Advisory Forum

DRAFT Summary results of breakout session at 63rd Advisory Forum Meeting in Malta on 7-8 March 2017

Background

Scientific cooperation and networking are fundamental to the work of Member States (MS) and EFSA. A list of competent organisations (Art.36 List) was established to facilitate European networking. The organisations on this list have to comply with criteria set in legislation and be designated by MS as competent organisations of their countries.

Much effort has been put into establishing and maintaining the list. Its use has mainly been focussed on organisations' involvement in grant and procurement projects. Yet, as a means to further facilitate networking, the usage of the list should go well beyond this activity and include exchanging information, sharing data, joint projects and building capacity.

Aim of discussions

To get strategic indications of the Advisory Forum (AF) on the **role and use of the Art.36 List** in future **for networking** of competent organisations **at EU and national levels**.

Break-out session

- Meeting participants were divided into 4 groups and each received a different question.
- The answers of each group were shared and discussed in plenary at the end of the session, to provide all participants with the opportunity for input.

Questions

From your perspective as member of EFSA's Advisory Forum,

1. Currently, what are the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of **networking** between Art.36 organisations, at national and EU level?

2. How could the **Art.36 List be used in future**, at national and EU level?

3. What **benefits** do you expect **from networking** between Art.36 organisations, at EU level and at national level?

4. What should be in place for **optimising** the **use of the Art.36 List**, at national and EU level?

Indications of the Advisory Forum

Strengths of the current process included:

- The existence of formal criteria, which the organisations need to comply with to be part of the list, thereby posing minimum standards for organisations.

Weaknesses of the current process included that:

- Procedures of finding partners are complicated and the use of the tools (Art.36 Database and Search Tool) is complex;
- Limited resources and grant budget are available to support projects of Art.36 organisations as a means of networking together;
- The language used in EFSA's calls is complex;
- Universities are interested in producing publications, which are not main outputs of EFSA grants;
- No indications/Links provided to organisations' publications, which could be used to:
  - Confirm organisations' expertise on indicated fields of competence; and
  - Identify partners for networking/projects.

In future, the **Art.36 List** could be **used more**, at national and EU level, for:

- Collecting and sharing data;
- Increasing awareness of Art.36 network organisations' competences, expertise and risk assessment (related) activities at national and EU level;
- Being able to find (risk assessment) expertise / knowledge 'centres' in MSs (through a Search Tool), e.g. to identify project partners;
- Disseminating EFSA's call for Panel experts to Art.36 organisations to reach highly-experienced experts potentially interested in working with EFSA.
- Building capacity in risk assessment in the EU (e.g. through initiatives as EU FORA, BTSF, TAIEX, Twinning);
- Supporting exchange of (harmonised) methodologies and practices;
- Supporting AF members, representing their MS, to get input for AF discussions on specific topics (e.g. on pesticides);
- International cooperation;
- Increasing organisations' reputation at national (and EU) level, by being part of the Art.36 List.

Items which can help **optimise the list** and **improve networking**:

- Less administrative burden;
- More information on organisations available to support collaboration, including:
  - Links to organisations' publications related to particular fields of work;
  - Information about the expertise (esp. in risk assessment) and competences of the Art.36 organisations should be available and accessible to MS (AF, FPs), Art.36 organisations and EFSA;
  - Possibilities for organisations to express interest in research / projects;
- Identifying risk assessment expertise among MS institutions employing both surveys and searches in the output through publicly available databases, e.g. when assessing if organisations meet the requirements;
- Compliance with criteria should be monitored regularly (annually) to ensure e.g. quality of organisations' work; their scientific output could be checked through publicly available databases (e.g. SCOPUS);

- Ensuring that there are different contact persons for different competences in Art.36 institutions, can help to better target the dissemination of information and increase efficiency in identifying relevant partners to work with;
- Extra points could be given in the selection process for small organisations to become active in grants; subcontracting could also help to further involve small organisations [N.B.: only non-core tasks can be subcontracted].

Activities, which could help **overcome weaknesses** and **support networking** include:

Advisory Forum:
- Support a more efficient use of the list by having a better overview about the (research / risk assessment) activities in their organisations, e.g. by mapping these activities;
- Disseminate results of the finished projects e.g. via conferences, EU RAA database;
- Emphasise the rules for use of Art.36 institutions in grants and procurements;
- Define what Art.36 institutions may be used for / their role, at national- and EU-level.

Focal Points:
- Organise national and transnational meetings between Art.36 organisations;
- Connect to Research&Innovation contact points and COST contact points;
- Foster the updating of organisations' list for competences (with consequences for those organisations which do not update their information).

EFSA:
- Improve EFSA's website presentation on Art.36; consider a new name / re-branding;
- Provide an IT tool that allows more interaction (e.g. a platform for specialists forming a RA community) / a networking tool, e.g. similar to Research Gate;
- Provide a more effective search tool for identification of partners that has a good database on competences, list of publications (possibly DG RTD experience could give ideas), expertise and contact details of organisations;
- Provide a toolkit to support MS in assessing organisations' compliance with criteria;
- Provide an indication on when and how to review the list at national level;
- Provide a letter [leaflet] to potential Art.36 to support MS;
- Plan for meetings open to all Art.36 organisations (e.g. EU RAA Conference);
- Define to what EFSA purposes Art.36 institutions should be used / indicate the role and use of the Art.36 List from EFSA's perspective;
- Make reports from grant and procurement projects accessible to MS.

Contrasting views

The views on some items were contrasting, including on:

Formal criteria:
- Some stressed that the formal criteria should be seen as minimum standards to be met by Art.36 organisations, creating a valuable list for collaboration at national and EU levels (with a need to take differences between the countries into consideration);
- Others indicated that narrowing criteria might be counterproductive, as it would allow for less flexibility and may lead to more exclusion of organisations;

Scientific Networks:
- Some indicated that Scientific Network members should come from Art.36 organisations, as it would allow projects to be supported by EFSA grants;
- Others stated that involving only organisations from the list may exclude organisations with experience.