

## Minutes

### 63<sup>rd</sup> MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM LA VALLETTA, MALTA; 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2017

**Chair:** Bernhard Url

Members	
Austria	<i>Klemens Fuchs</i>
Belgium	<i>Benoît Horion</i>
Bulgaria	<i>Boyko Likov</i>
Croatia	<i>Darja Sokolić</i>
Cyprus	<i>Stelios Yiannopoulos</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Petr Beneš</i>
Denmark	<i>Flemming Bager</i>
Estonia	<i>Martin Minjajev</i>
Finland	<i>Matti Aho</i>
France	<i>Charlotte Grastilleur</i>
Germany	<i>Andreas Hensel</i>
Greece	<i>Eirini Tsigarida</i>
Hungary	<i>Ákos Bernard Józwiak</i>
Iceland	<i>Jón Gíslason</i>
Ireland	<i>Pamela Byrne</i>
Italy	<i>Alessandra Perrella</i>
Latvia	<i>Vadims Bartkevičs</i>
Lithuania	<i>Jurgita Savickaitė</i>
Luxembourg	<i>Nathalie Welschbillig</i>
Malta	<i>Ingrid Borg</i>
Netherlands	<i>Antoon Opperhuizen</i>
Norway	<i>Danica Grahek-Ogden</i>
Poland	<i>Jacek Postupolski</i>
Portugal	<i>Pedro Portugal Gaspar</i>
Slovak Republic	<i>Zuzana Bírošová</i>
Slovenia	<i>Urška Blaznik</i>
Spain	<i>Ana Canals Caballero</i>
Sweden	<i>Per Bergman</i>
United Kingdom	<i>Javier Dominguez</i>

## Observers

Albania	<i>Pamela Radovani</i>
Bosnia-Herzegovina	<i>Dzemil Hajric</i>
FYR of Macedonia	<i>Zoran Popovski</i>
Serbia	<i>Tamara Boskovic</i>
Switzerland	<i>Vincent Dudler</i>
European Commission	<i>Lorenzo Terzi</i>
European Commission	<i>Luis Vivas-Alegre</i>

## EFSA Representatives

**AF Secretariat:** *Jeffrey Moon; Julia Finger*

<i>Stef Bronzwaer</i>	<i>Valeriu Curtui*</i>
<i>Guilhem De Seze</i>	<i>Dirk Detken*</i>
<i>Hubert Deluyker*</i>	<i>Barbara Gallani</i>
<i>Kerstin Gross-Helmert</i>	<i>Juliane Kleiner</i>
<i>Djien Liem*</i>	<i>Hans Verhagen</i>

\* Teleconference

## Guest Speaker

*Charmaine Gauci, Chair of Food Safety Commission Malta*

## Apologies:

Romania, Montenegro, Turkey

## 1. OPENING OF MEETING

Bernhard Url, Executive Director (ED) of the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) and Chair of the meeting, opened the 63<sup>rd</sup> Advisory Forum (AF) meeting in the Grand Hotel Excelsior, La Valletta, Malta, on occasion of the Maltese EU presidency.

Bernhard welcomed Dr. Charmaine Gauci, Chair of the Food Safety Commission of Malta to the meeting, who on behalf of the Minister of Health gave a welcome address to the plenary. Dr. Gauci underlined the importance of food safety in general and EFSA's role in particular, making reference to the visit of EFSA (ED visit) to the Maltese authorities, the Ministry of Health and the Food Safety Commission on the day prior to the meeting, where areas of further cooperation were discussed. Bernhard Url remarked that the visit revealed the functioning of an intergovernmental management of the food chain through the establishment of a Food Safety Commission in Malta and thanked Dr. Gauci for opening the meeting.

He then welcomed new members to the forum, namely Alessandra Perrella, alternate member from Italy and Dzemil Hajric, observer member from Bosnia-Herzegovina. He noted apologies from Romania, Turkey and Montenegro.

Bernhard Url noted that the minutes of the 62<sup>nd</sup> AF meeting had been approved by written procedure and published on EFSA's website on 26 January 2017.

