PhD Scheme

Building EU risk assessment capacity through the hosting of PhD researchers in EFSA

Aim of the PhD Scheme: Advancing Scientific Knowledge

The aim of this proposed program is to advance the scientific background and methodologies in Food Risk Assessment and to strengthen scientific cooperation between EFSA and MS academic institutions. Particularly, the objectives of the programme are to:

- Strengthen Europe's risk assessment capacity by advancing Scientific Knowledge and methodologies in Food Risk Assessment;
- Motivate Young Scientists to get involved in Risk Assessment;
- Intensify exchange and cooperation among academic institutions and EFSA;
- Contribute to harmonising risk assessment practices across Europe.

Description of the Scheme

PhD researches to perform their research in a topic of EFSA's remit

The purpose of the scheme is to promote knowledge and methodologies on Risk Assessment. This will be accomplished by:

a. identifying relevant research topics relevant to EFSA's merit, and
b. co-operating with Universities by hosting PhD researchers for certain periods in EFSA to work on these topics as part of their PhD thesis.

Who can apply?

PhD students from universities on the Article 36 list or other public European Academic Institutions with research interests on topics relevant to EFSA's work.

How does the process work?

The participants should be enrolled in a PhD programme of a public recognised higher education establishment from an EU member states and EEA countries that awards PhD degrees. EFSA will have a cooperation agreement with these establishments. The programme will start with a pilot year were candidate Institutions and individuals will be identified through AF, FP and Art36 List. Following the evaluation of the pilot year an open call procedure may be put in place listing the relevant research topics available by EFSA. If more than one applicant is interested in the same research topic, a number of criteria will be used to evaluate and rank the potential candidates. The evaluation will be performed by a committee with representatives of HUCAP, AFSCO and Scientific Units.

Topics for research?

Topics for research shall fall within EFSA's remit and will be proposed by applicants in their application. To help identifying interesting research proposals EFSA will be sharing possible research topics through the Advisory Forum and Focal Point network (some examples provided in Annex 1).

What happens, once a researcher has been approved?

Once a researcher has been approved to conduct part of his PhD research in EFSA on a relevant topic, an agreement will be signed between EFSA, the researcher and the corresponding Academic institute covering aspects of cooperation including the length of stay in EFSA, confidentiality issues and publishing rights. The stay of the Selected Experts in EFSA will be covered under EFSA's "Short-term study visits (STSV) Scheme". http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/jobs/docs/traineeshipdecision150218.pdf, where also an application form is available: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/jobs/traineeship.htm
Throughout the assignment at EFSA, each Researcher will be allocated a "Research Advisor", who will be the counterpart for the Academic Supervisors to counsel the Researcher during the stay in EFSA.

How long will the assignment last?

The duration of the actual assignment in EFSA shall depend on the objectives and the time required to accomplish the purpose of the stay. The current ED decision foresees a total length of stay of 6 months but it could be prolonged if deemed necessary.

What about remuneration?

As EFSA cannot offer educational grants to candidates, participants should secure funding for their participation either by their own means or by grant schemes, like the Marie Curie scheme of grants (http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/). EFSA is

willing to cooperate with the corresponding Academic Institution as a "partner" in such grant programs (if applicable) in order to help the candidate secure his/her funding.
Exchange of PhD students may also be part of cooperation agreements with national organisations if planned for in grant agreements or contractual arrangements.
EFSA will put at the disposal of the Researcher the necessary office space together with relevant office equipment.

Important to know: Social security payments, sickness and accident insurance

EFSA is not responsible for the Researcher's social security payments or sickness insurance during the stay at the Agency.
Hence, EFSA does not cover sickness insurance and Researchers must provide proof that they are covered by a sickness insurance scheme for the entire duration of the attachment at the Authority (Researchers are advised to obtain their European Health Card from their country of origin before their arrival at EFSA).
During the attachment at EFSA, a Researcher is only personally insured against the risk of accidents according to the EFSA insurance policy.

The assignment is finished. What now?

The Academic titles granted to the successful researcher in the end of his/her PhD program is sole responsibility and right of the corresponding Academic Institution.
EFSA will grant to the researcher a certificate for the time he/she spent with EFSA and the activities were he/she was involved. In addition, the Researchers that complete successfully their PhD studies will be included in EFSA's Alumni Network.

ANNEX 1

Examples of possible PhD research topics based on EFSA's recommendations

1. ***"Determination of carry-over of Ni from feed to food products of animal origin"***
   EFSA Panel: Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM)
   EFSA Journal: EFSA Journal 2015;13(4):4074
   Output Title: "Risks to animal and public health and the environment related to the presence of nickel in feed"

2. ***"Risk assessment formulation on specific welfare consequences, management systems and production purposes related to the farming of sheep".***
   EFSA Panel: Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW)
   EFSA Journal: EFSA Journal 2014;12(12):3933
   Output Title: Welfare risks related to the farming of sheep for wool, meat and milk production.

3. ***"Investigation of the presence of chloramphenicol in soil (hot spots) and on the possible uptake by cereals and vegetables, including the formation of plant metabolites"***
   EFSA Panel: Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM)
   EFSA Journal: EFSA Journal 2014;12(11):3907
   Output Title: "Chloramphenicol in food and feed"

4. ***"Developing infectivity assays for Norovirus and investigating survival of foodborne pathogens including internalisation in tomatoes during crop production at natural exposure levels"***
   EFSA Panel: Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ)
   EFSA Journal: EFSA Journal 2014;12(10):3832
   Output Title: "Risk posed by pathogens in food of non-animal origin part 2"

5. ***"Integrating modern methods in chemical risk assessment including OMICs, in vitro and toxicokinetic models"***
   EFSA Scientific Committee and Emerging Risks Unit and Scientific Committee
   EFSA Journal: EFSA Journal 2014;12(4):3638
   Output Title: "Modern methodologies and tools for human hazard assessment of chemicals"