

ADVISORY FORUM & SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION UNIT

Parma, 14th June 2013
EFSA/FP/M/2013/107/PUB

Final Minutes

**SEVENTEENTH MEETING BETWEEN FOCAL POINTS AND EFSA
DUBLIN (IRELAND), 7TH - 8TH MAY 2013**

Members

Chair: Stef Bronzwaer

Austria	<i>Melanie Kuffner</i>	Italy	<i>Luca Busani</i>
Belgium	<i>Laurence Ballieux</i>	Latvia	<i>Aija Melngailė</i>
Bulgaria	<i>Donka Popova-Mincheva</i>	Lithuania	<i>Ingrīda Miliūte</i>
Cyprus	<i>Pinelopi Ziegler</i>	Luxembourg	<i>Nathalie Welschbillig</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Petr Beneš</i>	Malta	<i>Ingrid Busuttil</i>
Denmark	<i>Dennis Jensen</i>	Netherlands	<i>Hubert Noteborn</i>
Estonia	<i>Piret Priisalu</i>	Norway	<i>Marie Louise Wiborg</i>
Finland	<i>Kirsi-Maarit Siekkinen</i>	Poland	<i>Iwona Wisniewska</i>
France	<i>Coralie Bultel</i>	Slovak Republic	<i>Marica Theiszová</i>
Germany	<i>Stefanie Freyberg</i>	Slovenia	<i>Blaža Nahtigal</i>
Greece	<i>Foteini Tzoumanika</i>	Spain	<i>Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry</i>
Hungary	<i>Judit Sali</i>	Sweden	<i>Irene Mattison</i>
Iceland	<i>Ástfriður Sigurðardóttir</i>	United Kingdom	<i>Esther Heller</i>
Ireland	<i>Wayne Anderson</i>		

Observers

Croatia	<i>Zorika Jurković</i>	Switzerland	<i>Judith Beck</i>
FYR of Macedonia	<i>Abdulezel Dogani</i>	Serbia	<i>Jelena Scepanovic</i>

Invitees

<i>Raymond Ellard</i> ¹	<i>Eileen O'Dea</i> ¹
------------------------------------	----------------------------------

Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

<i>Stef Bronzwaer</i>	<i>Kerstin Gross-Helmert</i>
<i>Sérgio Potier Rodeia</i>	<i>Elena Zeraschi</i>
<i>Saadia Noorani</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 17th meeting between Focal Points (FPs) and EFSA. The Chair thanked Raymond Ellard and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland for hosting this FP event.

The Chair welcomed the representatives from 31 countries, in particular Melanie Kuffner (Austria) and Aija Melngale (Latvia). Apologies were received from Portugal, Romania, Montenegro and Turkey.

2 WELCOME BY THE FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

The Chair introduced Raymond Ellard, Director of the Consumer Protection Division and AF Member, who welcomed FPs on behalf of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

3 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Following previous distribution of the draft agenda to FPs, some additional items were raised at the meeting under "Any Other Business" (AOB). The UK asked the floor to make a short announcement on a conference report; IT asked to announce an upcoming workshop; and SE asked to request FPs the sharing of experiences on endocrine disruptors.

The Chair informed participants that this FP meeting is set to last 1.5 days. The aim is to allow enough time for discussion of different Agenda items. Should this setup be considered more adequate, future FP meetings will be scheduled to last also 1.5 days.

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Declarations of Interests, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest (ADoIs) of meeting participants. No conflicts of interest 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.

¹ Attended part of the meeting

The final minutes of the 16th FP meeting were approved by written procedure and published on EFSA's website on the 20.03.2013. They were also uploaded on ScienceNet².

4 COOPERATION WITH MS ON DATA COLLECTION AND TRANSMISSION

The Chair introduced Eileen O'Dea, Senior Technical Executive of the Data Collection and Analysis Department of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. Eileen presented to FPs current initiatives regarding data harmonisation across the EU in the area of chemical contaminants, pesticides, food consumption data and zoonoses, antimicrobial resistance and food-borne outbreaks.

5 EFSA'S PRE-ACCESSION PROGRAMME

The Chair briefly presented EFSA's pre-accession programme. This programme aims to prepare the Food Safety Authorities in beneficiary countries (acceding countries – Croatia; candidate countries - Turkey, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; and potential candidate countries - Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Kosovo) for future participation in EFSA's networks; promote the transfer of knowledge in areas falling within EFSA's remit; develop communication and information exchange systems; and support national risk assessment and risk communication activities. Over the past 7 years, this programme has received a total investment of 4.1 million Euros.