In line with the requirements on independence, members were asked for additional Oral Declarations of Interest (ODOIs) and no additional interest was declared.

## **2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The draft meeting agenda was tabled for additional items. As an AOB item Estonia announced the 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Animal Science that will take place from 28 August to 1 September in Tallinn. The agenda was then adopted.

## **3. MATTERS ARISING**

### **3.a Action Points from last meeting**

An overview of the Action Points from the last meeting had been distributed to the participants. Most items had been concluded. On the open "Action Point 7: EC to confirm if fitness check on food law (REFIT) includes MS consultation", Lorenzo Terzi from the European Commission (EC) clarified that as this takes the form of a Commission staff working document the procedure does not foresee MS consultation prior to adoption. Spain expressed disappointment at this.

### **3.b ED country visits**

Since the last AF meeting in December 2016, the ED visits have continued with the visit to Malta prior to the meeting.

### **3.c Proposal for AF workshop**

Bernhard Url informed that following a visit of BfR to EFSA in September 2015 a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) has been signed on "Risk Assessment Tools for the Safety of Global Food and Feed Supply Chains" in December 2016. Germany announced a workshop, taking place under this FPA on 7 June in the EFSA premises, in conjunction with the next AF meeting. The workshop will address questions on tracing Networks and regional networks and model repository users. 10 countries expressed interest to participate. Detailed information will follow.

## **4. PRIORITIES FOR THE PRESIDENCY - MALTA**

Bernhard Url gave the floor to Malta to give an overview on the priorities of the Maltese Presidency in the area of food safety and the ED visit to Malta. Malta summarised the Presidency priorities as fighting childhood obesity, Emergency Preparedness for both the veterinary and phytosanitary sectors, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), support for an EC initiative for an international agriculture and fisheries declaration outlining the way forward in the Mediterranean. Malta then gave an overview on its current food safety system and the food safety strategy in the country. A central role is taken by the Food Safety Commission which met with EFSA on the ED visit the day prior to the meeting. Malta thanked EFSA for the visit that has increased interest of national organisations to apply for the Art.36 list and reinforced cooperation and work with EFSA.

## **5. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

### **5.1 EFSA's draft International Scientific cooperation Work Plan 2017-2020**

Barbara Gallani presented the draft International Scientific Cooperation Work Plan also to be presented to the EFSA Management Board (MB) in March. EFSA's goals in the area of international cooperation for 2017-2020 are in line with the EFSA strategy 2020 and aim at having Member States (MS) joining forces on international activities. The members welcomed the Work Plan. Spain asked for more information on the new Liaison Groups. The first group on international risk communication will be set up in June. Members welcomed the plan initiative, noting the need for tangible results. Spain informed members about COSI as a worldwide tool of WHO for food consumption surveys, which could be considered by EFSA in the area of dietary studies. Djien Liem, by teleconference, explained that EFSA keeps close cooperation with WHO and FAO particularly regarding data collection and food consumption data aiming for harmonisation at international level.

*Action Point 1: EFSA to share draft ToR of International Liaison Group of Risk Communication*

## **5.2 AF Discussion Group on International Capacity Building: Terms of Reference**

Norway and Spain presented the outcome of the first discussions of the recently created Advisory Forum Discussion Group (AFDG) on International Capacity Building. After an initial teleconference in December a first physical meeting took place on 15 and 16 February in Berlin, chaired by Germany (BfR, Nicole Gollnick and Reiner Wittkowski). Discussions centred on the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the AFDG and on a survey to be launched among AF members and FPs to assess current capacity building activities by MS institutions. On a question from Ireland, it was clarified that the document is meant to be finalised after the AF meeting and then to be circulated with the survey. Spain expressed that the idea is to have a global reach together, to unite already existing cooperation of MS with global partners making best use of resources at MS and European level. Current examples are joint activities in ENP workshops supported by TAIEX, EFSA and MS or the workshop for Mediterranean countries. Spain confirmed that the participation of more MS is welcome. France endorsed the ToR and confirmed the wish to join the AFDG in June. Sweden and Belgium welcomed the initiative, noting that limited resources and/or other national priorities can hinder participation. Finland welcomed the progress, remarking that sufficient time should be given for the survey. Ireland supported the activity, suggesting considering cooperation also through the EU-FAST. Germany pointed out that more discussions with the EC are needed to aim for international food safety standards, particularly in the area of data. Members agreed that the group is focussing on collaboration and on harmonisation and transfer of methodologies as well as capacity building.

