

## GMO rejections suggest Europeans becoming more hostile to science and technology

The continent of Galileo and Darwin is not about to cast off its glorious heritage. But the boffins have given cause for concern.

Three years ago Anne Glover, a Scottish molecular biologist, became the EU's first chief scientific adviser. She could also be its last. Her mandate expired, along with the previous commission's, and Jean-Claude Juncker, the new president, has not seen fit to renew it. Ms Glover was notably outspoken on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), describing opponents as suffering from "a form of madness". That was too much for green NGOs, who called for her head in a letter to Mr Juncker.

Even sober-minded observers worry about the signal Ms Glover's departure sends. Europe's agonies over GMOs illustrate the problems that arise when science is not well integrated into policymaking. Despite repeated studies finding no risk to human health from the consumption of GMOs, just one such crop (a form of maize) is cultivated in the EU, and in only a handful of countries. Under a new proposal countries will even be able to deny farmers the right to purchase GM seeds that have been approved at pan-European level. It is rare for the EU to return powers to national governments once it has acquired them. But politicians saw no other way to break the impasse.

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