

Correspondence

Order must spring from chaos in Italy

Italy's election last month does not bode well for science there, which is still beset with the problems you highlighted in a feature 35 years ago (*Nature* 303, 109–128; 1983). It is meagre consolation that research output is increasing, against the odds (*Nature* 554, 411–412; 2018).

We call on the new political leaders to work with internationally renowned scientists on a major reform of the Italian research system. This needs to be based on merit, transparency and internationalization. Funding should be doubled from its current 1.2% of gross domestic product to be on a par with that of other developed countries.

Four reforms are crucial. Italy needs an independent, public research foundation that supports centres of excellence as part of the European network. This should award funding that is open to all researchers, irrespective of affiliation, and subject to international peer review. Italian universities should be released from public administration to reduce bureaucracy and to allow them autonomy in hiring. Public funds must be disbursed to universities strictly on the basis of the performance of the teaching and research faculty, both to be independently assessed. And the public administration should appoint only PhD-trained skilled professionals to senior posts.

Gerry Melino* *University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy.*

gm614@mrc-tox.cam.ac.uk

*On behalf of 9 correspondents (see go.nature.com/2jzk41e for full list).

Exercise caution in cod management

Canada's stock of northern cod (*Gadus morhua*) off Newfoundland and Labrador has made a remarkable recovery over the past decade, but remains well below historical levels and current conservation limits. Despite

scientific advice to minimize removals (see, for example, S. Rowe and G. A. Rose *Nature* 545, 412; 2017), the government bowed to political pressure and the reported catch for 2017 was almost triple that for 2015.

Last month's assessment concludes that spawning stock biomass decreased by about 30% over the past year, and predicts a high probability of continued decline for 2019. This stalled productivity, together with evidence that the government's 2017 fisheries-management plan failed to meet the target of sustained stock growth (see go.nature.com/2qt3trk), make it incumbent on Canada's government to reduce cod mortality from fishing.

In our view, maintaining the current harvesting level or continuing expansion will jeopardize long-term stock recovery and a rebuilt fishery. Both stand to deliver another black eye to Canadian fisheries management.

Sherrylynn Rowe Memorial *University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Canada.*

George A. Rose *University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.*
sherrylynn.rowe@mi.mun.ca

Geoengineering is not a quick glacier fix

We disagree with John Moore and colleagues that geoengineering could counter rising sea levels from the melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets (*Nature* 555, 303–305; 2018). As environmental researchers in these regions, we contend that the consequences of the technology could be even more serious than in its absence.

The authors' suggestions (building ocean-bottom sills, installing pinning-point islands and removing subglacial water) might briefly slow outflow. However, these strategies could easily cause ice build-up that would overwhelm structural impediments, and further accelerate ice loss.

Even if feasible, slowing the flow of glaciers such as Jakobshavn Isbrae is only a partial solution, given that more than half of ice loss in Greenland is due to surface melt. And the logistical difficulties of transporting the unprecedented amounts of equipment and materials required needs to be taken into account. The Amundsen Sea in western Antarctica, for example, is often inaccessible to icebreakers. And the water-pumping system Moore *et al.* propose would have to extend over almost the entire glacier catchment to avoid water pooling or redirection.

In our view, the limited resources available should instead be used to address the root causes of accelerating ice loss — namely emissions and human-induced climate change.

Twila A. Moon* *National Snow and Ice Data Center, CIRES, University of Colorado, Boulder, USA.*

twila.moon@nsidc.org

*On behalf of 7 correspondents (see go.nature.com/2hhedct for full list).

Code of conduct for research integrity

I welcome the timely release of a Code of Ethics for Researchers by the World Economic Forum (WEF; see *Nature* 555, 5; 2018). I am concerned, however, that the simplicity of the seven principles could render this code unusable by researchers.

As chair of the drafting group for the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, published by ALLEA (All European Academies), I recommend that scientists read the WEF's code of ethics in parallel with other codes, such as ours (see go.nature.com/2hdestq). The European code is built on the views of a range of stakeholder organizations such as the European Network of Research Integrity Offices, ensuring comprehensive advice on how to implement good research practice.

For example, the WEF's code encourages 'engagement with

decision-makers'. This might not be easy for researchers who are unfamiliar with policy windows or with the best way to present evidence to decision-makers who are trying to balance many other inputs. The European code offers practical guidance, and the 2017 Brussels Declaration (see go.nature.com/2exd69c) sets out responsibilities for all actors, including researchers, to ensure reliable, evidence-based policymaking.

Maura Hiney *Health Research Board Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.*
mhiney@hrb.ie

Maryland's pursuit of fair drug prices

Bob More calls on the drug industry to hold managers accountable if they engage in opportunistic pricing (*Nature* 555, 561; 2018). In the meantime, the industry should embrace progressive policy measures that would protect people by demanding transparency from drug firms.

Maryland's General Assembly is leading the way, having passed a landmark law last year to prosecute companies that increase the prices of off-patent drugs. This year, the legislature aims go a step further and create a commission to review drug costs that insists on transparency from pharmaceutical firms to ensure fair pricing for consumers. Companies would be required to report and justify high prices for new drugs and large price increases for older ones (see go.nature.com/2hxujdt).

Rather than supporting such efforts to curb bad practices, however, trade associations such as the US Biotechnology Innovation Organization and PhRMA (Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America) have sent lobbyists to Maryland's state capital to oppose such measures (see go.nature.com/2vrazr1).

Leah Cairns *Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA.*
lcairns3@jhu.edu