

Final Minutes

TWENTY SECOND MEETING BETWEEN FOCAL POINTS AND EFSA BRUSSELS (BELGIUM), 11TH-12TH FEBRUARY 2015

Chair: Stef Bronzwaer

Members	
Austria	<i>Melanie Kuffner</i>
Belgium	<i>Laurence Ballieux</i>
Bulgaria	<i>Donka Popova-Mincheva</i>
Croatia	<i>Sanja Miloš</i>
Cyprus	<i>Georgios Stavroulakis</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Petr Beneš</i>
Estonia	<i>Piret Priisalu</i>
Finland	<i>Kirsi-Maarit Siekkinen</i>
France	<i>Coralie Bultel</i>
Germany	<i>Lea Herges</i>
Greece	<i>Gorgias Garofalakis</i>
Hungary	<i>Judit Sali</i>
Ireland	<i>Edel Smyth</i>
Iceland	<i>Àstfríður Sigurðardóttir</i>
Italy	<i>Luca Busani</i>
Latvia	<i>Aija Melngaile</i>
Lithuania	<i>Giedrė Čiuberkytė</i>
Malta	<i>Ingrid Busuttil</i>
Netherlands	<i>Hubert Noteborn</i>
Norway	<i>Gisle Solstad</i>
Poland	<i>Iwona Wisniewska</i>
Portugal	<i>Cristina Baptista Rodrigues</i>
Romania	<i>Dida Cozachievi</i>
Slovak Republic	<i>Marica Theiszová</i>
Slovenia	<i>Blaža Nahtigal</i>
Spain	<i>Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry</i>
Sweden	<i>Karin Nyberg</i>
United Kingdom	<i>Alisdair Wotherspoon</i>

Observers	
Switzerland	<i>Barbara Engeli</i>

Staff of EFSA	
Stef Bronzwaer	
Sérgio Potier Rodeia	
Julia Finger	
Jeff Moon	<i>teleconference</i>
Djien Liem	<i>teleconference</i>
Ilias Papatryfon	<i>teleconference</i>
Isabelle Hubert	<i>teleconference</i>
Martin Moravek	<i>teleconference</i>

Apologies:

Denmark, Luxembourg and Observers from Candidate Countries

1. WELCOME BY CHAIR

Stef Bronzwaer from EFSA's Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit (AFSCO) and Chair of the meeting opened the 22nd meeting between Focal Points (FPs) and EFSA.

The Chair welcomed the FP representatives, in particular the new Focal Point from Sweden, Karin Nyberg, who attended a FP meeting for the first time.

2. WELCOME BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE – HEALTH, FOOD CHAIN SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT

The Chair gave the floor to Dirk Cuypers, President of the Board of Directors of the Federal Public Service (FPS) - Food Chain Safety and Environment - who welcomed participants to the meeting in Brussels' Egmont Palace. He highlighted that Belgium was hosting for the first time a FP meeting and expressed his wishes for a fruitful event.

3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, MINUTES OF THE LAST FP MEETING, ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

The Chair informed participants that the minutes of the last FP meeting were approved by written procedure and published on EFSA's website and DMS on 5 December 2014.

Several issues were raised by FPs and included on the draft Agenda for the second day, namely:

- ANSES Opinion on intense sweeteners (FR);
- National recipes as tools for more accurate food consumption data and exposure assessment (CY);
- Local contamination of food with Hexachlorobenzene in Austria (AT)
- Multilateral requests (FR);
- Update on the Food Safety Almanac and upcoming BfR Events (DE);
- Brochure on French Cooperation with EFSA (FR);

- Cyprus National Dietary Survey (CY);
- Sharing of information materials (SI);
- Short animation video on food safety (PT).

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Declarations of Interests, the Chair asked if any FP wanted to declare an interest. No interest was declared.

