



Guidelines for new
FOCAL POINTS

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Introduction and Context

The **European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)**, founded in 2002, is the keystone of European Union (EU) risk assessment regarding food and feed safety, animal health and welfare, nutrition, plant protection and plant health.

In order to strengthen cooperation and networking between EFSA and the Member States (MS) a network of **EFSA Focal Points (FPs)** was established and is operational since 2008.

The overall objective of the FPs is to support the members of the EFSA **Advisory Forum (AF)** in the practical implementation of activities related to networking and scientific cooperation between and among MS and EFSA. The AF, with a representative from each national food safety institution in the 28 EU MS, Iceland and Norway, is at the heart of EFSA's collaborative approach, enabling EFSA and MS to work together to address risk assessment and communication issues in Europe.

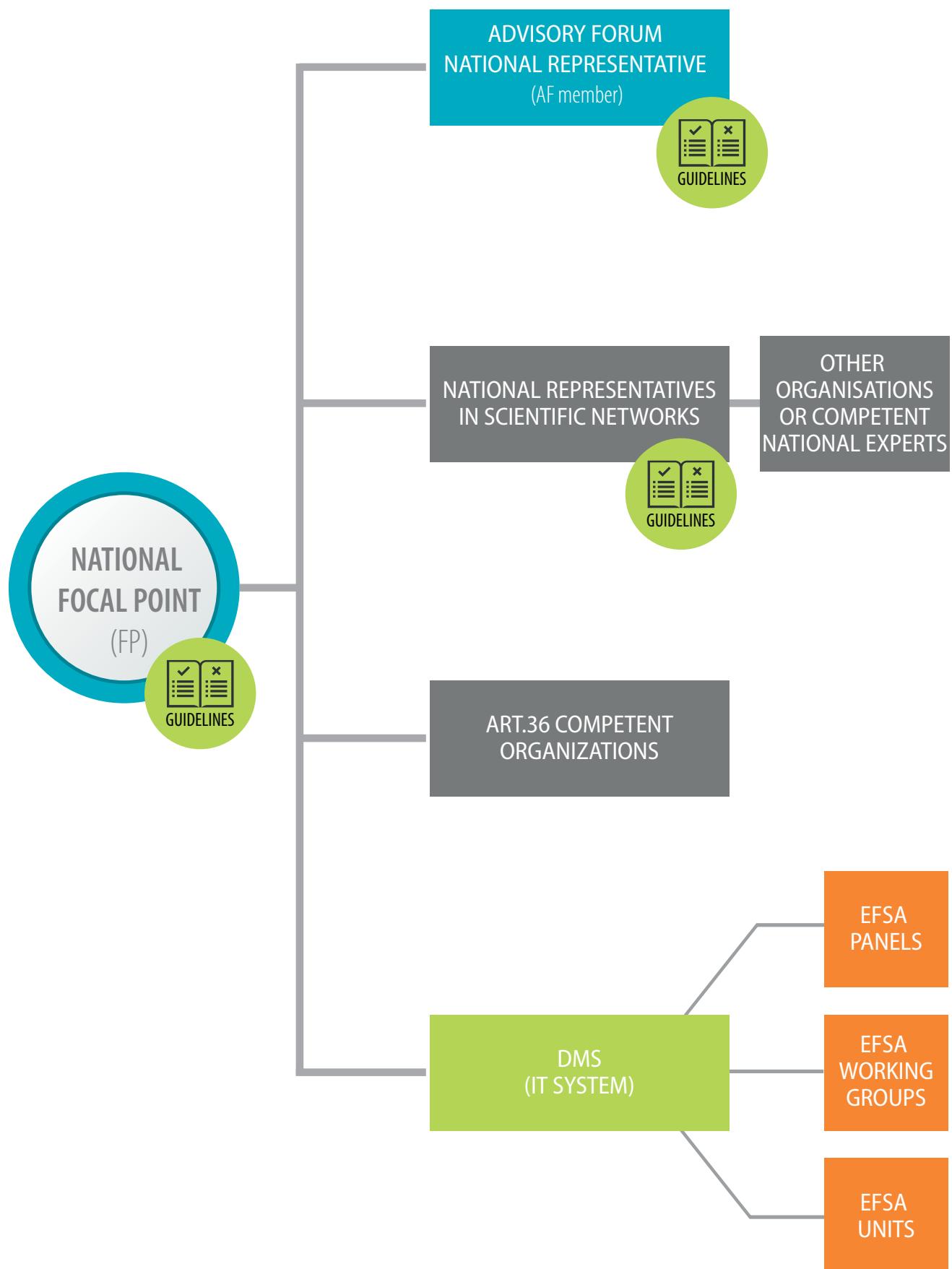
According to the tasks laid down in the specific FP grant agreements, FPs also provide support and advice regarding the cooperation of EFSA with institutions in the MS, particularly through the EFSA Scientific Networks and the Art.36 list: **Scientific networks**, supporting the various EFSA units, are networks of nationally appointed EU MS organisations, with expertise in the specific scientific subject matter of each network (e.g. emerging risks, animal health and welfare, data collection). The FP supports both the AF member, who is nominating the organisation and its representative and the representative in the Network.

