

ADVISORY FORUM & SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION UNIT

Parma, 23rd of November 2012
EFSA/FP/M/2012/097/PUB

Final Minutes

**FIFTEENTH MEETING BETWEEN FOCAL POINTS AND EFSA
PARMA (ITALY), 9TH - 10TH OCTOBER 2012**

Members

Chair: Stef Bronzwaer

Austria	<i>Johann Steinwider</i>	Latvia	<i>Dace Vilcāne</i>
Belgium	<i>Frederic Denauw</i>	Lithuania	<i>Ingrida Miliute</i>
Bulgaria	<i>Teodora Sarakostova</i>	Luxembourg	<i>Nathalie Welschbillig</i>
Cyprus	<i>Eleni Ioannou-Kakouri</i>	Malta	<i>Ingrid Busuttil</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Petr Beneš</i>	Netherlands	<i>Hubert Noteborn</i>
Denmark	<i>Dennis Jensen</i>	Norway	<i>Marie Louise Wiborg</i>
Estonia	<i>Piret Priisalu</i>	Poland	<i>Piotr Holownia</i>
Finland	<i>Kirsi-Maarit Siekkinen</i>	Portugal	<i>Paulo Fernandes</i>
France	<i>Coralie Bultel</i>	Romania	<i>Alecsandra Dida Cozachievici</i>
Germany	<i>Klaus Henning</i>	Slovak Republic	<i>Marica Theiszová</i>
Greece	<i>Foteini Tzoumanika</i>	Slovenia	<i>Blaža Nahtigal</i>
Hungary	<i>Judit Sali</i>	Spain	<i>Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry</i>
Iceland	<i>Ástfriður Sigurðardóttir</i>	Sweden	<i>Anita Strömborg</i>
Ireland	<i>Anne-Marie Boland</i>	United Kingdom	<i>Alisdair Wotherspoon</i>
Italy	<i>Luca Busani</i>		

Observers

Croatia	<i>Sandra Bašić</i>	Switzerland	<i>Judith Beck</i>
Serbia	<i>Jelena Šćepanović</i>		

Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

<i>Stef Bronzwaer</i>	<i>Jeff Moon</i>
<i>Sérgio Potier Rodeia</i>	<i>Kerstin Gross-Helmert</i>
<i>Saba Giovannacci</i>	<i>Laura Smillie</i>
<i>Elena Giroli</i>	<i>Raquel Garcia Matas</i>
<i>Franck Berthe</i>	<i>Saadia Noorani</i>
<i>Ilias Papatryfon</i>	<i>Sousanna Tasiou</i>

1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Stef Bronzwaer from EFSA's Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation (AFSCO) Unit and Chair of the meeting opened the 15th meeting between Focal Points (FPs) and EFSA.

The Chair welcomed the representatives from 32 countries, in particular Frederic Denauw from Belgium, Teodora Sarakostova from Bulgaria, Dennis Jensen from Denmark, Foteini Tzoumanika from Greece and Paulo Fernandes from Portugal, who attended the meeting for the first time. Apologies were received from FYROM, Montenegro and Turkey.

2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Following previous distribution of the draft agenda to FPs, some additional items were raised. Cyprus expressed the wish to report on endocrine disrupting substances in some consumer products (Bisphenol A and phthalate esters); the Czech Republic indicated to want to report on methanol poisoning cases; and the Slovak Republic expressed the wish to report on their national report on zoonoses and zoonotic agents. Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Finland, Malta and Switzerland requested to be given the floor under "Any Other Business" (AOB) so to make short announcements. From EFSA's side, two topics were listed also under AOB: an update on the Information Exchange Platform; and future FP meetings in 2013.

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Declarations of Interests, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest (ADoIs) of meeting participants. No conflicts of interests related to any issues to be discussed in this meeting were identified during the screening process or at the beginning of the meeting. FPs were also reminded to update their ADoIs, especially when they receive a notification that it will soon be one year old i.e. that it will no longer be valid.

The final minutes of the 14th FP meeting were approved with minor amendments by written procedure and published on EFSA's website on the 21.09.2012. They were also uploaded on ScienceNet on the same date.