The Chair then adopted the final agenda.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE RELEASE OF SILVER NANOPARTICLES FROM DECORATION OF PASTRY

The Chair welcomed Jan Mast, Scientific Expert at CODA-CERVA in BE who presented an innovative project on nanotechnology. In the context of a document of the EC asking "Are silver nanoparticles safe?" CODA-CERVA conducted an analysis of the release of silver nanoparticles from the decoration of pastry. The research study concluded that "Silver nanoparticles are released from the silver-coloured coating of confectionary". FPs asked whether any health risks were detected during the study and if, across Europe, any risk assessment regarding nanoparticles in food and feed is done. Jan Mast confirmed that many institutions across Europe are doing this kind of assessment; however, the traditional method - chemical tests - could not prove a possible risk and the method will now be aligned to toxicological tests. Another question raised was if the effect in the human body might differ from the tests conducted in water, which is probably the case.

5. SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION TOOLBOX

The Chair introduced Sérgio Potier Rodeia, Scientific Officer in the AFSCO Unit, who presented the new Scientific Cooperation Toolbox. The objective of the toolbox is to provide a dynamic overview of mechanisms (in terms of networks and programmes) and tools to implement the Scientific Cooperation Roadmap. FPs were asked if the Toolbox is useful for them and would be taken up by them at MS level; or if they would prefer other tools, for example an info-graphic on Scientific Cooperation, as used in the area of Animal Health and Welfare. The PT FP remarked that Prezzi is easier to work with than PowerPoint, but for the tasks of FPs an info-graphic would maybe be more useful, as it can be inserted in e-mails and webpages. The IT FP added that, in conferences, it is sometimes easier to use posters to present EFSA rather than presentations. The Chair concluded that, for the time being, there is no clear or urgent need for the use of the Toolbox neither for the development of an info-graphic on the subject.

6. STRENGTHENING NATIONAL NETWORKING

The Chair presented to FPs a graphical depiction of the correlation between Article 36 organisations and organisations represented in EFSA's Scientific Networks ("bubble graphs"). The presentation clearly showed the differences in the national organisation of MS, which was further detailed with concrete examples. The Chair underlined that there is no intention to bring MS to a harmonized model but rather depict their complexity. As the document is a draft version, FPs were asked to check their national depiction regarding mistakes, spellings and changes in order to present an updated document at the AF on 4-5 March 2015.

Action Point 1: *FPs to comment on their national depiction until 18 February in order to allow the printing of a poster in preparation of the upcoming AF meeting.*

7. RESULTS FROM THE PERCEPTION SURVEY AMONGST THE GREEK NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES IN EFSA'S SCIENTIFIC NETWORKS

The Chair introduced Gorgias Garofalakis, FP from GR, to present the outcome of a survey carried out among national representatives in EFSA's Scientific Networks. The initiative resulted in an overview of the perception that national Scientific Network representatives have on their work and how it contributes to the planning and

implementation of data collection, risk assessment and emerging food safety activities at both national and EU level. In general, the GR Network Representatives expressed to be satisfied with cooperation through the Scientific Networks.

Gorgias explained further that, after concluding the survey, a meeting was organised with Network Representatives and with Representatives of Article 36 institutions. The outcome of this process was that, although satisfactory, scientific cooperation with - and via - the Network Representatives could be further improved. To that end, the further promotion, at a national level, of EFSA's Scientific Networks and of the role of Representatives, as well as the expansion of relevant national scientific networks could help. In addition to that, newly appointed Representatives may, in some cases, benefit from more targeted support, for instance, on issues or procedures relevant to the Scientific Network they participate in.

The IT FP added that a meeting with IT Representatives in EFSA's Scientific Networks led to similar conclusions. ES reported a different perspective, mentioning that ES Representatives are rather un-satisfied with their obligations as Network Representatives and are not clear about what is expected from them. The FR FP also noted that new Representatives often claim to lack clarity on their tasks. Therefore it would be helpful to have a factsheet or didactic paper for newcomers in the Scientific Networks to make them more familiar with their tasks and obligations.

