdisciplinary collaboration in the task force?
 - 7.1. With what other disciplines did you collaborate particularly often/good?
 - 7.2. What opportunities and challenges have you perceived with regard to interdisciplinary collaboration?

Future

8. What lessons have you learned for the relationship between politics and science for future crises? What would you do differently?

Appendix 2

Coding tree

SCIENCE AND POLITICS

1. Motivation to participate in scientific advisory body
2. Relationships and interactions with politics
 - 2.1. Institutional development
 - 2.2. Commissioning and agenda setting
 - 2.3. Relationship with government
 - 2.4. Parallel structures
 - 2.5. Transparency and confidentiality
 - 2.6. Political instrumentalization of scientific advice
 - 2.7. Learning curve
3. Role reflections
 - 3.1. Role development and challenges
 - 3.2. Consensus: Scientists do not make political decisions
 - 3.3. Variety in role perceptions
 - 3.3.1. Separation between science and politics
 - 3.3.2. Spectrum between science and politics
 - 3.4. Scientific independence
4. How to derive recommendations for politics
 - 4.1. Evidence-based policymaking
 - 4.2. Pragmatic recommendations
 - 4.3. Seeking and communicating consensus
 - 4.4. Uncertainty
5. Lessons learned for future crises
 - 5.1. Lessons learned regarding the relationship between science and politics
 - 5.2. Transparency and accountability
 - 5.3. Challenges related to the academic system

SCIENCE AND MEDIA/PUBLIC

6. Motivation to engage in public communication
7. Relationships and interactions in public discourses
 - 7.1. High media interest
 - 7.2. Role perception and development
 - 7.3. Learning curve
 - 7.4. Challenges in public communication
 - 7.5. Building relationships