3 EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT: RECOMMENDATIONS ON SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION

Sérgio Potier Rodeia shared with participants the main conclusions and recommendations on scientific cooperation included on the recently published report of Ernst & Young concerning the external evaluation of EFSA's work. Reference was specifically made to comments on the report made by Advisory Forum Members during their last meeting. Feedback on the report is currently being collected in order to be provided to EFSA's Management Board, who will then agree on the main priority actions to take further. The report is available online¹.

4 IMPROVING FURTHER THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE ARTICLE 36 LIST

Kerstin Gross-Helmert briefed FPs on the main work achieved by the Advisory Forum Discussion Group on the development of the Article 36 List of Competent Organisations. A proposal for the revision of the Article 36 List has been agreed upon. FPs are asked to coordinate the review process and ensure four main goals: (1) that all organisations on the List are still relevant, i.e. that all organisations still comply with formal criteria for inclusion; (2) that all relevant organisations are on List, i.e. that they cover, as far as possible at national level, all of EFSA's remit; (3) that organisation profiles on the Article 36 database are up-to-date; and (4) that the names of organisations are given as indicated in guidelines. The review process is based on revised guidelines and is expected to be concluded by September of 2013. An overview on the information available and use of the Article 36 organisations database was also provided.

Action 1: Focal Points to, once prompted, coordinate at national level the review of the Article 36 List of organisations, in line with the guidelines.

5 GRANTS AND PROCUREMENT

5.1 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Sousanna Tasiou, from EFSA's Finance Unit, explained in detail the main differences between the administrative procedures applying to calls for proposals (grants) and calls for tender (procurement). Additional information was provided on the ongoing simplification procedures (i.e. negotiated procedures) applying to grants, in particular those resulting from EFSA's initiative and those resulting from the revision of the EU financial Regulation. One of the revised procedures is the application of a 10% ceiling for calculation of overhead costs (as opposed to the past 7%).

Action 2: AFSCO to consult with the EFSA Finance Unit if the revised ceiling of 10% also should be used on the calculation of the 2012 overhead costs on the Focal Point reports; and, if yes, to update and re-circulate amongst Focal Points a revised version of the Focal Point reporting template.

¹ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/120905.htm>

5.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PARTICIPATION OF ORGANISATIONS IN EFSA GRANTS AND PROCUREMENT

Kerstin Gross-Helmert and Ilias Papatryfon briefed participants on the current state-of-play of the involvement of Article 36 organisations in EFSA's activities. Reference was made to the type of activities where support has so far been provided and to the involvement on such activities of organisations not listed on the Article 36 List. The total amount of Article 36 organisations from the List considered to be/have been active by early October 2012 was found to be 38.5%.

FPs were then provided with four questions on the subject and split into four breakout discussion groups. The feedback received from the discussions occurred on the different groups will be summarised and shared with FPs for further input.

Action 3: AFSCO to prepare and share with Focal Points a summary note with the outcome of the discussion on factors influencing the participation of Article 36 organisations in EFSA grants and procurement.

Action 4: FPs to provide comments (or further input) on the summary note EFSA has prepared on factors influencing the participation of Article 36 organisations in EFSA grants and procurement.

5.3 INFORMATION ON PLANNED CALLS

Ilias Papatryfon provided participants with an overview on planned grant and procurement calls for 2013. By end of 2012, the 2013 annual work programme will be adopted by EFSA's management board and the list of planned calls published on EFSA's website. A total of 30 framework contracts is foreseen, eight of which will be new. FPs were reminded to continue providing support in the dissemination of calls as widely as possible, so to ensure reaching the relevant organisations and persons.

Action 5: Focal Points to continue providing support in the dissemination of calls for grants and procurement as widely as possible, so to ensure reaching the relevant organisations and persons.

6 SCHMALLEMBERG VIRUS: THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATION

6.1 SCHMALLEMBERG VIRUS IN CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS - THE NETHERLANDS 2011-2012

Hubert Noteborn, invited speaker and FP from the Netherlands, presented participants an historical summary of the Schmallenberg virus outbreak occurred in the Netherlands in 2011. Overall, it was considered that a good alert system was in place for the identification of the virus and implementation of control measures and that surveillance of vector borne diseases can still be improved.

