
ADVISORY FORUM AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION UNIT

Parma, 06 February 2014
EFSA/AF/M/2013/490/PUB/FINAL

Final Minutes**1ST JOINT MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING
GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ADVISORY FORUM****PARMA, ITALY, 06 DECEMBER 2013**

Chairs: Bernhard Url, Acting Executive Director and Anne-Laure Gassin, Director of Communications, EFSA

Attendees**MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM**

Austria	<i>Roland Grossgut</i>	Latvia	<i>Aivars Bērziņš</i>
Belgium	<i>Benoît Horion</i>	Lithuania	<i>Zenonas Stanevicius</i>
Bulgaria	<i>Boiko Likov</i>	Luxembourg	<i>Nathalie Welschbillig</i>
Croatia	<i>Andrea Gross-Bošković</i>	Malta	<i>Ingrid Busuttil</i>
Cyprus	<i>Popi Kanari</i>	Netherlands	<i>Hubert Noteborn</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Petr Beneš</i>	Norway	<i>Lars E. Hanssen</i>
Denmark	<i>Anders Permin</i>	Poland	<i>Jacek Postupolski</i>
Estonia	<i>Martin Minjajev</i>	Portugal	<i>Maria Graça Mariano</i>
Finland	<i>Matti Aho</i>	Romania	<i>Nicușor Ciocănea</i>
France	<i>Rozenn Saunier</i>	Slovakia	<i>Zuzana Bírošová</i>
Germany	<i>Reiner Wittkowski</i>	Slovenia	<i>Urška Blaznik</i>
Hungary	<i>Maria Szeitzné Szabó</i>	Spain	<i>Ana Canals Caballero</i>
Ireland	<i>Raymond Ellard</i>	Sweden	<i>Leif Busk</i>
Italy	<i>Giancarlo Belluzzi</i>	United Kingdom	<i>Alisdair Wotherspoon</i>

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS

Bulgaria	<i>Mariela Pchelinska</i>	Italy	<i>Carlotta Ferroni</i>
Croatia	<i>Sara Mikrut</i>	Norway	<i>Astrid Bjerkas</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Karolina Mikanova</i>	Poland	<i>Iwona Wisniewska</i>
Denmark	<i>Heidi Kornholt</i>	Slovakia	<i>Marica Theiszova</i>
Estonia	<i>Piret Priisalu</i>	Slovenia	<i>Mitja Vrdelja</i>
Finland	<i>Pia Vikman-Roslin</i>	Spain	<i>Carmen Garrido</i>
France	<i>Alima Marie</i>	Sweden	<i>Karin Gustafsson</i>
Germany	<i>Suzan Fiack</i>	The Netherlands	<i>Chris Krikken</i>
Greece	<i>Dimitra Kardasi</i>	UK	<i>Justin Everard</i>

OBSERVERS

Switzerland	<i>Sabina Helfer</i>	European Commission	<i>Jeannie Vergnettes</i>
Switzerland	<i>Michael Beer</i>	Serbia	<i>Vera Katić</i>
FYR of Macedonia	<i>Svetlana Tomeska Mickova</i>	Serbia	<i>Jasmina Milijkovic</i>
FYR of Macedonia	<i>Katherina Jonovska</i>	Turkey	<i>Funda Kadim</i>
Montenegro	<i>Nedeljko Latinovic</i>		

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY STAFF

<i>Per Bergman</i>	<i>Jeffrey Moon</i>
<i>Stef Bronzwaer</i>	<i>Saadia Noorani</i>
<i>Hubert Deluyker</i>	<i>Laura Smillie</i>
<i>Marta Hugas</i>	<i>Alessia Vecchio</i>
<i>Juliane Kleiner</i>	

1. WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Bernhard Url welcomed members and observers to the 1st joint meeting of the Advisory Forum (AF) and Advisory Forum Communication Working Group (AFCWFG).

Bernhard announced that Anne-Laure Gassin would be leaving EFSA at the end of this year to take up a position in the Health and Consumers Directorate General (DG SANCO). Members were informed that Alessia Vecchio had been assigned as Acting Director of Communications (as of 16th December 2013) until a permanent appointment is made.

