

Science and Democracy: safeguarding the right to science, also in agriculture

Written by Marco Cappato on 19 March 2018 in Opinion Plus
Opinion Plus

The upcoming World Congress for Freedom of Scientific Research will help raise awareness of the need for legislation to embrace the right to science, explains Marco Cappato.



Marco Cappato | *Photo credit: Europabio*

The Associazione Luca Coscioni (ALC) is a non-profit organisation advocating for the right to science and freedom for scientific research. Since its foundation in 2002, the association has campaigned for rights in a variety of fields, including assisted reproductive techniques, rights for people with disabilities and end-of-life decisions, and also the right to develop and harness innovation in agriculture for positive ends.

From 11-13 April 2018, ALC will organise the fifth edition of the [World Congress for Freedom of](#)

[Scientific Research](#) [1] in the European Parliament. The event will focus primarily on the interaction between scientific evidence and the decision-making process in the context of fake news. It will also cover critical debates on diverse topics such as genome editing and gender discrimination in science.

Freedom and responsibility are two sides of the science coin. Norms, policies and agreements regulating science, whether at national or international level, must achieve multiple goals simultaneously, including letting scientists carry out their work; ensuring transparent public and private support for research; guaranteeing the free circulation of their discoveries and data; creating free and verifiable peer-review processes; and guaranteeing the application of research.

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On April 12, a high-level workshop on modern agricultural biotechnology with the participation of EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis, will address the scientific, legal and political debate concerning plant breeding innovation and its legal status. Innovation cannot be stopped by an abstract fear of a risk or the simplistic risk of a risk. Sometimes science can be easily misunderstood by consumers leading to extreme opinions.

Instead, policymakers worldwide have the great responsibility to boost innovation through legislation that is proportionate, non-discriminatory and science-based, fully acknowledging the importance of innovation for addressing agricultural challenges.

Fostering an open debate between farmers, scientists, industries, environmentalists and policymakers can be a significant step towards developing a mutual understanding that will benefit citizens and the sustainability of agriculture.

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The Congress will help identify key recommendations for policymakers to address national and international institutions responsible for adopting regulations on science-related issues. Our aim is to raise awareness of the need for legislation to embrace the right to science.

ALC is coming back to the European Parliament, one of the most symbolic places for legislative debates and a key driver for progressive legislation. We hope that you will join us at the Congress, including the afternoon session on modern agricultural biotechnology on April 12, to debate and stand up for science and democracy, also in agriculture. Ultimately, the promotion of scientific freedom in all sectors is associated with the welfare and wellbeing of humanity.

For more information and to register, please [register here](#) [9] and visit www.freedomofresearch.org [1]

About the author

Former Italian MEP Marco Cappato is the Coordinator of the World Congress for Freedom of Scientific Research

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