

Summary of breakout session on National Networking

(28th Focal Point meeting, 15-16.09.2016)

A. Which are the main difficulties that you encounter for promoting an efficient national networking?

1. Lack of institutional support for implementing Focal Point tasks and operating on a networking environment, with excessive bureaucracy – **institutional barriers**;
2. "Competition" between networking organisations (namely between organisations with partially overlapping remits) – **institutional barriers**;
3. Big-sized networking partners look often into their own benefits (too much emphasis on "what's in it for me") – **institutional barriers**;
4. Limitations on the Focal Point capacity: knowledge/clarity of relevant national stakeholders, resource limitations, difficulty in ensuring sustainability of planned activities due to higher priorities – **knowledge and/or resource barriers**;
5. High turnover of the stakeholder contacts details – **knowledge and/or resource barriers**;
6. Limited available information (to Focal Points) regarding the different national entities that interact with the EFSA, leading to incomplete/inadequate networking – **knowledge and/or resource barriers**;
7. Lack of proper targeting of information cascaded down to national networks – **communication barriers**;
8. Overload of communications made by email – **communication barriers**;
9. Lack of feedback on communications made via email – **communication barriers**;
10. Lack of use of proper communication modes/tools – **communication barriers**;
11. Language barriers (being country specific or too technical for certain target audiences) – **communication barriers**;
12. Limited visibility of EFSA and/or of the FP at the national level – **engagement barriers**;
13. Difficulty in obtaining engagement of (some) stakeholders on the information/activities cascaded downwards due to organisational size/motivation ("what's in for them", "we're too small") and/or due to lack of resources at their end – **engagement barriers**;
14. Lack of best practices regarding interaction with stakeholders – **engagement barriers**.

B. How can Focal Points further improve the interaction with their national networks?

1. Obtain buy-in and additional support from higher management for the implementation of Focal Point activities and institutional interactions – **improved interaction with stakeholders**;
2. Ensure clear feedback from stakeholders on their actions and outreach – **improved interaction with stakeholders**;
3. Organise meetings involving relevant stakeholders, including Universities: smaller meetings may allow for better engagement but larger events (such as conferences) are better for promoting messages to a larger audience – **improved interaction with stakeholders**;
4. Provide an "umbrella" for activities to be carried out (beyond the communication of information), where contacts/organisations can be further engaged (e.g. having a national RA Agenda, involving relevant stakeholders in different activities/studies, using national Committees/WGs to implement activities relevant for EFSA and/or the FP network) – **improved interaction with stakeholders**;
5. Compile, review and update distribution lists, organising them in meaningful ways (e.g. thematically; by area of expertise of stakeholders; by type of stakeholder group) – **improved targeting of information**;
6. Prioritise relevant stakeholders & organisations, as well as information to be disseminated within the network (i.e. which information should be sent out to whom and in which way) – **improved targeting of information**;

7. *Formulate adequately and communicate messages with relevance to intended target audiences (e.g. summaries in national language, short snippets of information, leaflets with utility bills) – **improved communication**;*
8. *Select the appropriate route of communication, including the use of social media (e.g. Twitter) – **improved communication**;*
9. *Consider setting up an on-line platform for national networking – **improved communication**.*

C. How can Focal Points further extend their networking outreach?

1. *Explore opportunities of further networking with existing networks, allowing for a broader spread of information beyond single subjects – **increased outreach**;*
2. *Further promote the concept of the EFSA Focal Points and their role at national level (e.g. in conferences, on websites, etc.) enhancing engagement and better follow of information dissemination at national level – **increased outreach**;*
3. *Define strategies to be “attractive” for institutions & networks not yet involved, promoting their engagement – **increased outreach**;*
4. *Include, on the distribution lists used, contacts of associations or professional bodies and use them as multipliers – **increased outreach**;*
5. *Understand and identify better the EU stakeholders in order to understand if at national level there is a good “linkage” and “fitness” with the EU counterparts – **increased outreach**;*
6. *Use newsletters instead of (or in addition to) distribution lists (e.g. with support of Communications Departments) – **increased outreach**;*
7. *Use existing & new social media channels by the Focal Point organisation (and by other national institutions) for information dissemination – **increased outreach**;*
8. *Carry out a stakeholder mapping at national level (other than existing ones, like Article 36, Scientific Networks, etc.) and use results to increase outreach – **increased outreach**.*