

REVIEW of the OPERATION of EFSA'S ADVISORY FORUM 2015



FINDINGS OF A SAMPLE SURVEY

JUNE 2015

REVIEW of the OPERATION of EFSA'S ADVISORY FORUM 2015



Participating Member States

Cyprus
France
Germany
Hungary
Ireland
Lithuania
Netherlands
Poland
Slovak Republic
Spain
Sweden
UK

REVIEW of the OPERATION of EFSA'S ADVISORY FORUM 2015



Review Topics

role of Advisory Forum Members in the Forum

function of an Advisory Forum Member in representing his/her country

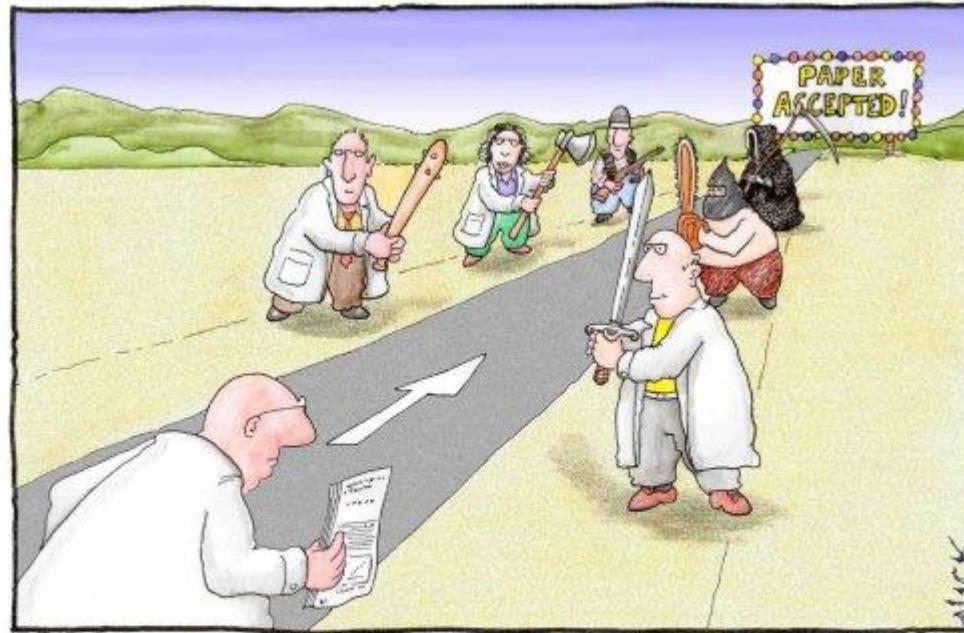
Advisory Forum Member's interaction with different groups in his/her country

Advisory Members' needs and expectations as active participants in the Forum

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Findings: role of Advisory Forum Members in the Forum



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

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Findings: role of Advisory Forum Members in the Forum

Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation tasks the Advisory Forum with eight duties
are these eight tasks feasible? is anything missing?

in the best of all possible worlds all eight duties are feasible, however

MS' national structures & systems are different => power is where the money is

MS' political imperatives take precedence => duplication may occur

no mechanism for mediation after an opinion has been developed/published => risk of overt divergence

AF agenda & discussion too operational => insufficient focus on strategic issues

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

create & distribute a list of MS' risk assessors' contact details in case of emergency

create a briefing sheet for new AF Members outlining what is expected of them (induction? podcast?)

