



K O N I N K L I J K E N E D E R L A N D S E
A K A D E M I E V A N W E T E N S C H A P P E N

**ADVICE ON
DUAL USE RESEARCH POLICY
IN THE NETHERLANDS**

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ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

André Knottnerus was a member of the KNAW committee that prepared the advice Improving Biosecurity (2013)

As vice president of KNAW in 2007, **Jos WM van der Meer** presented the Code of Conduct Biosecurity to the Minister of Science and Education, Maria van der Hoeven

He was a member of the Feedback group for the advice Improving Biosecurity (2013). As president of EASAC (European Academies Science Advisory Council), he was involved in the EASAC report on Dual use.



BIEN ÉTONNÉS DE SE TROUVER ENSEMBLE

- Life sciences and security policy: two separate worlds
- Impact of 9/11 and the anthrax letters
- Increased awareness as an issue for biomedicine, public health and Academies of Science
- KNAW in 2007: Code of Conduct for Biosecurity



2007 DUTCH CODE OF CONDUCT FOR BIOSECURITY

- Raising awareness
 - Education/training (risks of misuse)
 - Culture of responsibility
 - Regular attention
- Proactive research & publication policy
- Accountability and oversight (involvement of leadership)
- Internal and external communication
- Accessibility of institutions
- Shipment and transport
- Broad acceptance





LESSONS LEARNED OF H5N1 DEBATE

- The KNAW code of conduct is considered important as a method to make scientists aware of dual-use issues
- But: awareness is not enough.
- Scientists and security people may have different ideas about risks (and benefits).
- Involvement of policy and the general public.



2012: A REQUEST FOR ADVICE

Ministry of Science & Education asks advice at KNAW

- **How** should dual use research be assessed?
- **Who** should assess dual use research?

KNAW installs biosecurity committee to prepare the advice



THE KNAW BIOSECURITY COMMITTEE:

- Seven members from different disciplines: life sciences, medicine, law, security studies
- A feedback group of more than 30 persons from science, policy, industry, government
- National and international networking activities



BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- There is no zero risk for misuse of life sciences.
- Low and high risks have to be distinguished and handled differently.
- No singular discipline (science) or department (government) can survey all issues.
- Necessity to develop trust, and bridge gaps between government, scientists, security experts and the public.
- Risks must be weighed versus (potential) benefits.
- There are political and international dimensions.
- Knowledge-base of assessing risk of intentional misuse is always problematic

