

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### OF THE EFSA COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTS NETWORK (CEN)

October 2016

Risk communications<sup>1</sup> is identified as one of the mandates in EFSA's founding regulations and includes acting in close collaboration with the Member States to promote coherence in the risk communication process as well as ensuring appropriate cooperation with regard to public information campaigns<sup>2</sup>. Cooperation in risk communications between EFSA and the Member States is the main focus for the Communications Expert Network (CEN), which is closely aligned with the Advisory Forum (AF) to support its strategic priorities.

#### **Objectives:**

The main objectives of the CEN are:

1. To establish mechanisms (e.g. sharing calendars, teleconferences) that improve coordination, preparedness and consistency in communications on all areas within EFSA's remit, in particular in case of diverging views, food outbreaks, and emerging risks;
2. To work in close alignment to support the identified priorities of the AF, regularly update the AF regarding issues, joint activities and identified areas for development in risk communications and respond to requests by the AF to focus on key issues and priorities;
3. To explore opportunities to implement joint communications activities with a focus on those issues having the greatest public health impact and of priority to EFSA and the MS;
4. To identify risk communication challenges and support the development of appropriate good practices and guidelines, taking into account the needs of different target groups;

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in Regulation EC No 178/2002, point 13: "risk communication" means the interactive exchange of information and opinions throughout the risk analysis process as regards hazards and risks, risk-related factors and risk perceptions, among risk assessors, risk managers, consumers, feed and food businesses, the academic community and other interested parties, including the explanation of risk assessment findings and the basis of risk management decisions;

<sup>2</sup> Regulation EC No 178/2002: Article 40, points 3 and 4.

5. To facilitate acquisition of knowledge and share experiences in communications and risk communications, including strengthening expertise in how social science can support risk communications, innovative communications channels (e.g. social media) and communicating on emerging risks;
6. To share information and knowledge on public perception on food and feed safety, especially regarding controversial or sensitive topics (e.g. GMO, BPA, Pesticides) or areas of priority for the EU (e.g. AMR) to inform risk communications strategies.

## Members

The Members of the network are organisations from EU Member States with expertise in the fields covered by the network. A National Representative or an Alternate represents the Network Member at meetings. The Network Representatives represent not only the national designated organisations, but in a broader sense also the Member States. CEN Members and Alternates shall be nominated by the relevant Member State AF member in accordance with Article 3 of the Decision of the Management Board of EFSA on the establishment and operations of networks<sup>3</sup>. They should fit the following profile:

- Experience in risk communications in the area of food and feed safety, in line with EFSA's mandate;
- Ability to play an active role in the Communications Unit of a competent authority in a Member State;
- Be in the position to act as a communication point for relevant organisations and stakeholders within the MS, ensuring the exchange of information between these national organisations.
- Be able to liaise at national level both before meetings (ensuring that there is a Member State perspective being prepared) and after the meetings (to ensure timely feedback on the discussions and outcomes of the meeting), as well as to identify possible discussion topics for future consideration within the CEN.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/panelnetworksrop.pdf>

## **Access to meetings**

Representatives of the European Commission will be invited to attend meetings of Networks as observers. The Chair may invite representatives of other agencies, bodies or Institutions of the European Union, third countries or international organisations to attend meetings of Networks as observers.

## **Working methods**

The network shall meet two or three times a year, including workshops or symposia covering relevant aspects of risk communications, social science and expert contributions.

In addition it will use other means of collaboration:

- Email exchanges for information about meetings, campaigns, activities and deliverables and sharing documents (e.g. Minutes, Terms of Reference, Flash Reports, Agendas, etc.);
- Online exchanges (e.g. Yammer) to share ideas, references, organisational updates and promotions;
- Teleconferences – bilateral or multilateral, as a tool to discuss and share approaches on risk communications for sensitive issues, diverging views, or ad hoc updates on key topics, and during food outbreaks and incidents;
- Meetings – either bilateral or multilateral, to share experiences and expertise on areas of competence (e.g. social sciences, stakeholder engagement, organisational issues, etc.).

## **Deliverables:**

- The activities of the network will be defined in an Annual Work plan at the beginning of each year. Discussions and decisions should be recorded in meeting minutes, and shared with the members for feedback. Annual Work plan to be published on the EFSA website;
- Regular reports on activities to be presented to the Advisory Forum (AF) to be accompanied by discussions to inform priorities;
- Development of a shared forward-looking calendar including key and relevant communications activities planned by EFSA and the MS to increase preparedness, coherence and efficiency;
- Risk Communications Guidelines - update edition and add relevant content,

when determined as needed by the Network , of *When Food is Cooking Up a Storm*. Incident Communications Best Practice Recommendations – update version as relevant and determined by the Network;

- Surveys collating consumer insights (e.g. EU Insights Risk Perception surveys) from the Member States and other social science related activities guided by and supporting the priorities of the AF, to support targeted risk communications strategies;
- Joint Communications Plans and Campaigns - when appropriate and identified by the Network with input from AF members;
- Expert Contributions – invite external experts in risk communications and/or social science in a relevant topic to present to the CEN to build capacity in Risk Communications.

**Timeline:**

The terms of reference will be renewed after 3 years in 2020.