Action Point 2: *AFSCO to draft factsheet for Scientific Network newcomers.*

8. FP EVENTS CONCERNING THE COORDINATION OF THE COMMUNICATION FLOW IN SCIENTIFIC NETWORKS

The Chair introduced Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry, FP from ES, who presented initiatives regarding national networking. Cristina provided an overview on FP events having taken place in ES to coordinate the communication flow between Network Representatives and the AF/FP representatives. Cristina explained further the concept of creating "mirroring" Networks: in the area of Nanotechnologies and Emerging Risks, national networks have been set up to discuss feedback from EFSA's Network meetings and spread information. For the other Scientific Networks currently no mirroring national Networks exist. However, regular coordination meetings will be set up.

9. IMPLEMENTATION OF 2015 FOCAL POINT AGREEMENTS

9.1 Introduction

The Chair gave an introduction on the topic, explaining the structure of the new FP Agreements and the main FP tasks. Martin Moravek, Team Leader of the Procurement Team in EFSA's Finance Unit kindly assisted via teleconference for questions and explanations regarding financial issues.

The new FP Agreements are multi-annual Grant Agreements issued for one year and renewable for three consecutive years. These types of Grant Agreements follow the principle of lump sum co-financing, with 70% being paid upon the signature of Agreements. The main task of FPs is the provision of support to AF members. This task is broken down into 6 sub-tasks. FPs are not obliged to carry out all activities listed on the Agreement and falling under each sub-task (as some might not be applicable to them), however, at least one activity under each sub-task needs to be implemented.

The Chair further clarified that, when submitting the annual activities reports (by 31.10.2015 the latest) FPs should, at the same time, ask for the payment of the second instalment of the lump sum contribution (30%). Reports are expected to be approved by EFSA around mid-November and letters extending the 2015 Agreements should be delivered by EFSA around end of November.

9.2 Training opportunities in risk assessment

The Chair gave the floor to Sérgio Potier Rodeia, who presented the main FP tasks regarding training opportunities in risk assessment (RA), and referring particularly to the 2nd edition of the BTFS training courses and to the MS participation in EFSA's specialized RA training courses. Sérgio encouraged FPs to share information also about other training initiatives, not necessarily restricted to EU level, but also at an international scale, of which EFSA might be unaware. The FR FP informed about a training cooperation initiative between ANSES and WHO. Sérgio confirmed that, even if the target audience of this initiative falls outside the EU, information about the course is useful for EFSA, particularly to pass it on to the contact persons in the Pre-Accession (IPA) and Neighbourhood (ENP) Programmes.

Action Point 3: *FR FP to circulate information about the training initiative between ANSES - WHO.*

9.3 Coordination of EFSA's Scientific Networks at national level

The Chair introduced Julia Finger, Officer in the AFSCO Unit, who updated FPs on the future involvement of FPs in the national coordination of network activities, the nomination of national representatives and the network meeting preparation. Julia informed FPs about the yearly update of the list of Representatives in EFSA's Scientific Networks, that will start by 16 February and finish by 2 March 2015. AF Members will be asked to verify nominations and contact details and FPs shall support them where necessary.

FPs reported about problems to enter the Network communities. They got informed that a FAQ exists for general problems with EFSA's Document Management System (DMS). Problems could also derive from particular access rights or missing communities yet to be created by the responsible Scientific Units. FPs asked to receive an overview on Network meetings throughout the calendar year to support meeting preparation.

Action Point 4: *AFSCO to check with Scientific Units if Network communities have been created and if FPs have been granted access.*

Action Point 5: *AFSCO to circulate FAQ on DMS to FPs.*

Action Point 6: *AFSCO to liaise with Scientific Units and create an overview on Network meetings in 2015.*

9.4 International Cooperation

The Chair introduced Djien Liem, Lead Expert on International Scientific Cooperation, who – via teleconference – briefed FPs on their supporting tasks regarding international cooperation activities. In particular, FPs were requested to promote the exchange of information on international cooperation activities on-going at national level falling within the remit of EFSA.