Apologies were received from members of the AF from Greece, Iceland and Turkey and the Irish member of the AFCWG.

2. AFWGC WORK PROGRAMME AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Anne-Laure Gassin presented the revised Terms of Reference of the AFCWG, highlighting the main changes that had been made following consultation with the AF and AFCWG. It was noted that an annual work programme including joint communication activities would be developed. The Chair opened the floor for comments.

Latvia asked about the intended recipients of the proposed training initiatives. Anne-Laure explained that the programme had been built taking into account the needs of the AFCWG.

The Terms of Reference were agreed by the group.

Laura Smillie presented the 2014 work programme of the AFCWG. She presented the main vision of EFSA in the area of risk communications, outlining five key areas and highlighted the planned activities for each area. Members were informed that food hygiene and food allergies have been identified for joint activities and a new website is planned for launch in 2015. New guidelines on crisis communication would be developed and a training programme in support of this initiative would be a priority in 2014. It was recognised that the programme would be of mutual benefit to Member States and EFSA.

Denmark suggested that it would be useful to have a communication plan on independence and to benchmark how each of the national competent authorities liaises with industry. Laura explained that independence-related topics were regularly discussed by the AFCWG. Laura suggested that there should be a broader debate on this issue which EFSA would be happy to be involved in.

Austria asked for clarification of the role of members in the work programme. Germany agreed with Austria that the work programme was missing information on how it could communicate science. Germany suggested that EFSA should be more active in presenting its work at scientific conferences. Italy suggested that EFSA should present their work at the EXPO 2015 event. Members were informed that it had been decided to have a joint EU presence at the Expo 2015 which was being led by EC's Joint Research Centre (JRC). It was clarified that EFSA does attend scientific conferences and will have a corporate presence at six selected events in 2014.

There was a discussion on independence and transparency and it was noted that there was a need to develop a common understanding or approach on this issue. It was suggested that the issue should be discussed by the AFCWG. Anne-Laure suggested that the issue could be tabled to the AFCWG, however, other partners would also need to be involved.

The Chair recognised that the community of scientists should develop an understanding about the provision of advice to risk managers and should be involved in the broader debate on conflicts of interest and science. EFSA has clear implementing rules relating to experts' declarations of interests, however, not all Member States have detailed rules or guidelines on this issue. The risk assessment community should develop a common understanding on the role of science and conflict of interests. It was recognised that this is a difficult task and the key element was transparency. The Commission recognised that this is an issue for all EU agencies.

In response to the question on what is being proposed in the joint activities, it was outlined that EFSA is taking the lead on the initiatives, however, the valuable contribution of Member States is also needed.

Spain congratulated the AFCWG for including the crisis communication guidelines within their work programme. Spain commented that the recent stakeholders survey conducted by EFSA which included a questionnaire for Member States was a difficult exercise. Laura responded that EFSA had undertaken a stakeholder mapping exercise to understand how EFSA is perceived by stakeholders according to the network members with whom the Authority liaises most closely. The results were presented at the joint Focal Point / AFCWG meeting in October 2013 and a report will follow.

3. COMMUNICATING RISK

3.1. BfR risk profile

Suzan Fiack from the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) presented the risk profile model developed by the BfR to communicate the outcomes of its risk assessments. Suzan outlined how the model was developed and used to communicate risk.

Juliane Kleiner asked how the severity of the health impairment is categorised. Suzan explained that the guidance was elaborated in collaboration with scientists who are involved in the risk assessment.

The UK's AFCWG member asked about the problem that was being addressed through the development of the model and who were the respondents to the evaluation survey.

Suzan explained that the goal of the risk profile is to increase understanding and to use standardised terminology. The respondents included risk managers, risk assessors as well as stakeholders including industry and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The Swedish AF member asked about the rationale behind developing the model and if reporting by the media had changed since the introduction of this model. Suzan explained that the model was developed to address a need to concentrate on risk communication. She clarified that the model was not a risk ranking tool but provides information which allows consumers to make a decision based on their own individual situation. Suzan confirmed that the model had not been evaluated to see how it influenced the reporting of risk assessments in the media.

Finland asked for further clarification on the consumer's ability (or not) to take preventative measures. Suzan explained that additional information was provided when it was highlighted that no control was possible by the consumer e.g. action taken by risk managers.