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Findings: role of Advisory Forum Members in the Forum

first listed duty under Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation tasks Advisory Forum with providing advice to EFSA's Executive Director in the performance of his duties

what should this mean in practice? what form should it take? (1/2)

Members should provide EFSA's Executive Director with advice on

MS' 'hot topics', possible solutions, strategic priorities, potential areas of conflict
what's coming over the horizon (strategic thinking)

how to deploy EFSA's resources

how EFSA can influence/shape Commission & Parliament questions, and European research priorities

how to pursue EFSA's self-tasking agenda

creation European risk assessment scenarios

how to build capability for emergencies

PERCEIVED ISSUES

AF a 'sounding board' rather an advisory platform

AF agenda & discussion too operational (backward-looking) => insufficient focus on strategic issues

little MS' ownership of AF agendas => reactive involvement rather than pro-active engagement

no input from Panels (awareness of Panel agendas) => limits in-, and between-,MS debate & collaboration

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2015



Findings: role of Advisory Forum Members in the Forum

first listed duty under Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation tasks Advisory Forum with providing advice to EFSA's Executive Director in the performance of his duties

what should this mean in practice? what form should it take? (2/2)

QUESTIONS

should AF set the agenda for policy thinking about how Europe does risk assessment?

should Panel Heads be part of EFSA's Advisory Forum?

who are EFSA's 'real-world' clients? (EFSA's impact beyond EC-EFSA mindset)

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- greater focus on strategic issues in AF agendas
- harvest MS' priorities for 'next AF meeting' agenda

(end of AF meeting roundtable, AFSCO initiate between meetings)

- MS' presentations to AF meetings about MS' national priorities => 'raise the 'intelligence' bar'
(an EFSA-produced document detailing MS' operational & strategic research priorities)
- intensify between-meetings working groups (face-to-face, electronic, yammer?) => better networking
 - EFSA & MS bring to AF meetings perspectives from outside Europe

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Findings: role of Advisory Forum Members in the Forum

sixth listed duty under Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation tasks Advisory Forum with cooperating in situations where a scientific divergence is identified

what is AF's role in preventing/communicating around diverging opinions?

prevention is neither feasible nor desirable

‘name’ the divergence, interpret the divergence, discuss the content of communications around the divergence, and to facilitate discussion between relevant parties about the ‘nature’ of actual or potential divergence(e.g. value-based judgements, science, methodologies, data collection, data quality)

‘make ready’ AF Members to explain to MS’ national media

signal the potential for divergence & to follow up

(change focus from damage control to early stage detection => strengthen demands on MS’ to be open about early stage risk assessment=>a more proactive AFSCO role in communicating potential for divergence to AF)

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATION

AF develop an enforceable set of guidelines for early stage detection, a process for managing potential divergence and guidance on how to communicate divergence to general public

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Findings: role of Advisory Forum Members in the Forum

what is AF's role in influencing other parties (e.g. community research programmes or media)?

- diverse range of views about in-MS influence:

from.....AF Members influential in garnering research ideas, & influencing research agendas,
through.....EFSA information creates a good lever for discussion
to.....EFSA's influence on programmes pitiful

- influence over Community :

AF good vehicle for presenting EFSA with real problems facing MS => EFSA can advise EC
=> ? exerts influence over community's research agenda

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

create a research agenda of strategic priorities, setting out the direction of travel
(a list of food safety and security research priorities) => a common vision which can create influence

thoroughly re-appraise ways to influence Community research agenda

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Findings: role of Advisory Forum Members in the Forum

third listed duty under Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation tasks Advisory Forum with ensuring close cooperation between national competent bodies and EFSA

what more could be done to develop this? (1/2)

increase EFSA visibility and grow national MS capability by:

- encouraging Scientific Panels to hold conferences in MS around national experts
- hosting conferences with national-level MS ministers, EC seniors, national MS/international media
- (with stakeholders) delivering workshops/joint training with MS on specific topics, organising/brokering high-profile relevant scientific events
- making available EFSA materials (models, data, papers) for nationally organised events
 - Executive Director visits to MS
- introducing bi-laterals between Executive Director & national competent bodies/heads (yammer, skype, teleconference)

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Findings: role of Advisory Forum Members in the Forum

third listed duty under Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation tasks Advisory Forum with ensuring close cooperation between national competent bodies and EFSA

what more could be done to develop this? (2/2)

create a rapporteur system

dedicate an EFSA employee to each large MS to function as 'relationship manager' (FDA model)

oblige the will to deliver on verbal commitments made at AF meetings of working together
(recognising the reality of shrinking MS resource constraints)

restructure AF meetings to foster closer cooperation: less 'top down', more formal interaction
(tap into informal 'hot topics' (coffee session conversations) using open space technology, future search tools)