Competent organisations under Article 36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 are legal entities that pursue public interest objectives, have technical and scientific capacity and are active in one or more of the fields of work of EFSA, which could undertake tasks assigned by EFSA and perform them with independence and integrity. FPs provide advice on proposals for new designations by the MS, and support the organisations on the list to network and participate in calls and joint projects. Each FP organisation should be a competent organisation of Article 36.

Furthermore, FPs promote EFSA's scientific outputs and risk assessment initiatives to the relevant audiences within the MS, disseminate and collect information and organise national events. The FPs cooperate closely with EFSA via regular quarterly meetings.



This figure illustrates the links between the different channels mentioned above.



The guidelines illustrated refers to the information flow ones.

Mission

The main mission of the FP network, in support of the AF, is to ensure the sharing and dissemination of information concerning food safety risk assessments helping to improve scientific cooperation and networking activities between and among MS and with EFSA. This is achieved by both mandatory and other tasks as described in the FP grant agreements.

The **mandatory tasks** include:

- A. Exchange of information
 - Dissemination through the national networks of requests for specific information coming from EFSA or other FPs
 - Dissemination through the national networks of proposals and information of importance to the function of EFSA (e.g. calls for tender or proposals, calls for data, job or placement announcements, etc.)
- B. Cooperation through article 36 and databases or networks of scientific experts
 - Provision of advice on actions of common interest that can be undertaken in the framework of article 36
 - » Support to the identification and inclusion of relevant competent MS organisations in the Art.36 list; Support in the regular review of the organisation of the MS in the list, at least every 3 years.
 - » Support to MS new competent organisations in preparing and submitting their information to the Art.36 database; Support to the overall designation procedure.
 - » Monitoring of changes in the MS Art.36 competent organisations and communication with EFSA; Support in the identification and withdrawal of the entries of MS organisations that do not meet the formal criteria.
 - Promotion and support of databases or networks of scientific experts
 - » Set-up and maintenance or use of national databases or networks of scientific experts to facilitate the dissemination of relevant information received via the FP network.
- C. Networking and raising the visibility of EFSA and of its role in the EU
 - Maintenance of national FP webpages to inform about EFSA activities, email alerts and scientific outputs.
 - Maintenance of contact lists of relevant organisations or stakeholders, other than the Art.36 organisations or the databases/ networks mentioned above, to which information and communication materials about EFSA are disseminated.
- D. Training opportunities in Risk Assessment
 - Dissemination of information provided by EFSA and/ or other FPs regarding training opportunities in risk assessment to relevant national organisations (e.g. BTSF training, other EFSA risk assessment courses, training workshops/ activities on risk assessment shared by other FPs) contributing to the harmonisation of risk assessment practices across the EU.
- E. Coordination of EFSA's Scientific Networks at national level
 - Provision of relevant information to the AF member regarding Scientific Network meetings, e.g. draft agendas, background documents, presentations, outcomes of meetings, as provided by EFSA or the national Network representatives, as well as relevant aspects of work programmes, planned risk assessment activities and activity reports of the different Scientific Networks.

F. International Cooperation

- Sharing of information on planned international scientific cooperation activities related to risk assessment, e.g., projects, meetings, workshops, events, trainings, etc. planned in the FP's country to take place with third countries or international organisations.

The FP grant agreements can be found [here](#) in a folder for each country on EFSA's Document Management System (DMS) including all relevant documentation. At the end of each year under the FP grant agreement, the tasks foreseen to be carried out may be modified via a written procedure.

To carry out these various tasks, FPs have at their disposal a range of **tools and information resources**. An overview of such tools can be found in the table in [ANNEX 1](#).

Operational procedures

Meetings:

FPs meet 4 times a year, prior to the AF meetings. The agenda includes standing items in preparation and follow-up of the AF meeting and issues raised by both FPs and EFSA. Therefore, the draft agenda is sent to FPs for additions and suggestions a few weeks before the meeting and is uploaded on the DMS together with supporting documents and presentations.

Reporting and financial rules:

EFSA supports FPs for carrying out their activities by providing a lump sum co-financing to their annual budget. The overall FP budget, which is set per country by EFSA, can be used towards eligible activities and costs according to financial rules laid down in the FP grant agreements.

Every year, FPs submit to EFSA an annual activity report, typically by the end of October, explaining how each task was implemented and illustrating it with concrete examples. EFSA announces exact timeline and procedure details.

EFSA performs checks on the received reports and may perform audits at the FP organisations. The link to the reporting template can be found on the folders [here](#) on DMS, sorted by year, including templates for the exchange of letters for payment of the running year and renewal of FP grant agreements for the next year.

