



Minutes

74th MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

Meeting details

Date: 27th -28th November 2019

Venue: EFSA

Meeting hours: 09:00 – 17:30 (27.11.2019)

09:00 – 12:30 (28.11.2019)

Members	
Austria (AT)	Klemens Fuchs
Belgium (BE)	Frederic Denauw
Bulgaria (BG)	Georgi Georgiev
Croatia (HR)	Darja Sokolić
Cyprus (CY)	Stelios Yiannopoulos
Czech Republic (CZ)	Peter Benes
Denmark (DK)	Flemming Bager
Estonia (EE)	Piret Priisalu
Finland (FI)	Pia Mäkelä
France (FR)	Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Reiner Wittkowski
Greece (EL)	Eirini Tsigarida
Hungary (HU)	Ákos Bernard Józwiak
Ireland (IE)	Pamela Byrne
Italy (IT)	Alessandra Perrella
Latvia (LV)	Vadims Bartkevičs
Lithuania (LT)	Jurgita Bakasėnienė
Luxembourg (LU)	Patrick Hau
Malta (MT)	Ingrid Borg
Netherlands (NL)	Antoon Opperhuizen
Norway (NO)	Cecilie Rolstad Denby
Portugal (PT)	Pedro Gaspar
Romania (RO)	Monica Neagu
Slovenia (SI)	Urška Blaznik
Slovak Republic (SK)	Milo Bystricky
Spain (ES)	Ana Canals Caballero
Sweden (SE)	Per Bergman



Observers & Guest Participants	
Kosovo ¹ (XK)	Valdet Gjinovci
Montenegro (ME)	Ana Velimirovic
Serbia (RS)	Tamara Bošković
Turkey (TR)	Serap Hanci
Switzerland (CH)	Michael Beer
European Commission (EC)	Anastasia Alvizou
Germany (DE - BfR)	Nicole Gollnick (only 2 nd day)
Denmark (DK - DTU)	Bjarne Kjaer Ersboell (VC)

EFSA Representatives
Bernhard URL: Chair
Juliane Kleiner: Co-Chair
Guilhem de Seze: Co-Chair
Barbara Gallani: Co-Chair
Marta Hugas: Co-Chair
Victoria Villamar
Ilias Papatryfon
Bruno Dujardin
Didier Verloo
Mary Gilsenan
Yves Van Der Stede
Emanuela Turla
Advisory Forum Secretariat: Sérgio Potier Rodeia & Deimante Bikneryte

Apologies	
United Kingdom (UK)	Jesus Alvarez-Pinera
Iceland (IS)	Jón Gíslason
Poland (PL)	Jacek
Albania (AL)	Pamela Radovani
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)	Dzemil Hajric
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Zoran Atanasov

1. Opening of the meeting

Bernhard Url, Chair of the meeting welcomed all members to the 74th Advisory Forum (AF) meeting. Apologies were noted from Iceland, Poland, United Kingdom², Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Albania. The Chair welcomed Anastasia Alvizou, the representative from European Commission (DG-SANTE). The Chair welcomed the variety of satellite meetings connected/around the 74th AF meeting which further enable networking contacts and opportunities.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

² UK informed that the policy limiting attendance to EU meetings imposed on UK officials still stands. Therefore, UK representative could not attend the AF meeting.



2. Adoption of agenda and action points from last meeting

The Chair asked the plenary for any new items to be included in the draft Agenda. Spain raised an additional item, on "Consumption advice regarding mercury in fish from AESAN 2019", which was included under Agenda item 8. The plenary adopted the Agenda for the meeting. The Chair informed that 6 out of the 8 action points from the last AF meeting were implemented while 2 are ongoing: (1) interactions between the TF on Data Collection & Data Modelling and AF DG on Capacity Building on current and future needs for data science competencies; interaction between TF on Data Collection & Data Modelling with the EFSA Data Collection Scientific Networks for sharing the Interim Report on the Activities of the TF; and (2) EFSA to request input from MSs (via AF Scientific Network members of the Chemical Monitoring Data Collection Network) about any occurrence data from the priority list of the supplementary material on emerging chemicals. The Chair noted that the minutes of the 73rd AF meeting were published on EFSA's website on 24.10.2019.

3. Recent Activities

■ 3.1 – 2nd SANTE Inter-Agency meeting

Marta Hugas informed the plenary on main outcomes from the 2nd SANTE Inter-Agency Meeting, held in Brussels on 05.11.2019, with participants from various DGs (SANTE, AGRI, CLIMA, CNECT, DIGIT, ENV, GROW, RTD), JRC, CPVO and the 5 ENVI Agencies (ECDC, ECHA, EEA, EFSA, EMA). Participants exchanged ideas about possible contributions from EU Agencies / Institutions, especially on the "European Green Deal" (EGD) in areas concerning health and the environment. Several questions were placed to participants in the meeting e.g. how a sustainability element could be included in the risk analysis; what the current state of science is to support such assessment; and what the implications are for data collection and assessment methodologies. There was unanimity in concluding that a good definition of sustainability is needed, including impact on health. The next SANTE Inter-Agency meeting is scheduled for 2020.