*Action Point 2: MS to comment on draft ToR of International AFDG*

## **6. COMMUNICATIONS**

Barbara Gallani gave an update on activities in the area of communications including social media, stakeholder engagement and the new Communication Expert Network (CEN), that had its first meeting after its transformation from the AFCWG to a Scientific Network on 1-2 March 2017. Finland welcomed the activities, asking for pre-notifications to be done earlier, if possible. Italy informed about communication activities via the FP website, including a newsletter. Spain asked for possibilities for MS to exchange communication strategies, maybe by making use of the FP Network. Barbara provided details on a dedicated space on the Document Management System (DMS) for MS to share campaigns and material, with the idea to also share communication plans. The UK asked for a common plan to cooperate on social media to amplify information. Barbara replied that currently the CEN operated via WhatsApp, Yammer and tailored mailing, but that social media cooperation was also being considered. Germany pointed at the importance to take an active role in defining scientific positions questioning a common approach to tackle fake news and pseudo-science and welcomed the work of the CEN on AMR, underlining the need to focus both on projects and methodologies. Serbia asked for description of the profile of an expert in the CEN Network.

*Action Point 3: EFSA to send information on CEN member profile to Serbia*

*Action Point 4: MS to take part in survey on communication uncertainty*

## **7. EU RISK ASSESSMENT AGENDA DISCUSSION GROUP**

Stef Bronzwaer introduced the session, thanking FPs for their work in collecting the proposals. Slovenia reported back from the teleconference of the AF Discussion Group that took place on 28 February (involving Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, Portugal and Sweden). The group discussed three different options for implementing projects in the EURAA catalogue: EFSA grants, external funding or without funds depending on the nature of the project. Stef noted that in addition the EURAA could help to influence research agendas on European and national level. The AFDG proposed to organise, upon

agreement of the AF, a EURAA conference in January 2018 with the aim to bring project partners and possible funders together.

Stef Bronzwaer noted that the final catalogue comprises 117 project proposals from 23 countries. He reported back on the visits to DG RTD and EU-COST aimed at identifying possible funding for the projects. Members agreed that networking is one of the beneficial outcomes of the exercise together with avoiding the duplication of efforts. Bernhard Url concluded that the EU RAA can possibly be used for identifying needs beyond 2020, but that its foremost importance is to promote the catalogue for funding and starting of joint projects at national and regional level.

*Action Point 5: MS to express interest in joining AFDG on EURAA*

*Action Point 6: EFSA to consider a conference on EURAA in January 2018*

*Action Point 7: EFSA to present EURAA to Scientific Committee*

*Action Point 8: EFSA to recirculate tables on funding opportunities*

## **8. MATTERS FROM EFSA AND MS**

### **8.1 Collaboration of EFSA and Member States on Novel Foods**

Valeriu Curtui from EFSA presented by teleconference the latest developments in the area of Novel Foods. The new Regulation<sup>1</sup> on Novel Foods will enter into force on 1 January 2018 and will introduce a centralised safety assessment by EFSA for novel food applications and a notification procedure for traditional foods having a history of safe food use in third countries. In preparation of the new regulation EFSA will be launching a call for tender on preparatory work for the assessment of novel food applications in June and AF members are encouraged to inform possible applicants in their country. To support the work, Valeriu proposed to the AF to set up a new Scientific Network on Novel Foods to provide a platform for discussion, consultation and collaboration between EFSA and the MS. The AF agreed to the proposal. Belgium asked whether the structure of a Network is appropriate to manage the time-frame of 4 months for motivated objections to a notification from third countries and to manage the workload. Denmark added that the Network could be a starting point but its necessity should be reviewed in the course of Network evaluation in 2018. Greece asked about an already existing Working Group of the EC on Novel Foods and possible overlap. Valeriu explained that the EFSA Network is meant to comprise risk assessors and scientists whereas the EC Working Group mainly consists of risk managers. Croatia asked if discussions will focus on RA of novel foods only or also debate substantial equivalents. Valeriu clarified that the Network is meant to comment on novel food applications, by setting the methodology rather than going through the applications.