6 CROATIAN EXPERIENCES ON SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION THROUGH THE PRE-ACCESSION PROGRAMME

The Chair introduced Zorica Jurković, Director of the Croatian Food Agency, who provided participants with an overview of the Croatian Food Safety System in general. Reference was made to the tasks and responsibilities of the Croatian Food Agency, to the activities and benefits resulting from the participation of the Agency in the FP network, and to the Croatian participation (through the Pre-Accession Programme) in EFSA working groups, networks and study visits.

7 OUTCOME OF SWOT ANALYSIS ON THE 5 YEAR REVIEW OF THE FOCAL POINT NETWORK

Sérgio Potier Rodeia presented to FPs the main conclusions of the SWOT analysis exercise concerning the 5 year review of the FP network². The presentation was followed by a discussion, where one of the key issues raised concerned how to bring further clarity and focus on questions/requests sent throughout the network. One of the suggestions made was the use of a template for formulating and circulation of questions/requests. FPs

² https://scienzenet.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=80696&folderID=888909

agreed to explore further the possible development of such a template. A call for volunteers to set a “think tank” amongst FPs on this topic shall be launched by AFSCO.

Action 1: AFSCO to launch a call for volunteers to consider the possible development and use of a template for formulating and circulation of questions/requests sent throughout the FP network.

8 RELEVANT ISSUES FROM THE LAST ADVISORY FORUM MEETING

Sadia Noorani briefed FPs on the most relevant issues discussed at the last meeting of the AF, occurred in Dublin on 6-7 March 2013. Key issues addressed were an exchange of views with the Chair of EFSA’s Management Board, EFSA’s draft multi-annual plan for 2014-2016, the self review of EFSA’s scientific networks, lessons learned from the meat products authenticity study, and feedback from the AF discussion group on future needs in research. Other relevant issues were EFSA’s position paper on whole genome sequencing, a request to EFSA for assessing the safety of botanicals and the transparency initiative aiming to establish two consultation groups involving AF Members, the EC and possibly Members of the European Parliament in the area of data access and quality review. The minutes of this AF meeting are available on EFSA’s website³.

9 BTSF TRAINING COURSES ON RISK ASSESSMENT IN MS

Sérgio Potier Rodeia presented FPs the current state-of-play of the ongoing BTSF trainings courses in risk assessment. The main aim of these courses and the framework under which they are being implemented was described. A summary of the main positive and negative findings, as reported by EFSA Observers to the training courses, was also provided.

The discussion that followed the presentation highlighted the need for the implementation of improvements in future editions of the training courses, namely (1) on the process leading to the selection of the most adequate candidates; (2) the possible setting up of two types of training courses, one for young professionals (beginners course) and another for scientists with more years of professional experience in risk assessment (advanced course, appropriate for trainers of trainers); (3) possibly explore the implementation of training courses in other areas of risk assessment e.g. animal health, animal welfare, nanotechnology, botanicals; and (4) make the best use of the available training material, in particular via the setting up of risk assessment training courses at national level.

Action 2: Focal Points to make the best use of the available BTSF risk assessment training material, in particular via the setting up of risk assessment training courses at national level.

Action 3: in future editions of the BTSF risk assessment training courses, AFSCO to explore the possible setting up of 2 types of training courses, one for young professionals (beginners course) and another for scientists with more years of professional experience in risk assessment (advanced course, appropriate for trainers of trainers); and the

³ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/130306a.htm>

implementation of training courses in other areas of risk assessment e.g. animal health, animal welfare, nanotechnology, botanicals.

10 TOOLS FOR INFORMATION EXCHANGE

10.1 DEMO ON THE INFORMATION EXCHANGE PLATFORM (IEP)

As per request of FPs in previous meetings, Saadia Noorani provided a live demonstration of the main features of the IEP⁴.

10.2 TABLE ON PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Sérgio Potier Rodeia provided an overview of the current state-of-play of the FP reporting table on planned activities, a table that aims to allow MS to share information on planned activities related to risk assessment, research and data collection in a concise format, before they reach the stage of being well-defined and have received a formal mandate/request. A summary of the information so far collected in the table was provided. The limitations of this tool were also evoked. As agreed during the discussions had under Point 11 of the Agenda (see below), the Chair reminded FPs to continue updating this table, provided some improvements are brought.

Action 4: Focal Points to continue updating the table on planned activities, available on ScienceNet⁵.

10.3 VIRTUAL LIBRARY

Saadia Noorani presented briefly the EFSA Virtual Library, a project that will establish a non-confidential repository of risk assessments, guidance documents, research findings, reports and other scientific evidence not consistently archived and indexed in bibliographic databases, for use by EFSA and MS. The project aims to increase transparency in the selection of such scientific evidence for European risk assessments and establish a comprehensive evidence database for the food and feed risk assessment community. The Virtual Library is intended to incorporate in the future the IEP.

