



the global network of science academies

Recent media response to IAP's Statement "Releasing Global Potential in Synthetic Biology: Scientific Opportunities and Good Governance"

20 August 2014

On 7 May 2014, IAP published a statement entitled 'Releasing Global Potential in Synthetic Biology: Scientific Opportunities and Good Governance'. The dissemination of the document around the web about two months after its release demonstrates that the Statement has been welcomed and appreciated around the world by the scientific community.

Many IAP member academies endorsed the statement and added a page to their website giving reasons for the endorsement, and including a link to the original document on the IAP site. Among the IAP member academies which assisted in the dissemination of the Statement in this way were: the Royal Netherlands Academy¹, the Chinese Academy of Sciences², the Australian Academy of Science³, the *Academia Mexicana de la Ciencias*⁴, among others. Additionally, the statement received support from TWAS⁵ (The World Academies of Science) and the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC)⁶.

The scientific magazine *Nature* helped increase the IAP's statement audience by publishing IAP co-chair Volker ter Meulen's article on the synthetic biology issue, where he explained that the Statement could fuel the debate on how scientific evidence may impact the policy-making process. Other online columns referring to the Statement were found on 'Labroots'⁷ and the website of the Center of Genetics and Society⁸. These two praised the IAP's call for regulation and public debate on the topic. Nevertheless, articles on the Statement were found even in non-scientific publications such as the online edition of the UK newspaper, *The Guardian*⁹.

The Statement was also promoted on the social media platform 'Twitter' by the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA)¹⁰ in English, and by Canada's national Academy¹¹ in French, thus demonstrating the potential to spread the debate on synthetic biology beyond the scientific community.

The scientific review magazine 'Futuribles' also published an article on the debate on synthetic biology and summarized the IAP's statement in French. While in the Spanish language, online newspapers of all kinds reported on the statement, from daily newspapers such as *La Jornada*¹² and *La Crónica*¹³, to economic

¹ <https://www.knaw.nl/en/news/news/statement-on-synthetic-biology>

² http://english.cas.cn/Ne/CASE/201405/t20140508_120660.shtml

³ <http://www.science.org.au/news/world-science-academies-promote-debate-synthetic-biology>

⁴ <http://www.comunicacion.amc.edu.mx/comunicados/declaracion-iap-sobre-biologia-sintetica/>

⁵ <http://www.twas.org/article/iap-issues-statement-synthetic-biology>

⁶ <http://www.easac.eu/home/easac-news/detail-view/article/iap-statement.html>

⁷ <https://labroots.com/user/news/daily/id/140/title/synthetic-biology-an-exciting-field-filled-with-controversy-hope-and-danger>

⁸ <http://www.geneticsandsociety.org/article.php?id=7806>

⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/science/political-science/2014/may/08/dont-shut-the-door-on-the-synthetic-biology-debate>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/SULSAtweets/status/464448542770077696>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/RSCTheAcademies/status/464418112553512960>

¹² <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/05/13/ciencias/a03n1cie>



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newspapers such as *El Economista*¹⁴. This shows that the Statement reached a broad audience all over the world thanks to the multiple languages into which it was translated.

Earth People¹⁵, a human and natural rights association, reported on the Statement, challenging the safety of synthetic biology, displaying the relevance of the publication in sparking constructive debates.

Finally, the US-based Synthetic Biology Engineering Research Center¹⁶ dedicated a full page of their website praising and supporting the Statement.

The impressive opening of the debate created by the IAP latest publication and the support it received clearly demonstrates the ability of IAP and its 107 member academies to act as a forum for discussion in the global arena, even when attention is focused on potentially controversial issues such as synthetic biology.

This paper was drafted by Lorenzo Matronola during his internship at IAP Headquarters in Trieste, Italy, in July 2014.

¹³ <http://www.cronica.com.mx/notas/2014/832055.html>

¹⁴ <http://eleconomista.com.mx/entretenimiento/2014/05/07/declaratoria-sobre-biologia-sintetica>

¹⁵ <http://earthpeoples.org/blog/?p=5902>

¹⁶ <http://www.synberc.org/response-to-iap-statement>