6.2 "SCHMALLEMBERG" VIRUS – ANALYSIS OF THE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL DATA AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Franck Berthe, Head of EFSA's Animal Health and Welfare Unit, presented FPs an overview of the work carried out by EFSA following the request from the EC for scientific and technical assistance on the possible risks for animal and public health

caused by the Schmallenberg virus. A second mandate on this matter has been agreed upon, aiming to (1) continue the collection of data and issue epidemiological reports three times per year; and (2) update the overall assessment of the impact on animal health, animal production and animal welfare.

7 PANEL COMPOSITION : GENDER AND GEOGRAPHICAL BALANCE

Raquel Garcia Matas briefed participants on the current EFSA promotion plan to stimulate applications to EFSA calls of its Scientific Committee and Panels. An analysis of the distribution of applicants to past calls, based on population size and gender, and the planned initiatives aimed at (1) increasing awareness on the calls targeting gender and identified countries; (2) training external experts on risk assessment in targeted countries; and (3) stimulating the participation of external experts in EFSA's working groups and short term assignments, were presented in detail.

8 FOCAL POINT REPORTING IN 2012

Sérgio Potier Rodeia informed FPs on the key timelines for end 2012 and beginning of 2013, concerning the FP annual reporting and the renewal (or signing of new) FP Agreements. Specific reference was made to the launch of the FP reporting period on 25.09.2012; to the timeline for submission of national reports by 15.11.2012 (recommended before); and to the renewal of FP Agreements in 2013. On the latter, FPs were reminded to provide by 12.10.2012 the information needed for signing the 2013 Agreements.

Action 6: Focal Points reminded to provide by 12.10.2012 the information needed for signing the 2013 Focal Point Agreements.

Action 7: Focal Points to submit national Focal Point reports by 15.11.2012, preferably before the timeline is due.

9 RELEVANT ISSUES FROM THE LAST ADVISORY FORUM MEETING

Jeff Moon briefed FPs on the key discussions held at the last Advisory Forum meeting, occurred in Parma on 26-27.09.2012. With higher relevance to FPs, the Agenda included a discussion on the external evaluation report from Ernst & Young¹; a proposal from the Article 36 Discussion Group for the review of the Article 36 List of Organisations; and the "self-review" of EFSA's scientific networks.

10 RELEVANT ISSUES FROM THE LAST AFCWG MEETING

Laura Smillie provided participants with feedback from the last AFCWG meeting, occurred in Paris on 04-05.07.2012. Reference was made to the break-out group discussion concerning national cooperation activities between AFCWG members and FPs, in preparation of the joint meeting between AFCWG members and FPs (to occur in Parma on 10.10.2012); and also to other relevant topics such as the new search engine

available on EFSA's website, the revised format of EFSA's electronic newsletters², the new email alert system³, and the publication of revised risk communication guidelines⁴.

11 ISSUES RAISED BY FOCAL POINTS

11.1 ENDOCRINE DISRUPTING SUBSTANCES IN SOME CONSUMER PRODUCTS - THE CASE OF BISPHENOL A (BPA) AND PHTHALATE ESTERS – LOW VS. HIGH CONCENTRATIONS (CY)

Eleni Ioannou Kakouri, Advisory Forum member and FP from Cyprus, briefed participants on the results of a study carried out in Cyprus with the aim to investigate the levels of BPA in polycarbonate plastics and the levels of phthalate esters in certain articles made from PVC material. The results of the studies on BPA raised concerns that contributed for EFSA to launch a full reevaluation focused on exposure and possible low dose effects; and as well to the organization of the “17th EFSA Scientific Colloquium on low dose response” in toxicology and risk assessment”⁵. For phthalate esters, the study contributed to the onset of the current EFSA review of available scientific information on endocrine disruptors. A scientific opinion will be delivered by EFSA in March 2013⁶.