Administrative procedures

EFSA, in accordance with its financial rules, covers the travel costs on the basis of one FP member per MS.

Participants receive information on the procedures for reimbursement by the EFSA secretariat together with the invitation. The Experts Compensation Guide lays down the rules on reimbursement that can be found [here](#):

EFSA contacts

The facilitation of the FP network is carried out by the Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit of EFSA. The functional contact mailbox of the Unit is scientific.cooperation@efsa.europa.eu. Contact details are formally provided in the FP grant agreement.

Activities as per FP Grant Agreement		Exchange of scientific information	Cooperation through art. 36 and databases or networks of scientific experts	Networking and raising the visibility of EFSA and of its role in the EU food safety system	Training opportunities in RA	Coordination of EFSA's Scientific Network at national level	International cooperation	General/ supportive activities
Tools	Description	FP ensures the exchange of information on relevant scientific outputs, data collection activities and/or other relevant scientific information concerning RA.	FPs support the update and maintenance of art. 36. organisation list. FPs set up, promote and support national databases or networks of scientific experts.	FPs raise EFSA's scientific visibility in the MS and act as an interface between EFSA and national stakeholders. FPs provide support in organising and coordinating scientific activities of relevance to EFSA.	FPs disseminate information provided by EFSA and national authorities regarding training opportunities in RA. FPs support the implementation of publicly funded courses on RA.	FPs promote the information flow between the AF members and the national representatives in EFSA's scientific networks. FPs support their AF member in the identification of national representatives for meetings of EFSA's scientific networks.	FPs assist EFSA and their AF member in sharing relevant information on international scientific cooperation activities related to RA.	Other activities not clearly categorised under a single Grant Agreement action. E.g., activities for the support of RA groups, training, communication with various stakeholders, promotion of EFSA, etc.
<u>FP Meetings</u>	FPs normally meet 4 times a year. The timing of the meetings is usually arranged so as to precede the Advisory Forum meetings	x						
<u>DMS</u>	The Document Management System, which EFSA uses for document storage and collaboration. Typically, access to certain folders is given by EFSA to FPs, AF members and representatives in Scientific Networks	x						
<u>Template for information exchange within the FP network</u>	A form that can be used to address questions to the colleagues within the FP network. Questions usually concern RA but may also include Risk Management or other scientific/ legal topics.	x						

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<u>Art. 36 list management tool</u>	An online tool for reviewing, managing and searching the list of Art. 36 organisations. Also useful to identify experts.		X		X	X		
<u>Guidelines for information flow among AF member, FPs and Scientific Network representatives</u>	A document describing the communication among the AF member, the FP and the Scientific Network representatives. It includes suggestions for the information flow and the corresponding timings.					X		
<u>Table of main forthcoming Risk Assessment Activities</u>	A table for the monitoring of ongoing RA activities at the MS level, facilitating potential cross-MS collaboration. The table is regularly updated by input from the FPs.	X	X					
<u>EU-Risk Assessment Agenda/ catalogue of projects and ideas</u>	A list of topics identified as priorities for RA work. The catalogues includes projects and project ideas across the MS working on the agenda topics.		X					
<u>Calendar of FP-EFSA Events</u>	A calendar where FPs can announce EFSA-relevant events and stimulate international participation.			X	X		X	
<u>Knowledge Junction</u>	A web repository for the publication and dissemination of tools and documents with close relevance to RA. Publication is done by applying an open, creative commons license.	X						
<u>EFSA's Register of Questions</u>	A table of the mandates EFSA receives, their status and their associated outputs.	X						

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<u>Contact details of FPs and AF members</u>	A table with the contact details of the members and alternates in the AF and the FP network. The table is kept up-to-date by EFSA.	X						
National meetings/ events	National events may be used to stimulate scientific cooperation or facilitate data collection. They present opportunities to present EFSA outputs and promote RA topics.			X		X		
National databases of experts	National expert databases can help achieve better communication and cooperation at the national level. They also facilitate the formulation of national scientific networks in support of any current RA activities		X	X			X	
<u>Data Warehouse (public access)</u>	A portal providing summary information on data providers and datasets for the various data collections of EFSA.	X		X				X
<u>Open Food Tox</u>	OpenFoodTox is a tool that provides information useful for RA on a large number of chemical compounds and source of information for scientific advisory bodies and stakeholders with an interest in chemical risk assessment.							X
<u>Compendium of botanicals</u>	The Compendium of Botanicals is a database of botanicals that are reported to contain substances of possible concern for human health when present in food.							X
<u>EFSA Statistical Models</u>	A collection of statistical models available on web forms, which users can use to process data. It needs registration to access.							X

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EFSA Journal	The EFSA Journal is an open access, online scientific journal that publishes the scientific outputs of the European Food Safety Authority.							X
EUSurvey	A web tool for creating and deploying on line surveys, questionnaires, event registration forms, etc. It has been developed by the EC and its use is free of charge.							X