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Findings: function of an Advisory Forum Member in representing his/her country



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Findings: function of an Advisory Forum Member in representing his/her country

**do you feel you can truly represent your country?
what would you wish to change?**

diverse range of views

from yes, (unqualified & qualified) (easier for smaller countries)
through..... unsure, lack of certainty about having all relevant information, experience
to..... difficult, because MS has no common position/opinions to represent

ISSUES

challenge to know what is going on in universities
many institutional bodies having direct contact with EFSA may create confusion about who speaks for MS
(what is the role of AF being a one-stop shop?)
AF agenda distributed too late to allow for full in-country consultations

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

more structured work between AF meetings to keep issues alive, generate more input
EFSA produce a list of contacts of MS national institutions for AF Members

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Findings:
function of an Advisory Forum Member in representing his/her institution

**do you feel you can truly represent your institution?
what would you wish to change?**

yes, (unqualified & qualified)

caveats:

“irrelevant question, since Member represents his/her country”
“embarrassed to represent a ‘private’ institution”

ASPIRATIONS FOR CHANGE

a few Members would like better in-country coordination:
(better flows of information within and between in-country organisations,
more formal structures to foster coordination)
(issues of political will, interest, resources, power)

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Findings:

Advisory Forum Member's interaction with different groups in his/her country



Focal Point

Advisory Forum Communications Working Group

Article 36 organisations

Organisations representing your country in an EFSA Scientific Network

Other organisations (e.g. research bodies, ministries)

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Findings:

Advisory Forum Member's interaction with different groups in his/her country

what works well, what needs to develop, in your interaction with in-country counterparts?

FOCAL POINT

most report “working very well” or “working well”

QUESTIONS

does EFSA see FPs as fulfilling EFSA promotional and intelligence gathering roles?
what examples can Members share of FPs working effectively?

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

strengthen ‘bridge’ between FPs and scientists of MS’ universities
(marketing tools to explain EFSA’s capabilities and to facilitate access to a potentially new European network
of scientists)

create formal relations/network between FPs and other non-academic MS bodies/institutions

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ADVISORY FORUM COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

some report “working well”, others report uncertainty about knowing whether it is working effectively
sense that AFCWG is disconnected from AF

QUESTIONS

is AFCWG a working group for EFSA or for MS?

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

AF review AFCWG's mandate to ensure clarity about its responsibilities, its activities are coordinated, it is
more pro-active, and it uses most appropriate tools/technologies

AFCWG ‘up its game’ to become world-class communicator, and become a role model for MS
(=> raise the bar across Europe)

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what works well, what needs to develop, in your interaction with in-country counterparts?

ARTICLE 36 ORGANISATIONS

a minority report “working well”

majority report few Article 36 organisations actively cooperate or collaborate
(=>not a lively/active/profitable set of connections)

ISSUES

accession procedures, and administrative burden of involvement, are deterrents
insufficient understanding of the reasons for lack of appeal

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

a serious overhaul of what EFSA expects of Article 36 organisations, the value-add for organisations to list,
efficacy of EFSA's engagement tools, and a critical review of current lists

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ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTING YOUR COUNTRY IN AN EFSA SCIENTIFIC NETWORK

a majority report “working very well” or “well”

OTHER ORGANISATIONS (e.g. RESEARCH BODIES, MINISTRIES)

majority (of the few respondents) report interaction with ministries “working very well” or “well”
(interest from ministries depends in part of political administration’s interest in food safety)

links with universities difficult

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how best to achieve visibility for AF Members in Member States?

many report this is not an issue: main vehicle are FPs and other working networks

EFSA shows up in MS
ED bi-laterals
training MS' scientists in RA methodologies

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

compile and distribute to AF Members contact details of MS' media who contact EFSA directly
(=> connections can be followed up in MS)