Action Point 7: *AFSCO to share link to multi-annual programme on international cooperation activities.*

10. RELEVANT ISSUES FROM THE LAST ADVISORY FORUM MEETING

The Chair introduced Jeff Moon, Deputy Head of the AFSCO Unit, who informed FPs via teleconference on key issues discussed at the 54th AF meeting, held in Parma on 10-11 December 2014. Jeff provided details on a guideline being developed to deal with "Article 30" diverging scientific opinions and on a questionnaire on the operation of the AF and the role of AF members. A Delphi study with MS' involvement has also been launched to identify and gain consensus on the most important scientific food safety areas for collaboration between EFSA and EU MS, Norway and Iceland. Further background documents have been shared with the FPs, namely: the draft minutes of the last AF meeting, the results of a survey carried out with AF members on the operation of the AF,

the draft Agenda of the coming AF meeting and a set of slides with an EFSA Communications update.

Action Point 8: *FPs to look into the draft agenda of AF meeting and brief AF Members on any relevant topics stemming from the FP meeting.*

11. JOINT MEETING BETWEEN AF MEMBERS AND FOCAL POINTS ON 13 OCTOBER 2015

The Chair updated FPs on the state of play of the planned joint AF and FP meeting which will take place on 13 October 2015 in the context of EXPO 2015. The meeting offers an opportunity to discuss the support FPs may provide to AF members. In this context, FPs were asked to share their views on the expected outcome for this meeting. FPs noted that before discussing the most relevant areas for provision of assistance, it would be helpful to lay down clearly both the role of FPs and AF members, so to ensure that all are clear about their role. Another issue raised is the lack of common priorities of both networks, leading to AF members not being fully aware of the increased amount of work requested to FPs. It is important to clearly outline what AF and FP members expect from each other and to ensure a smooth information flow between the different stakeholders.

The Chair added that an increased awareness of each other's work and a better expression of expectations are essential for a good cooperation between AF and FP representatives. The Chair proposed to reflect on objectives and desirable achievements and report back suggestions of topics for discussion at the joint meeting.

Action Point 9: *FPs to reflect on objectives and topics for discussion on the joint AF/FP meeting and send suggestions to AFSCO by 15.04.2015.*

12. FEEDBACK FROM 2014 FP REPORTING

The Chair gave the floor to Sérgio Potier Rodeia who briefed participants on the preliminary results from the 2014 FP reporting. Sérgio presented the main activities conducted in 2014 as well as the use made of the FP budget.

Regarding the plans for implementing a new tool for information exchange, EFSA is currently defining the requirements for such new tool. FPs will be asked to provide input on the subject (see Point 15 of the Agenda). With regards to the phasing out of the Information Exchange Platform (IEP), the Chair clarified that there is currently no timeline. The IEP is located on ScienceNet, which is no longer receiving IT maintenance since the shift to OpenText (DMS). Thus, its phasing out should occur in parallel to the move onto a new, more modern information sharing system. Also the Expert Database (EDB) will be phased out in the long term, approximately in 3-4 years. It will be replaced by a Talent Management system. A Talent Management Programme has been initiated within EFSA and it will integrate in the future the EDB as well as the process for selecting experts for EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels.

13. ISSUES RAISED BY EFSA & FOCAL POINTS

13.1 Update on Grants and Procurement

The Chair introduced Ilias Papatryfon, Team Leader of the Planning & Monitoring Team of the Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance Department, who gave an update on Grants and Procurement via teleconference. Ilias presented the main scientific Grant and Procurement calls planned to be launched during the first quarter of 2015. The information about Grants and Procurements is available on EFSA's website. The Finnish FP asked when the call on the "EU-Menu" Project will be launched. Ilias explained that the exact timeline is not decided yet, but the call will probably be launched by the end of March and with an application timeline of approximately 3 months.