Bernhard Url concluded that AF support is given for the establishment of a new network. The ToR will be developed and shared with the AF with the request for nominating representatives.

*Action Point 9: EFSA to share data summary sheets on contract for preparatory work for the assessment of novel food applications*

*Action Point 10: EFSA to share ToR of Scientific Network on Novel Foods*

### **8.2 Vitamin B6**

The Netherlands presented a study on determining a safe intake of vitamin B6 from food supplements. The study centred on upper limits in the intake from foods and the maxi-

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2015/2283 of the European Parliament and of the Council on novel foods, repealing Regulation (EC) 258/97

mum intake from supplements, with the result that Vitamin B6 intake in the Netherlands is sufficient for all age groups and no use of supplements is needed.

### **8.3 National Total Diet Study (2012-2014)**

Italy presented the outcome of a total diet study conducted over the period of two years 2012-2014. The study was designed to provide a basis for dietary exposure assessment to chemicals and its potential impact in public health. Italy gave an overview of the methodology and the conclusions. Germany informed about a similar project still ongoing.

## **9. RISK ASSESSMENT SESSION**

### **EFSA and MS activities**

Bernhard Url opened the regular session on information exchange on RA in EFSA and the MS, giving the floor to Hans Verhagen. Hans invited Italy to provide an update on avian influenza.

Guilhem De Seze informed that following a new study by INRA on titanium dioxide collaboration with ANSES had been initiated. Guilhem then noted the revision of documents for the assessment of the efficacy and of the environmental risks of feed additives. Specific calls on consultations on the guidance notes will be launched in March. He presented the outcome on the LLP of GM in food and feed where consultation with MS had taken place through FPs, who received the draft guidance and sent it to MS Competent Authorities for consultation. It is planned to propose the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of this guidance to the GMO panel for endorsement in April, followed by a public consultation and final adoption of the guidance in September.

France informed about a mandate received on scrapie, asking if other MS have received a similar mandate. EFSA noted that it had already issued an Opinion and dialogue was needed to ensure duplication is avoided. A related request for information exchange will be circulated through the FP Network.

### **MS Mandate Workflow**

The topic was postponed due to time constraints.

## **10. Art. 36 EVOLUTION**

Kerstin Gross-Helmert introduced a dedicated session on changes to the management of cooperation using the Art.36 list. Members split into four groups to answer the following questions and report back in plenary:

- 1) Currently, what are the strengths and weaknesses of networking between Art.36 organisations?
- 2) How could the Art.36 list be used in the future?
- 3) What benefits do you expect from networking between Art.36 organisations?
- 4) What should be in place for optimising the use of the Art.36 list?

The feedback of the breakout session will input into the development of business needs for future processes and tools for managing the list. The document will be shared with AF and FP. A detailed summary of the discussions in the four breakout groups is annexed to the minutes.

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Bernhard Url then closed the meeting on the first day.