ED appoint a deputy to undertake more direct contact/visits/bi-laterals/speaking engagements under the auspices of AF Members

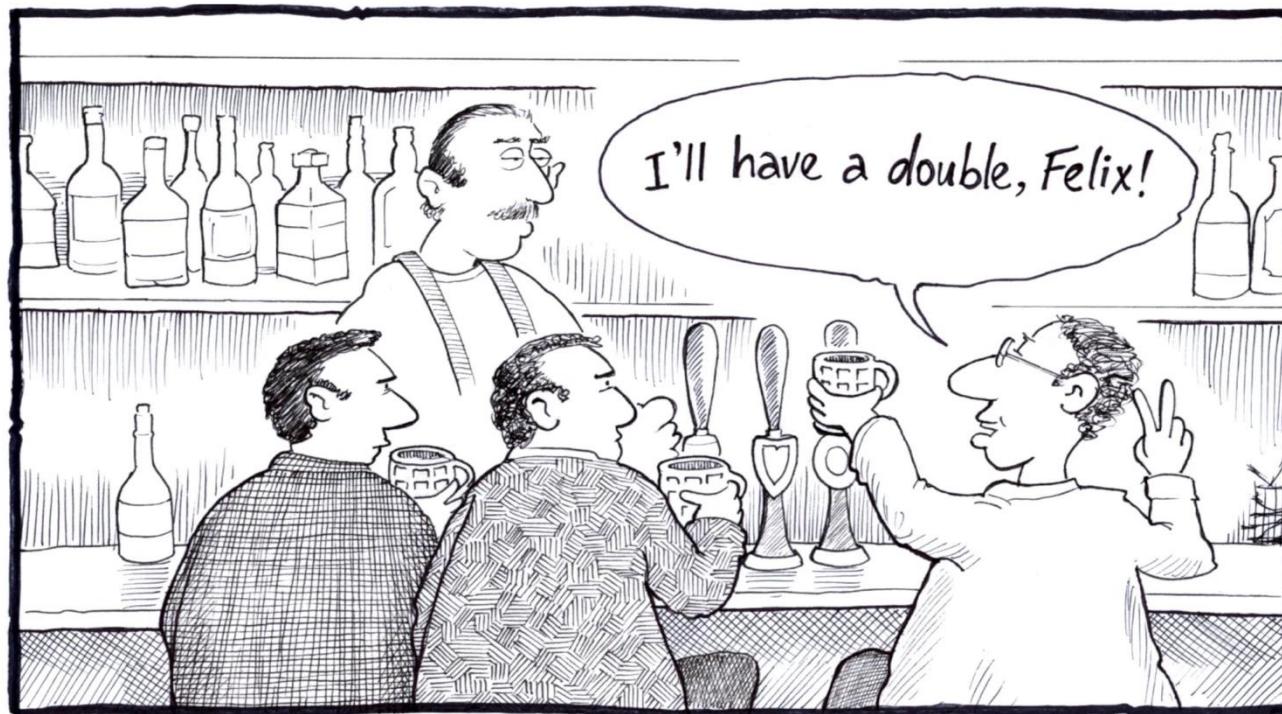
AF review what AF Members and FPs can do better to promote EFSA

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Findings:

Advisory Members' needs and expectations as active participants in the Forum



Cambridge, 1953. Shortly before discovering the structure of DNA, Watson and Crick, depressed by their lack of progress, visit the local pub.

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would the AF Member support regularly working in groups between meetings?

between-AF meetings working groups enhances networking, keeps issues alive, increases output
electronic, teleconferencing, yammer tools to optimise resources

potential impediments are MS' resource constraints, political will, 'topic-value'

what do AF Members expect from AF concerning Risk Communication?

share good communications practice

communications that interpret science in simple, consumer-accessible language
communications to decision-makers and consumers that link science outcomes with potential social impact

what role should AFWCG play?