13.2 Scientific Conference at EXPO 2015

The Chair welcomed Isabelle Hubert, EFSA Communications Officer, who informed FPs on communication activities currently on-going to promote EFSA's 2nd Scientific

Conference. The Conference, entitled "Shaping the Future of Food Safety, Together" takes place on 14-16 October in the frame of EXPO 2015 in Milan. Registrations are open until 15 May 2015. Isabelle asked FPs to particularly spread information about the Young Researcher Initiative, giving support to early career researchers. Deadline to submit abstracts for the poster session is the 3rd April 2015. Around 100 contributions will be awarded. More information can be found on the website <http://www.efsaexpo2015.eu/>.

Action Point 10: *FPs to disseminate information about EFSA's 2nd Scientific Conference and, in particular, about the Young Researcher Initiative.*

13.3 Feedback on the last call for the Scientific Committee and Panels

The Chair gave the floor to Isabelle Hubert, who presented via teleconference the lessons learnt from the integrated communications campaign for the last call to EFSA's Panel Renewal. The newly appointed members will be announced in the coming months. It will then also be possible to see the distribution of candidates per nationality.

13.4 ANSES opinion on intense sweeteners

The Chair gave the floor to Coralie Bultel, FP from FR, who informed participants on a Scientific Opinion from ANSES on intense sweeteners. The main conclusions of the Agency assessment are that: with regard to nutritional benefits, the available studies show no proof that the consumption of products containing intense sweeteners aid in weight control, or in regulating blood glucose levels in diabetics or the incidence of type 2 diabetes; for the risks of developing cancer, type 2 diabetes, or premature births, the data available to date do not enable a link to be established between onset of these risks and the consumption of intense sweeteners. A few studies do however highlight the need to obtain further knowledge on the link between intense sweeteners and certain risks. In a nutritional policy context in which one of the main objectives is the reduction of sugar intake in the general public, ANSES considers that no meaningful data exist that justify encouraging the substitution of sugars by intense sweeteners in a public health framework.

13.5 National recipes as tool for more accurate food consumption data & exposure assessment

The Chair gave the floor to Georgios Stavroulakis, FP from CY, who gave a presentation on how to achieve more accurate food consumption data and exposure assessment by extracting the ingredients of national recipes. The National Dietary Survey, having started in Cyprus in December 2014, is part of the EU Menu project.

13.6 Local Contamination of food with Hexachlorobenzene (HCB) in Austria

The Chair gave the floor to Melanie Kuffner, FP from AT, who described an interesting episode of local contamination of food with HCB occurred in Austria, along with its follow-up.

The Chair closed the meeting of the first day.

14. FORTHCOMING RISK ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES IN MEMBER STATES

The Chair opened the 2nd day of the meeting with the agenda item on sharing forthcoming RA activities in MS. The related EXCEL table had been shared with FPs in advance of the meeting and FPs had been asked to insert relevant RA activities taking place in their country before the meeting. The aim of the table is to share via the AF/FP Network information on forthcoming RA activities on-going at national level in order to avoid duplication of work on European level. The table on forthcoming RA activities will become a standing item on the FP and AF meetings and is part of the preparatory work to be done by FPs in advance of the AF meetings. FPs will be asked to quarterly update the table regarding RA activities which will then be brought to the attention of the AF on the following AF meeting.

The Chair explained that the table is not meant to contain much background information, but should simply highlight the activities. Instructions on how to fill out the table can be found on the first sheet of the table. This guideline can be further developed according to the needs and use of the table. The Chair highlighted that it is important not to overload the table with information but filter the relevant activities to be shared. Seven FPs that had uploaded activities before the meeting gave a short explanation on their input.

FPs reported on problems to open and upload new versions of the table. Regarding IT problems, it was suggested that FPs send a screenshot to EFSA's Service Desk (service.desk@efsa.europa.eu) and AFSCO so to follow up on the problem. Regarding the upload of documents, it is important that FPs do not upload in overlapping timeframes thus eliminating the information of others. To ensure that such overlap does not occur, the reserve function available on the drop-down menu of the file should be used. Once the new version is uploaded then the document should be unreserved by use of the "un-reserve" function meanwhile made available.