11 EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON WORK PLANNING

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The Chair briefly introduced this Agenda item, explaining to FPs that a breakout session was prepared for discussing the exchange of information on work planning. The session aimed to: identify key limitations MS face in sharing information on work planning; understand the current limitations of the existing tools for collection of information on work planning (i.e. the IEP and the table on planned activities); discuss the usefulness of sharing available information on work planning; and understand if there are other tools/mechanisms for collection and sharing of information on work planning.

⁴ https://scienonet.efsa.europa.eu/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=449&mode=2&in_hi_userid=13722&cached=true

⁵ https://scienonet.efsa.europa.eu/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_32_0_229_0_-1_47/http;/beacons.efsa.eu.int;11930/collab/do/document/overview?projID=91473&folderID=393838

11.2 BREAKOUT SESSION

The Chair informed FPs that they could choose one of the three breakout groups prepared for this discussion. Each group addressed one common question and as well a set of three different types of questions. With regards to the latter, Group 1 focused on the IEP; Group 2 addressed the FP table on planned activities; and Group 3 centred the discussion on other means for sharing information on work planning⁶.

11.3 DISCUSSION

The Chair opened the discussion session. After an open debate, the Chair concluded that AFSCO shall prepare a draft summary report of the discussion occurred, to be submitted to FPs for final comments. This summary report has been uploaded on ScienceNet⁷.

Action 5: AFSCO to prepare a summary report on the plenary discussion concerning the exchange information on work planning.

Action 6: Focal Points to, when prompted, provide comments on the summary report concerning exchange of information on work planning.

12 FOLLOW UP ON SHARING OF EXPERIENCES ON THE REVIEW OF THE ARTICLE 36 LIST OF ORGANISATIONS

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The Chair introduced Kerstin Gross-Helmert, who briefed FPs on the current state-of-play of the review process of the Article 36 List of Organisations. The presentation focused on key activities being and yet to be carried out in the context of the review process, in particular the possible scenarios leading to: the submission of updates to existing questionnaires or alternatively of new questionnaires; and the type of information to be included in the letters to be sent by the MS Permanent Representations to EFSA for communicating changes to be made on the list (e.g. new designations, replacements, withdrawals, substantial changes), as well as the summary of organisations on the List. Final reference was made to the new EFSA webpage dedicated to Article 36 cooperation⁸.

Action 7: Focal Points to continue actively reviewing the List of Article 36 organisations of their own countries.

12.2 FRENCH EXPERIENCES ON THE REVIEW PROCESS

The Chair introduced Coralie Bultel, French FP, who presented the French experiences on the review process of the Article 36 List of Organisations. A national strategy was put in place in December 2012 aiming to update the information concerning French organisations on the List and to identify organisations that could be included on the List. Reference was also made to difficulties encountered during this process, e.g. the time-

⁶ https://scienzenet.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=80696&folderID=959952

⁷ https://scienzenet.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=80696&folderID=959950

⁸ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/networks/art36.htm>

consuming process to carry out an update or application, and the constant changes occurring on the contact persons from organisations included in the List.

12.3 PLENARY DISCUSSION

A plenary discussion took place amongst FPs. The Chair closed this Agenda item mentioning that EFSA is committed to further foster cooperation via the existing mechanisms foreseen on Article 36 of its Founding Regulation and that the ongoing review process revitalizes the Article 36 network.

13 SHARING MS EXPERIENCES ON EFSA'S SCIENTIFIC NETWORKS

13.1 EXPERIENCES FROM SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Chair introduced Marica Theizová, FP of the Slovak Republic, who briefed participants on the national experiences in coordinating the work of the national representatives in EFSA's scientific networks. Reference was made to the key cooperative role played by the national AF Member and FP (located both on the same Department/Organisation) in designating the national representatives to all EFSA's scientific networks and providing special information or data to national experts attending network meetings. Once per year, the AF Member and FP organise a coordination meeting for the national representatives of EFSA's scientific networks.

13.2 EXPERIENCES FROM SPAIN

The Chair introduced Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry, Spanish FP, who briefed FPs on the experiences from Spain in coordinating the work of the national representatives in EFSA's scientific networks. Spain has representatives in all EFSA's scientific networks and 4 of these representatives originate from the National Food Safety Agency, AESAN. Specific reference was made to the setting up of a national network on nanotechnology in food and feed, respective added value, and to the possible setting up of other national horizontal networks operating as national counterparts of EFSA's scientific networks.