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## **11. INDEPENDENCE POLICY**



Bernhard Url opened the meeting of the second day, welcoming Dirk Detken, who presented via teleconference. the developments regarding the update of the EFSA Independence Policy. As a follow-up of the last AF meeting, an AF Working Group has been created, consisting of France, Germany, Denmark, UK and Sweden to undertake a mapping exercise to improve reciprocal understanding and identify possible common grounds. A first teleconference was held on 2 March and final reporting back to the AF is planned for the last quarter of 2017. However, it is clear, that tensions arise from the different approaches in MSs. The working group should help to come to a basic agreement on minimum levels of independence. Germany asked for the nature of an interest and pointed out that an exclusion of industry per se must also entail exclusion of NGOs, as they have strong interests. Bernhard Url explained that a conflict of interest can arise in form of any financial, advisory or other engagement and is a situation that should be avoided. He added that those with interests could attend meetings as hearing experts to provide information which could allow industry knowledge to be included, however their participation in the decision making process would be prohibited. On questions from Ireland, Dirk Detken explained that "earnings" in the definition are meant as personal earnings, not as research earnings and "cooling periods" mainly refer to the engagements of experts before joining, not after leaving EFSA. The UK underlined that a conflict of interest could theoretically derive from various aspects, including personal beliefs or contacts and that the UK favoured a partnership approach with industry. Sweden acknowledged the gap between the search for experts and a further elaboration of the list of conflicts. Finland remarked that new requirements regarding conflicts of interest at EU level and the extra layer on the different legal requirements in the MS, which should be taken into consideration by the Commission. Bernhard Url acknowledged a proposal by the Netherlands for a statement of the AF on this matter as support through the MS for EFSA. On question from Spain, it was clarified that no DoI screening applies for MS representatives in AF and Scientific Networks as they do not attend as independent experts.

Dirk Detken concluded that after discussions in the Management Board (MB) in March, the document will go out for public consultation and also sent to the AF.

## **12. ACCESS TO MEMBER STATE DATA**

Dirk Detken provided an update on the Public Access to Documents (PAD) requests and EFSA's position on PAD requests relating to MS Data. Following recent case law developments EFSA will release all data in the area of pesticide residues until 2017 and will not consult MS on further releases in the future, but proactively release the data subject to a PAD request. Regarding Chemical Occurrence Data, it is planned to remove the current inconsistency in disclosure of MS Datasets and discussions will take place in the Scientific Network on Chemical Occurrence Data Collection regarding this. AF members were asked to discuss this with their national representatives in the Network. Belgium pointed out that often MS representatives cannot access even their national raw data in the data warehouse, whereas a third party could request disclosure of the data. Bernhard Url confirmed that the release of data sets is theoretically wider than the access given to a MS organisation. MS organisations that are not data providers do not have automatic access to raw data of their country in the Data Warehouse, even when they are the data owners. This problem can be resolved on national level between the organisations collecting the data and those wishing to access it, and at EFSA level through a flexible application or, if needed, a revision of the access rules and by facilitating the access on demand.

## **13. EFSA PANEL RENEWAL**

Juliane Kleiner presented the timelines and key steps involved in the selection of the panel representatives for 2018. For the first time ten panels and the Scientific Committee will be renewed at the same time and a call for expressions of interest will be published from 1 June to 31 August 2017. For three panels, new mandates and names apply: The former CEF Panel will change into CEP on food contact materials, enzymes and processing aids; the ANS Panel will become the FAF Panel on food additives and flavour-

ings and the NDA Panel will enlarge its responsibilities to nutrition, novel foods and food allergens. The difficulty in recruiting experts was acknowledged, with the UK reported facing similar challenges, noting that a procurement system would help to employ experts and pay compensations as it seemed that young experts mainly pursued careers in the private sector out of financial considerations. Norway remarked that the perception of independence decreases when public institutions are paying the experts institutions and not the experts directly. Bernhard Url concluded that the central question is on who is paying for the system, through insourcing or outsourcing as EFSA cannot raise fees like, for example, the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

#### **14. EFSA EXTERNAL REVIEW**

Juliane Kleiner presented the activities relating to the EFSA external evaluation, due to commence in June, the role of the MB, the External Evaluation Steering Committee and the Evaluation Criteria. On question from Finland, Juliane clarified that the external contractor will ask input from national stakeholders in the MS. On a proposal from Bulgaria to evaluate RA activities in MS, Bernhard Url noted that this was not in EFSA's remit. The current evaluation will focus on two aspects: EFSA's working practices and the impact of EFSA on the European agri-food-safety system. Spain, supported by Ireland added that beyond the impact of EFSA on the system the question could embrace a possible extension or change in EFSA's remit after 15 years of existence including topics in the field of nutrition, food waste, sustainability. Bernhard Url welcomed this, suggesting that the AF could develop a strategic paper on the future of EFSA towards 2030. On question from Finland Bernhard confirmed that a project plan for the External Evaluation will be shared with MS once ready.