15. BREAKOUT SESSION ON FOCAL POINT TASKS

The Chair gave an introduction to the following breakout session on FP tasks. The purpose of the breakout session is to discuss in detail the practical implementation of certain FP tasks, where new specific activities are envisaged. FPs were split into 4 groups to discuss the following topics:

- A. Article 36 Network;
- B. Supporting RA Training Activities;
- C. IEP and information exchange;
- D. Forthcoming RA activities

Briefing notes for each topic were shared with FPs in advance of the meeting. A summary of the main outcomes of the breakout sessions is available in Annex I.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 Multilateral requests (FR)

Coralie Bultel, FP from FR, raised in plenary the possibility of sharing the information collected in the context of requests for information exchange circulated within the FP network with national institutions. FPs agreed that the information can be disseminated unless it has been classified "confidential" by the MS before.

16.2 Requests for information exchange from ENP (AFSCO)

Sérgio Potier Rodeia asked FPs whether, in general, requests for information received from ENP countries can be circulated through the FP Network whenever information cannot be given from EFSA/EU side but could exist under national legislation. A concrete example was the recent request addressed to EFSA by the ENP contact person in Jordan regarding scientific outputs available in MS about the acceptable percentage of lead in white feta cheese. In this context, the FP from PT asked if it is possible for FPs to circulate requests from third countries through the FP network, as Portugal has established cooperation activities with Portuguese speaking countries outside the EU. Sérgio explained that these requests are of interest within EFSA's international activities framework.

16.3 Focal Point meetings in 2015 (AFSCO)

The Chair informed FPs on the current plan for FP meetings in 2015. The new approach aims to align FP and AF meetings, with the first normally occurring one month before the latter. This will allow the collection of input during FP meetings to feed some AF agenda items, in line with the objective of FPs supporting the preparation of AF meetings. Some FPs raised logistical questions regarding the joint AF/FP meeting before the Scientific Conference at the EXPO in Milan. They were informed that a block-booking was

made for accommodation purposes and further information will soon be passed on to them. For participating in the Scientific Conference, AF and FPs are requested to register indicating their status (i.e. "FP" or "AF"). Those that have registered without this indication should send an email to AFSCO in order to confirm their registration.

16.4 Update on the EU Food Safety Almanac and upcoming BfR Events (GER)

Lea Herges, FP from DE, provided FPs with a brief updated on BfR's EU Food Safety Almanac, which has been translated and is available now in Spanish, French and Chinese, both as printed versions or to download from the BfR's website. In addition, a template for the profiles of the ENP countries has been developed and circulated. The next update on the EU Food Safety Almanac will occur in 2017 and FPs will be asked in advance to provide input on changes occurred in their own countries. Finally, Lea gave an overview on upcoming BfR events in 2015.

16.5 Brochure on French cooperation with EFSA (FR)

Coralie Bultel, FP from FR, asked FPs for authorization to use two pictures taken on the occasion of past FP meetings for a brochure concerning FR cooperation with EFSA. FPs had no objections to the use of these pictures.

16.6 EFSA Procurement Call on the Delphi study (AFSCO)

The Chair informed FPs that a procurement call on the Delphi study related to the RA Agenda has been published on EFSA's website. FPs were asked to disseminate information on this call through their national networks.

16.7 Cyprus National Dietary Survey (CY)

Georgios Stavroulakis, FP from CY, informed participants about the project "Cyprus National Dietary Survey", conducted in the context of EFSA's EU Menu project that aims at collecting harmonized food consumption data at EU level. The information leaflet was distributed among FPs.

16.8 Brochure for consumers in Slovenia (SI)

Blaža Nahtigal, FP from SI, asked FPs for support as Slovenia is planning to create a brochure on food safety for Slovenian consumers. In particular, FPs were requested to share similar examples that have been published at national level.

16.9 Video on food safety from Portugal (PT)

Cristiana Baptista Rodrigues, FP from PT, presented a video aiming to provide consumers basic information on food safety. The video was prepared by the Portuguese Competent Authority (ASAE) together with the national airline (TAP).