13.3 PLENARY DISCUSSION

A plenary discussion occurred amongst participants. The Chair concluded this Agenda item highlighting the recommendation addressed to FPs on the report on 'Self Review' of EFSA's Scientific Networks⁹, discussed at the AF meeting in February 2013. The role of FPs in facilitating the exchange of information between network members at national level is to be further considered during the current review process of FP network.

14 RELEVANT ISSUES FROM THE LAST AFCWG MEETING

The Chair gave the floor to Sérgio Potier Rodeia who provided an update on the most relevant issues from the last AFCWG meeting. Reference was made to the input requested from FPs on two initiatives yet to be launched, the survey on stakeholder mapping and the nomination of candidates to the Advisory Group on Risk

⁹ https://scienonet.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=80696&folderID=959949

Communications. During discussion, FPs raised some questions on these two initiatives for which there was no immediate reply. The Chair proposed that FPs raise these questions directly to our Colleague from the Communications Directorate, Laura Smillie.

Action 8: Focal Points to raise any specific questions concerning the stakeholder mapping and the nomination of candidates to the Advisory Group on Risk Communications to Laura Smillie (Laura.SMILLIE@efsa.europa.eu).

Action 9: Focal Points to, once prompted, provide input to the survey on stakeholder mapping.

Action 10: Focal Points to, once prompted, disseminate and provide information on the renewal of the Advisory Group on Risk Communications to potentially interested parties.

15 ISSUES RAISED BY FOCAL POINTS

15.1 MICROPLASTIC PARTICLES IN MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND OTHER ARTICLE 29 REQUESTS

The Chair introduced Stefanie Freyberg, German FP, who informed participants of a recent request for a scientific opinion sent by Germany to EFSA in the context of Article 29 of EFSA's founding Regulation. The aim of the presentation was to illustrate an example of such types of requests (i.e. sent by a MS directly to EFSA) and the role that FPs can play in such process. These requests allow a European wide gathering of data and analysis as a basis for scientific assessments, and achieving a common level of knowledge, harmonised throughout Europe. These requests build the foundation for a mechanism to collect scientific knowledge all over Europe, and for strengthening the role of MS and EFSA in the collective responsibility for food safety in the EU. The Chair confirmed to participants that the request is currently being looked into by different EFSA scientific Units for checking and proposing a strategy for dealing with the matter.

15.2 EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

The Chair gave the floor to Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry, who asked for improvements on the exchange of email messages between FPs, AF Members, AFCWG Members and other scientific network members. The concern expressed regards the current policy for blinding emails exchanged between these 3 networks, not allowing knowing who has been informed. A revision of this BCC policy seems difficult as the requirement to blind addressees in emails (i.e. to blind personal emails) results from data protection reasons. The Chair concluded that a possible solution could be to inform on the header of exchanged emails who is being BCC and if any action is expected from addressees (i.e. if the email is for action or information).

Action 11: AFSCO to agree internally with the EFSA coordinators of the AF and AFCWG networks the introduction of a sentence on the top of exchanged emails informing who has been addressed and what type of action is expected (i.e. if the email is for action or simply information).

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ONE HEALTH, ONE MEDICINE

The Chair gave the floor to Coralie Bultel, who informed participants about the MedVetNet International Scientific Conference “One health, one medicine: sharing challenges for combating zoonoses”, to occur on the Technical University of Denmark, Lyngby, Denmark on 24-25 June 2013. More information about the respective scientific programme is available online¹⁰.

16.2 GRANTS & PROCUREMENTS

The Chair gave the floor to Kerstin Gross-Helmert, who provided to participants an overview of EFSA’s grant and procurement schemes. A detailed explanation was given on the key characteristics and differences of these two types of schemes, in particular the different types of procurement procedures (i.e. negotiated procedures and open calls) and grant procedures (e.g. project specific grants and thematic grants), types of procurement contracts (e.g. direct contracts, framework contracts), documentation necessary in calls for tenders and proposals, and types of criteria used on the evaluation of calls for tenders and proposals. More information on procurement and grant procedures is available on EFSA’s website^{11,12}.

During discussion, France mentioned that the timelines provided for some calls for proposals and tenders are too short, limiting the number of applicants, and that this situation should be avoided. France was asked to provide concrete examples where this situation has occurred. The Chair agreed to bring back the issue to EFSA and raise it with the Procurement Team.

16.3 TABLE ON PLANNED FP EVENTS

The Chair gave the floor to Sérgio Potier Rodeia, who briefed FPs on the current state-of-play of the table on planned FP events¹³. FPs were reminded about the importance of keeping this table up-to-date in order to allow the timely provision of support by EFSA to MS on the occasion of such events (e.g. allocation of speakers, provision of outreach material, etc.).

