

Opening Remarks – Round table on Science and Policy

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Science and policy: Issues of framing, authority, evidence and political-
economic decision making***

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Good afternoon and thank you all for being here.

Our discussion today takes place at a moment when the relationship between **science, geopolitics, and energy policy** has become unmistakably clear. The global energy crisis of recent years—intensified by geopolitical instability and, most recently, by the escalation of conflict in the Middle East—has shown how deeply scientific evidence, political authority, and economic decision-making are intertwined.

Scientific evidence has long warned us about the vulnerabilities of our current energy systems and their impact on the environment.

Yet the reality of political decision-making often diverges from these scientific recommendations.

The war in the Middle East has heightened concerns about global oil and gas supply stability, disrupted market expectations, and intensified debates around energy security.

As a result, governments across the world—including in Europe—have sometimes responded by reinforcing short-term fossil fuel strategies in order to try to stabilize prices and guarantee supply.

This tension reveals a central dilemma in the science–policy relationship.

Scientific evidence may point clearly towards a long-term systemic transformation, but political decisions must also respond to **immediate geopolitical pressures, market volatility, and social instability**. The energy crisis illustrates that policymaking rarely follows a purely “evidence-based” path; it is more accurately

described as **evidence-informed**, operating within a landscape of competing interests and constraints.

The issue of **framing** is therefore crucial. If the energy crisis is framed primarily as a geopolitical security problem, policy responses will prioritize diversification of fossil fuel supply chains and strategic reserves. If it is framed as a climate emergency—as emphasized by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** in its *Emissions Gap Reports*—then the priority becomes rapid acceleration of renewable energy systems and structural energy transition.

The authority of expertise also becomes contested in such contexts.

Scientific institutions—including the **European Environment Agency** and the **International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)**—provide robust data showing that renewable energy deployment is not only environmentally necessary but increasingly economically competitive.

However, political decision-makers must also weigh industrial competitiveness, employment, infrastructure capacity, and geopolitical alliances.

This leads us directly to the well-known dilemma between “**evidence-based policy**” and “**policy-based evidence.**”

Ideally, policies should follow the best available scientific evidence.

In practice, however, evidence is often interpreted—or selectively mobilized—to justify decisions that are already shaped by political or economic priorities.

The energy crisis linked to geopolitical conflict therefore highlights something fundamental: the gap between science and policy is not simply a problem of communication between experts and politicians.

It reflects the broader interactions between **knowledge, power, institutional authority, and political-economic interests.**

The purpose of this Round Table is precisely to explore further these complex interactions following the recommendations of the ENSSER conference May 2025 in the Academy of Athens

- How can scientific expertise maintain credibility and authority in politically charged environments?
- How can policymakers integrate scientific evidence without ignoring the economic and geopolitical realities they face?
- And how can we ensure that short-term crisis management does not undermine the long-term transformation that science tells us is necessary?

These are not merely academic questions. They lie at the heart of how societies use science to solve problems and navigate crises—whether pandemics, new technologies, energy, climate, pollution, biodiversity or geopolitical—and how we should design scientific research capable of answering difficult questions balancing **scientific integrity, democratic legitimacy, and strategic stability**.

I look forward to a thoughtful and constructive discussion.