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting, thanking participants for their attendance and active contributions. A special appreciation note was expressed to the FP from BE for all the preparatory work and the pleasant atmosphere of the meeting.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

Reference	Who	What?
Action 1	FPs	To comment on their national depiction until 18 February in order to allow the printing of a poster in preparation of the upcoming AF meeting
Action 2	AFSCO	To draft factsheet for Scientific Network newcomers
Action 3	FR FP	To circulate information about the training initiative between ANSES - WHO
Action 4	AFSCO	To check with Scientific Units if Network communities have been created and if FPs have been granted access
Action 5	AFSCO	To circulate FAQ on DMS to FPs
Action 6	AFSCO	To liaise with Scientific Units and create an overview on Network meetings in 2015
Action 7	AFSCO	To share link to multi-annual programme on international cooperation activities
Action 8	FPs	To look up into the draft agenda of AF meeting and brief AF Members on any relevant topics stemming from the FP meeting
Action 9	FPs	To reflect on objectives and topics for discussion on the Joint AF/FP meeting and send suggestions to AFSCO by 15.04.2015
Action 10	FPs	To disseminate information about EFSA's 2 nd Scientific Conference and in particular about the Young Researcher Initiative

ANNEX I

OUTCOME OF BREAKOUT SESSIONS ON FOCAL POINT TASKS

The session started with the Chair explaining that the purpose of the breakout session is to discuss in detail the practical implementation of certain FP tasks, namely where new activities are envisaged. FPs were split into 4 groups to discuss the following topics:

1. Article 36 Network
2. Supporting risk assessment training activities
3. IEP and information exchange
4. Forthcoming risk assessment activities

Briefing notes for each topic were shared with FPs in advance of the meeting. After discussion, the groups reported back to the plenary. A summary of the key conclusions from the breakout sessions, as well as the outcome of the respective discussion in plenary, is presented below.

1. ARTICLE 36 NETWORK

- FPs discussed new ways for promoting the networking of Art. 36 organisations at national and EU level, including how to attract new organisations to join the List;
- Two different difficulties were highlighted: (a) generating interest for organisations to join the List; and (b) generating interest for organisations to apply to calls for grants. The reasons behind these difficulties seem to be, respectively: (a) cumbersome application processes; and (b) values for grants considered low when compared with the work to be done;
- Participants suggested a yearly check of the List in order to keep it up-to-date, facilitating networking;
- FPs expressed the view that they see the role of FPs more linked to providing support to organisations included on the list; and the role of AF members more linked with promoting the interest of organisations to join the List;
- Past experiences with Art. 36 FP events were discussed as an eventual mechanism for promoting better national networking;
- For better networking at EU level it was suggested the organisation of EU (or regional) events (promoted by EFSA/AF members) for pooling together organisations from different EU countries. Other tools for promoting better networking at EU level were staff exchanges between Article 36 organizations and having Multi-MS Consortia as a requirement on grant calls.

2. SUPPORTING RISK ASSESSMENT TRAINING ACTIVITIES

- The following 4 activities were reported to be the most urgent to be implemented: (a) open the advanced RA courses developed by and for EFSA Panel members/staff to participants from MS; (b) develop basic RA training opportunities/material targeted to non-scientists and relevant stakeholders; (c) expand the guest scientist programme to other EU Agencies and third countries; (d) stimulate and share opportunities for participation in RA courses, for example summer courses;
- Defining clearly the target audience of training courses is crucial for the success of training courses. It ensures the selection of appropriate experts as well achieving the goals of the training course set by the organisers;

- Further sharing of information about training opportunities is considered desirable. To this end, a joint FP “register” (e.g. Excel sheet, a table, a team calendar within DMS, etc.) where training opportunities could be recorded and shared (including those which are not for MS – but which might stimulate interest in being developed by MS) should be kept. In addition, setting a standing Agenda item on main training opportunities could be included on FP meeting agendas in the same way as for forthcoming RA activities;
- More training opportunities for young scientists should be developed. This this might be achieved via the opening of the advanced RA courses but material would need to be better tailored (as sometimes these courses go too deep, even for “experienced” people);
- New forms of education (e.g. e-learning, basic RA training, etc.) should be considered as these may suit best for young/inexperienced scientists and for non-scientists/stakeholders (for the latter, training courses are probably not the best methods as opposed to online materials, info-graphics, etc.).