11.2 METHANOL POISONING CASES (CZ)

Petr Beneš, FP from the Czech Republic, reported on cases of methanol intoxications observed last September in the Czech Republic. A total of 28 confirmed deaths and almost 80 poisoning cases were associated with this incident.

11.3 NATIONAL REPORT ON ZOONOSES AND ZOONOTIC AGENTS IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC (SK)

Marica Theiszová, FP from the Slovak Republic, presented the main findings of the national report on zoonoses and zoonotic agents in the Slovak Republic in 2011. The report includes information on 25 zoonotic agents and reveals that the most frequent zoonotic diseases at national level are campylobacteriosis, salmonellosis, yersiniosis and infections caused by *E.coli*. The report will be published online on the FP website.

² <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/newsletters.htm>

³ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/alerts.htm>

⁴ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/corporate/pub/riskcommguidelines.htm>

⁵ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/bisphenol.htm>

⁶ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/121001a.htm>

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 INFORMATION EXCHANGE PLATFORM

Saadia Noorani briefed participants on the planned new feature that is due to be implemented on the Information Exchange Platform (IEP). Users will be able to subscribe to receive email notifications when the monthly reports are uploaded. As the feature will be automated, Focal Points were reminded to pay particular attention to spelling and word characters in the fields when uploading documents.

Action 8: Focal Points reminded to upload data on the IEP with correct spelling, proper characters and in English.

12.2 FUTURE FOCAL POINT MEETINGS

The proposed dates for the forthcoming 2013 FP meetings are:

- 16th meeting: 19-20 February, Parma, (IT)
- 17th meeting: 07-08 May, Dublin (IE)
- 18th meeting: 09-10 October, Parma, (IT)

FPs were reminded not to make any travel arrangements until receiving the formal invitation from EFSA. FPs were also reminded that they should have an approved ADoI before registering for a meeting.

12.3 STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF FOCAL POINTS

Judith Beck, Swiss FP, requested that the document created by AFSCO on the structure and organisation of FPs is kept up-to-date. All participants agreed with the request.

Action 9: Focal Points reminded to update the information requested on the document uploaded on ScienceNet concerning the structure and organisation of Focal Points⁷.

12.4 OTHER TOPICS RAISED BY FOCAL POINTS

Bulgaria, Cyprus and Latvia circulated amongst FPs brochures (and a page marker in the case of Cyprus) for dissemination of information on EFSA and/or FP activities to national stakeholders at conferences and events. Croatia, Finland and Malta circulated brochures (or informed participants orally) on recently occurred (or soon to occur) national scientific events.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting, thanking participants for their attendance and their active contributions in the various discussions. He wished a continued fruitful and consolidated collaboration between EFSA and the FP network for 2013.

⁷ https://sciencenet.efsa.europa.eu/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_32_0_229_0_-1_47/http://beaps.efsa.eu.int;11930/collab/do/document/overview?projID=91473&folderID=91480

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

Reference	Who	What
Action 1	FPs	To, once prompted, coordinate at national level the review of the Article 36 List of organisations in line with the guidelines
Action 2	AFSCO	To consult with the EFSA Finance Unit if the revised ceiling of 10% also should be used on the calculation of the 2012 overhead costs on the Focal Point reports; and, if yes, to update and re-circulate amongst Focal Points a revised version of the Focal Point reporting template
Action 3	AFSCO	To prepare and share with Focal Points a summary note with the outcome of the discussion on factors influencing the participation of Article 36 organisations in EFSA grants and procurement
Action 4	FPs	To provide comments (or further input) on the summary note EFSA has prepared on factors influencing the participation of Article 36 organisations in EFSA grants and procurement
Action 5	FPs	To continue providing support in the dissemination of calls for grants and procurement as widely as possible, so to ensure reaching the relevant organisations and persons
Action 6	FPs	Reminded to provide by 12.10.2012 the information needed for signing the 2013 Focal Point Agreements
Action 7	FPs	To submit national Focal Point reports by 15.11.2012, preferably before the timeline is due
Action 8	FPs	Reminded to upload data on the IEP with correct spelling, proper characters and in English
Action 9	FPs	Reminded to update the information requested on the document uploaded on ScienceNet concerning the structure and organisation of Focal Points