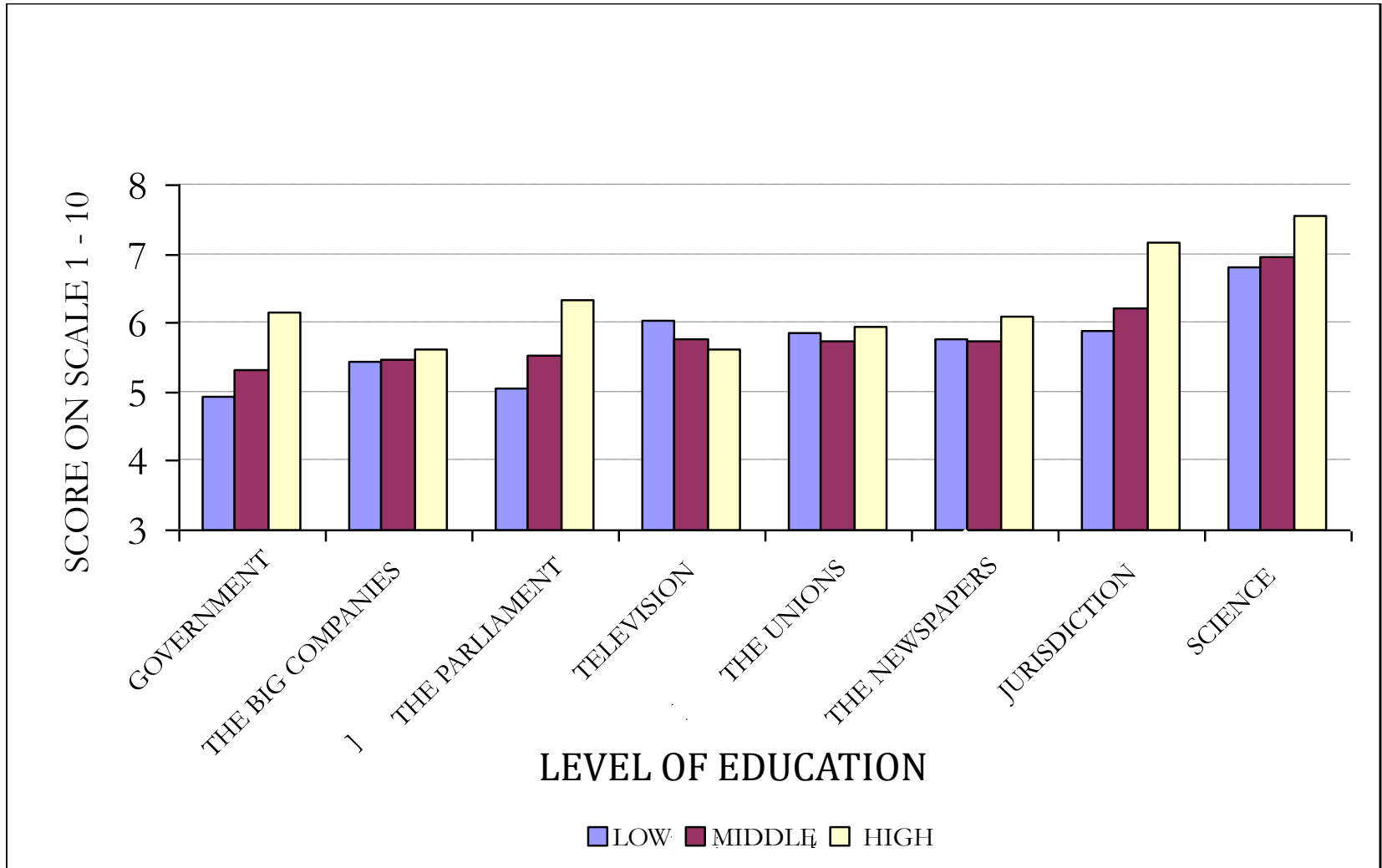


MAIN CONSIDERATIONS (1)

- Self regulation, including regular external review, is the basis
- The public should be able to trust researchers to assess whether their results can be misused for criminal or terrorist purposes.
- An integrated approach for weighing/debating dual use risks and benefits from scientific, security, and societal perspective.
- Look for politically acceptable and scientifically feasible institutional and policy options to deal with dual use



Public confidence in (n=800, 2012*)

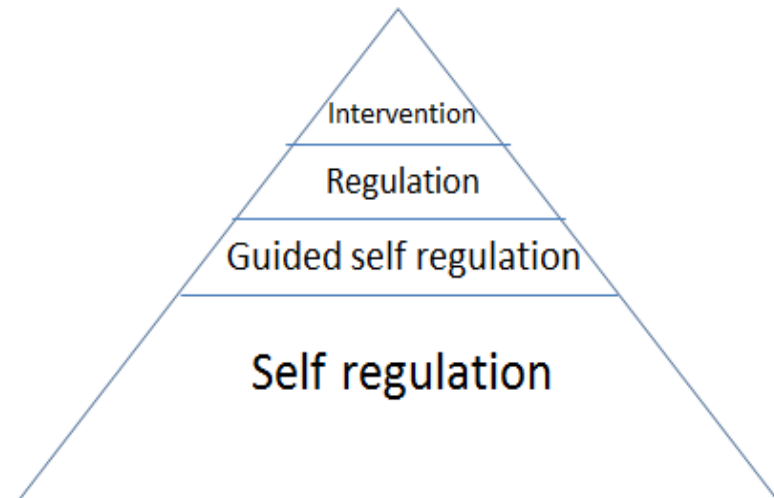


* Scientific Council for Governmental Policy (WRR) & Rathenau Institute



MAIN CONSIDERATIONS (2)

- No more bureaucracy, but clear guidelines within or in addition to the existing regulatory framework.
- Reinforcement of awareness measures
- More international cooperation and coordination





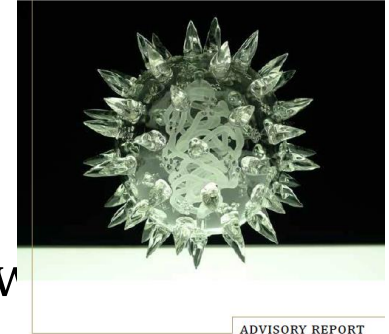
RECOMMENDATIONS

- The current national advisory structure does not cover biosecurity well
- A separate advisory body should be established: the **Biosecurity Advisory Committee for Research in Life Sciences**.
- Basic principles for this Committee:
 - accessible for all stakeholders
 - independent and transparent weighing of all relevant interests
 - confidentiality
 - option to reconsider advice based on the response of the requesting party
- This Committee could be accommodated at The Netherlands Health Council



TASKS FOR THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Advise on specific research proposals or publication of results
- Review reports by whistle blowers about projects or researchers
- Keep track of scientific, technological and policy-related trends and developments
- Maintain contacts with research institutions
- Maintain a network of international contacts
- Issue annual (general) report, public accountability
- Inform and communicate with public, communication
- Inform government



MEANWHILE...

- Advice was published November 2013*
- Government response in October 2015
- Scientific conference to discuss government view
- Meanwhile the debate goes on:
 - June 2014 – KNAW debate on Gain-of-Function
 - August 2014 – Biosecurity workshop with Academies of Indonesia (AIPI) and US (NAS)
 - 2014/2015 – Participation in EASAC Working Group (AK)
 - Dec 2014 – Participation in VWS and NAS GoF debate
 - Dec 2014 – Participation in GoF Conference in Hannover
- Government response October 2015....

<https://www.knaw.nl/en/advisory-work/advisory-reports-and-foresight-studies/lopende-adviezen/biosecurity>



GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSE

(DEKKER & PLOUMEN, OCT 2015)

- No Advisory Committee Biosecurity
- Risk assessment in early stage is important
- Use the local biosafety officials at the scientific institutions
- Support by the Bureau Biosecurity RIVM
- Consultation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where there is expertise.