3. IEP AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

- With regards to what kind of information should be shared, FPs noted that the new platform will most likely not be sharing the same kind of information as ScienceNet & IEP given that it aims to be an open source of information. Thus DMS should be kept as an alternative for sharing relevant documents;
- The sharing of work plans was discussed during the session. Overtime it has been observed that not all countries share this information mostly due to the fact that it is not available. Therefore, given that the sharing of this information is not mandatory, FPs agreed that it can be referred as one of the type of documents to be shared through the new platform;
- FPs also considered very interesting the sharing of information on concluded scientific outputs, events (paying especial attention to deadlines) and media action (e.g. management of crisis or information addressed to consumers), since this kind of information is normally not otherwise searchable;
- With regards to functionalities required on the new tool for information exchange, FPs agreed that ideally it should have: a good search function, since information on dynamic platforms gets easily “lost”; an option to allow recipients decide how often they want to receive updates (once a day, once a week, etc.); a structured folder organisation, per topic; if possible, a way to link the update directly to other social media platforms, such as institutional twitter or Facebook (this option would be interesting only to English speaking countries or those who update their own platforms in English);
- Regarding the phasing out of the IEP, FPs expressed concerns regarding the loss of the information currently stored on the IEP. This tool currently holds structured information, stored in folders according to subject. Another added value of the current set of information is the fact that most documents can be searched per country;
- With regards to the new tool, FPs raised some anticipated difficulties, namely: if too dynamic there is the risk of “bombarding” recipients with too much information, becoming eventually “tiring”; the language may be a limitation, as links to documents on a language other than English may not be so relevant; and the fact that a dynamic platform tends to become “old” fast, which may limit the searching capacity for concrete subject.

4. FORTHCOMING RISK ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

- FPs discussed the MS reporting on forthcoming RA activities, and expressed the view that the current table available to this purpose should be kept as simple as possible;
- FPs proposed that the Excel file is revised so to have 2 distinct sheets, one with ongoing activities, another where to place finalized activities. In this context, the current column header "completion or publication date" should read "expected date" on the first sheet. Once an activity is finalized, the FP should then cut and paste the information from the 1st sheet to the 2nd one. With regards to the column referring to "short description", FPs reported that sometimes it is not necessary to fill in as the project/activity title is self-explanatory. As to the remaining columns, FPs considered them all relevant;
- The current table does not allow for an easy identification of subjects that could be of interest for more than one country and/or for EFSA. Therefore, FPs proposed that countries express their particular interests during the dedicated AF Agenda items, and/or over bilateral discussions;
- The nature of activities/projects to be included on the table should be clearly stated in a guide (currently located on the very first sheet of the Excel file). These may include research projects concerning data collection activities relevant to RA, research projects aiming at the execution of part or full RA, meta-data analyses aiming at the execution of part or full RA and qualitative or (semi) quantitative RA. Research on analytical methods, general conferences and workshops should not be included in this table. Information on planned activities in case of crises (rapid measures) should be reported;
- FPs confirmed that they are willing to gather and keep information up-to-date on the table, as well as to inform AF members of updates of the table before AF meetings. It should be noted that sometimes the information may come from the AF representative, who should therefore inform the FP accordingly;
- FPs reported that it is important to have a trial period to get used to the table, as well as to obtain the information internally at national level and to implement good information exchange with the AF representative on this topic; alternative scenarios (other than the table) should also be considered for provision of feedback, namely the provision of oral feedback during the AF meetings.

Document history

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Prepared by	Julia Finger
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