Marta Hugas highlighted that the name, risk profile is a term used in Codex Alimentarius as a preliminary risk management activity to describe a food safety problem and its

context. It was noted that this could cause some confusion. Suzan recognised this and mentioned that there was ongoing discussion in BfR on the wording of the initiative.

The Greek AFCWG member asked why the model did not provide information on long term exposure. Suzan responded by explaining that the risk profile does provide information on acute and long term exposure when it is available in the opinion.

3.2. Strengthening cooperation in risk communication

Giancarlo Belluzzi, the Advisory Forum member for Italy, presented ideas on how Member States could strengthen cooperation in risk communication in the area of zoonoses. He highlighted the importance of coordination, cooperation, exchange of knowledge and an pan-European approach in the subject area.

Anne-Laure Gassin asked for the agreement to proceed with a coordinated communication approach in zoonoses. Members were informed that a small sub group would be created to discuss the specific topic and target audience(s). The working group will liaise with the EC to coordinate the communication campaign.

It was agreed that a sub-group should be created to further develop the concept and report back to the AF and AFCWG.

The Bulgarian AFCWG congratulated EFSA on its work on risk communications and presented Anne-Laure Gassin with a farewell gift.

The Bulgarian AF member highlighted that communication is not always done well mentioning the *E coli* outbreak where Spanish cucumbers were incorrectly identified as the source of the outbreak. He informed the Forum of incorrect reports of a case of rabies in dogs imported from Bulgaria which resulted in the EC placing restrictions on Bulgaria and Romania. He reminded members of the significant effects of getting the communication wrong.

Anne-Laure thanked the Bulgarian AF member for reminding the Forum that communication needs to be evidence based.

Action 1: *AFCWG Secretariat to set up a small subgroup to develop a coordinated communication approach on a specific topic in the area of zoonoses.*

4. METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS INDEX

Laura Smillie presented the Clear Communication Index created by the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which provides a set of research-based criteria to develop and assess both scientific and communication outputs. It seeks to ensure that any material developed is tailored to address the needs of a single, principal target audience.

Laura updated the Forum on discussions that took place the previous day with the AFCWG. It was noted that the initial four questions are amongst the most difficult for EFSA to answer given the diverse audiences the Authority communication to.

Anne-Laure Gassin opened the floor for comments.

The Swedish AF member commented that traditionally individuals, who work in the communication field, focus on media channels but are less knowledgeable in the fields of social science. Anne-Laure responded that some Member States do have committees on social science.

The Austrian AF member recommended pilot testing the index on the public to evaluate if the key messages are understood by the public. Laura clarified that the index focuses on one audience whilst EFSA can target different audiences for the same output. It was agreed this needed further discussion.

The Irish AF member asked if there was any evidence to show that the index was effective in translating messages to the consumer. Laure Smillie responded that CDC would be looking at the impact of the index on consumer understanding in 2014.

It was agreed that the index would be tested on EFSA's own examples to pilot test its feasibility.

5. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN RISK COMMUNICATION

Anne-Laure Gassin presented EFSA's key objective in the area of international risk communication and sought views on how EFSA should best engage and prioritise its work in this area. She highlighted the importance of looking at consistency of messages and the promotion of coherence especially in today's digital environment.

Anne-Laure Gassin opened the floor for views on developing risk communication outside of the EU.

The AF member for Finland commented that it was a sensitive area and suggested that caution be exercised since there were no global actors in this field.

The AF member for France commented that in the international area, European risk assessment received criticism for not being science based. It was suggested that a joint statement should be drafted to address the criticism. The AF member for Sweden supported this view.

It was agreed that the EU risk assessment model should be explained to international partners.

Action 2: *Secretariat to explore/ draft a statement / presentation to explain EU risk assessment*

The Chair thanked members and observers for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Close of meeting

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

Reference	Responsible	Action
Action 1 Agenda item 3.2	AFCWG Secretariat	AFCWG Secretariat to set up a small subgroup to develop a coordinated communication approach on a specific topic in the area of zoonoses.
Action 2 Agenda item 5	AFCWG Secretariat	Secretariat to explore/draft a statement/presentation to explain EU risk assessment