Action 12: Focal Points to continue providing information regarding national Focal Point events in the relevant table available on ScienceNet¹³.

16.4 REVISION OF FOCAL POINT AGREEMENTS

The Chair gave the floor to Sérgio Potier Rodeia who informed FPs on the ongoing activities and calendar aiming the revision of FP Agreements. The important contribution FPs can provide during the course of this revision process, as it was already the case with

¹⁰ <http://www.medvetnet2013.eu/index.php/MedVetNet-Association-Internat/643/0/>

¹¹ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/procurement/tenders.htm>

¹² <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/art36/art36faqs.htm>

¹³ https://scienzenet.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=611887&folderID=1072381

the SWOT analysis of the work of FPs, carried out on the February FP meeting, was highlighted.

16.5 FUTURE FOCAL POINT MEETINGS

The date scheduled for the forthcoming 2013 FP meeting is:

- 18th FP meeting: 09-10 October, Parma, (IT)

The Chair asked if the setup for FP meetings to last 1.5 days was considered better by participants. All FPs responded positively and so next FP meetings will be set to last 1.5 days.

16.6 OTHER TOPICS RAISED BY FOCAL POINTS

The Chair gave to floor to Esther Heller, FP from the UK, who informed participants about the Food Standards Agency's Food borne Virus Research Conference held in January 2013. The Agency hosted the conference to develop a better understanding of food borne viruses, in particular norovirus, in the food chain. The report of the conference and the presentations can be accessed online¹⁴.

The Chair gave the floor to Luca Busani, FP from IT, who informed participants about the workshop "The innovative methods of Risk Based Surveillance", to be held in Turin, Italy on 22-24 May 2013. This workshop is intended to give to the participants an understanding of the principles of risk-based surveillance design together with basic information and tools on how to apply and evaluate it. The workshop is intended for professionals working in the health sector or with an interest in public health.

The Chair finally gave the floor to Irene Mattison from SE who pre-warned FPs about a request soon to be sent out by the SE FP requesting the sharing of experiences on endocrine disruptors.

CLOSURE OF MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting, thanking participants for their attendance and their active contributions in the various discussions. The Chair thanked in particular Wayne Anderson and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland for having hosted the FP event in Dublin in such well planned and nice manner. He finally wished for a continued collaboration between EFSA and FPs network during the course of 2013.

¹⁴ <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/foodborneillness/foodbornediseaseresearch/noroconference13>

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

Reference	Who	What
Action 1	AFSCO	<i>To launch a call for volunteers to consider the possible development and use of a template for formulating and circulation of questions/requests sent throughout the FP network.</i>
Action 2	FPs	<i>To make the best use of the available BTSF risk assessment training material, in particular via the setting up of risk assessment training courses at national level.</i>
Action 3	AFSCO	<i>In future editions of the BTSF risk assessment training courses, AFSCO, to explore the possible setting up of 2 types of training courses, one for young professionals (beginner course) and another for scientists with more years of professional experience in risk assessment (advanced course, appropriate for trainers of trainers); and the implementation of training courses in other areas of risk assessment e.g. animal health, animal welfare, nanotechnology, botanicals.</i>
Action 4	FPs	<i>To continue updating the table on planned activities, available on ScienceNet⁵.</i>
Action 5	AFSCO	<i>Prepare a summary report on the plenary discussion concerning the exchange information on work planning⁷.</i>
Action 6	FPs	<i>To, when prompted, provide comments on the summary report concerning exchange of information on work planning.</i>
Action 7	FPs	<i>To continue actively reviewing the List of Article 36 organisations of their own countries.</i>
Action 8	FPs	<i>To raise any specific questions concerning the stakeholder mapping and the nomination of candidates to the Advisory Group on Risk Communications to Laura Smillie (Laura.SMILLIE@efsa.europa.eu).</i>
Action 9	FPs	<i>To, once prompted, provide input to the survey on stakeholder mapping.</i>
Action 10	FPs	<i>To, once prompted, disseminate and provide information on the renewal of the Advisory Group on Risk Communications to potentially interested parties.</i>
Action 11	AFSCO	<i>To agree internally with the EFSA coordinators of the AF and AFCWG networks the introduction of a sentence on the top of exchanged emails informing who has been addressed and what type of action is expected (i.e. if the email is for action or simply information).</i>
Action 12	FPs	<i>to continue providing information regarding national Focal Point events in the relevant table available on ScienceNet¹³.</i>