#### **15. EFSA EXPERT EMPLOYERS' SURVEY**

Hubert Deluyker presented by teleconference the outcomes of a survey that has been completed of the EFSA panel expert's employers. The survey was launched at the end of 2016 and was primarily targeted at those organisations which employed one or more EFSA panel expert. Countries where no panel experts are employed were also included in the survey. The survey had a response rate of 70% (37 institutes out of 58 from 24 countries) with expectation of additional responses in the coming days. A full report will be prepared in the months between this meeting and the meeting in June and a draft report will be sent to members for their comments.

Bernhard Url noted the importance of the exercise which was being undertaken for the first time, thanking MS for their responses. Further details will be given at the AF meeting in June.

#### **16. EU TRAINING NETWORK**

Hubert Deluyker introduced a proposal to establish a training network using EMA's EU Network Training Centre as a possible model, asking the AF for feedback. The plenary agreed to the initiative. EFSA will invite a colleague from EMA to give a presentation on this on the next AF meeting.

*Action Point 11: EFSA to invite speaker from EMA to present the EU Training Network*

#### **17. COOPERATION AND NETWORKING REVIEW**

Jeffrey Moon from EFSA gave an overview of cooperation activities with MS. Jeffrey gave feedback from the annual Focal Point reports noting the main areas of activity, informed about the introduction of the Scientific Cooperation newsletter and the updating of the graphical representation of the networks in member states. He also gave an overview of the planned ED visits to MS in 2017. Regarding the external review of Scientific Networks, Jeffrey explained that due to the external review of EFSA in 2017, the review of Networks will be deferred until 2018 to avoid running two similar exercises at the same time.



## 18. AOB

### EU-FORA

Stef Bronzwaer presented the outcome of the two calls launched for the EU Fellowship Programme (EU-FORA). Both applications for hosting sites and for fellows have exceeded expectations in numbers with 85 fellow candidate applications from 21 different countries having been received to date along with 16 proposals for hosting sites from 14 different countries. Stef thanked MS for their strong support both of AF and FPs. He then gave an outlook on the upcoming milestones and asked for participation, at own expense, on 5 open seats available to MS organisations to participate in the EU-FORA Induction course in EFSA (4-22 September).

*Action Point 12: MS to express interest for additional seat at induction course EU-FORA.*

### List of Network Members

Bernhard Url noted that the annual exercise to review organisations and representatives taking part in EFSA's scientific networks has been concluded and AF members have received a copy of the lists for all networks as a background document for endorsement. The AF endorsed the list.

### France: Nutrivigilance

France informed that for a project in the area of nutrivigilance, an application for COST funds was intended and project partners were being sought. Finland expressed interest in participating.

### CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Bernhard Url closed the meeting, thanking participants for their attendance and active contribution, and expressed special thanks to Malta for the hospitality.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS	
Action Number	Action
1	EFSA to share draft ToR of International Liaison Group of Risk Communication
2	MS to comment on draft ToR of International AFCWG
3	EFSA to send information on CEN profile to Serbia
4	MS to take part in survey on communication uncertainty
5	MS to express interest in joining AFDG on EURAA
6	EFSA to organise conference on EURAA in January 2018
7	EFSA to present EURAA to Scientific Committee
8	EFSA to recirculate tables on funding opportunities
9	EFSA to share data summary sheets on contract for preparatory work for the assessment of novel food applications
10	EFSA to share ToR of Scientific Network on Novel Foods
11	EFSA to invite speaker from EMA to present the EU Training Network
12	MS to express interest for additional seat at induction course EU-FORA

### Document history

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