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Findings:

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**in addition to hosting an AF meeting, what role could be given to
Member State holding the EU Presidency?**

table own MS' risk assessment priorities for AF meetings

invite Panels & Management Board to conduct their meetings in country

lead discussion groups in AF meetings

co-chair EFSA meetings

host EFSA training in country

requires significant preparation for flawless execution

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Findings:

Advisory Members' needs and expectations as active participants in the Forum

does the Forum advise you about EFSA's work and outputs, and that of other MSs?

too much 'top down' input, insufficient scope for break-out work
some presentations pedestrian, focused on operational rather than strategic issues
strike a balance between MS' national risk assessment concerns and broader view

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

create a clear format of communication between AF Members and AFWCG

ensure all Members present contribute to discussions
(directed questions if necessary)

make better use of modern communication tools to 'present' information ahead of AF meetings
=> optimise 'meeting time' for discussion

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Findings:

Advisory Members' needs and expectations as active participants in the Forum

what do you need from AF?

a repository of risk assessment models/algorithms for MS use

greater collaboration in the creation of AF meeting agendas

more dynamic, coordinated relationship involving joint development of work programmes, and risk assessment/communication tools

knowledge, help, cooperation, advice

opportunities to share with, and learn from, other Members

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Findings:

Advisory Members' needs and expectations as active participants in the Forum

where do Members want AF to be five years from now?

more dynamic, more participatory body having close functioning links with international bodies

strong, internationally-recognised platform for sharing information

clear strategy that sets the risk assessment agenda for others

open, lively, professional friends' network for cooperation and open information flows

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Findings:

Advisory Members' needs and expectations as active participants in the Forum

the External Evaluation differentiated between countries with limited own risk assessment capacities and those without risk assessment capacities.

do you see there could be cluster approaches using different cooperation tools?

clusters already exist informally

MS' differing views on formalising clusters :

might limit MS to work within cluster => close off opportunities

real potential value in cooperating with larger-capacity country
(selection criteria: risk assessment capability, regional, topics, interests?)

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Findings:

Advisory Members' needs and expectations as active participants in the Forum

**we have agreed a process to define a common EU risk assessment agenda.
what added value would this bring for you?**

- expedient use of Europe-wide capacities
- efficient use of limited resources
- mitigate against divergent opinions
- more coherent communications
- leverage to influence MS' priorities/research

CONCERNS

methodology being developed is too bureaucratic
“EC orders a car from EFSA; Fiat would do, but EFSA produces a Ferrari”

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Findings:

Advisory Members' needs and expectations as active participants in the Forum

current legislation foresees EFSA working with a MS'-resourced model of Scientific Panels. is this model sustainable?

strength of current model:

employs a diverse range of MS' scientists from different backgrounds with different viewpoints

- + some MS' say model is sustainable, citing
 - increase of MS' scientists deployment in recent years
 - in several MS' political will remains strong to continue support
 - MS must be persuaded to budget/fight for & deploy means to resource Panels

- other MS' say model is past its shelf-life/unsustainable, citing
 - less capacity building at universities and economic pressures => premium on national resources for national priorities

- deployment of MS' scientists to Panels, depletes contribution at national level
 - scientists involved in EFSA research may not be independent
 - Panel scientists not necessarily 'best' scientists (time-rich rather v. capability-rich?)
 - systematic exclusion of private sector capabilities

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Findings:

Advisory Members' needs and expectations as active participants in the Forum

**current legislation foresees EFSA working with a MS'-resourced model of Scientific Panels.
do you see alternatives?**

task EFSA to merge MS' reference laboratories, and build network with MS' private laboratories

task EFSA to hire scientists directly (FDA model)

nominate MS rapporteurs: pay designated national experts (EMA model)

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Findings:

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**EFSA has a backlog of 'regulated-products' work.
what more could EFSA do to outsource this work? would you country participate in this effort?**

some MS' already assist EFSA in this way

EFSA's long term vision should include MS' doing more political and resource issues to address for any re-distribution of work to MS'
important EFSA demonstrates this is not a 'power grab'

task EFSA to establish and use a formal set of 'Collaboratory Partners'

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Thank you

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