FR asked whether EFSA could present at an upcoming meeting its participation in the preparation of different Horizon Europe partnerships (e.g. partnerships concerning chemicals risk assessment) while acknowledging the fast-moving process. ES asked if EFSA is considering new areas of work in relation to sustainability as some might not fall currently under EFSA's remit. The Chair confirmed that an update on Horizon Europe partnerships can be provided in one of the upcoming AF meetings, with the possible involvement of DG-RTD, also considering the links of these questions to Agenda item 8 (on Combined Exposure to Multiple Chemicals). DG-SANTE added that the sustainable farm-to-fork Strategy, which is currently under development under the lead of DG-SANTE is one of the main priorities of the new Commission. It further advised waiting until the announcement of the Green Deal in the coming days and the subsequent adoption of the Strategy and the relevant action plan by mid-2020.

■ 3.2 – EFSA visit to South Africa

Barbara Gallani presented an update on the Workshop on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Risk Analysis, organised on 1-3 October 2019 in Pretoria, South Africa, by University of Pretoria. The workshop was attended by more than 70 participants from competent authorities, academia and research institutes, along with other relevant stakeholders, mainly from South Africa, but also from neighbouring countries. The main objective of the workshop was to present the EU risk analysis approach and structure, and to discuss its relevance and suitability for South Africa and, potentially, in the region. Invited speakers included DG-SANTE, EFSA, and three MS organisations: BfR, DTU and ANSES.

The NL asked for any follow up actions stemming from the workshop. Barbara clarified that EFSA supports the EC efforts in increasing risk assessment capacity in Africa and would be willing to support further initiatives in the region. PT asked whether other countries (e.g. Angola, Mozambique) were involved in this initiative; or if participation was limited to Southern African Union countries. Barbara



replied that the event gathered participants from South Africa, though considerations were made on the suitability of these EU systems in the region – mission report available³. IE stressed the importance of a coordinated approach, considering also other initiatives in the region such as the African Union. The Chair reminded that EC has a leading role in these initiatives, noting that, often, third country capacity building initiatives on food safety systems are triggered as well by other factors such as trade.

■ 3.3 – AGES Risk Day

Klemens Fuchs (AT) updated AF members on the AGES Risk Day event. EFSA's Executive Director was invited to attend this year's edition of AGES Risk Day, which was held in Vienna on 05.11.2019. The event aimed at achieving an interdisciplinary discussion with a focus on climate change and on how to put existing knowledge into concrete actions. The Chair added that he was pleased to participate in the event and for having the opportunity to present and discuss food safety perspectives and interlinkages with the key topic of the event.

■ 3.4 – Workshop on QSAR

Juliane Kleiner presented to AF members the outcome of a recent EFSA Workshop on Quantitative Structure-Activity Relationship (QSAR) models organised in EFSA on the 25.11.2019. During the workshop, Senior Officers from the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) presented Danish (Q)SAR Databases and model websites, including QSAR activities over the past two decades with focus on contributions to the Danish EPA single substance evaluations and screening projects for substances with predicted hazardous properties. EFSA colleagues from FIP, FEED, Pesticides & SCER presented their activities and needs related with the use of in silico methods as a part of the risk assessment in the relevant food sectors. DK added the importance of the collaborative work in a coordinated manner on this topic. The Chair added that EFSA will come back to the AF with a proposal for in silico testing methods and that this workshop acted as a starting point for this discussion. Additional information on this workshop is available for consultation⁴.

■ 3.5 – Update on the 1st meeting of the RARA2020 Programme Committee

Pamela Byrne (IE), the newly appointed Chair of the RARA2020 Programme Committee, debriefed the plenary on the 1st meeting of this Committee, which took place the day before the AF meeting. The Committee is composed by EFSA representatives and 5 volunteer countries from IE, ES, NO, DE and DK. A first draft for the ToR for the RARA2020 Programme Committee was presented and will be shared with AF members for any final comments. The Chair highlighted an important objective included in the ToR aiming to align, at EU and MS level, initiatives concerning regulatory research needs. DE further noted that, according to the current Horizon Europe structure, mission boards have been set up to provide advice to the EC on a future vision for research activities, including regulatory science, an aspect for EFSA to take in consideration. The NL asked further clarification on the "sounding board role" of the RARA2020 Programme Committee; and advised a clearer definition of the target audience for the event. Pamela clarified that the RARA 2020 Programme Committee can be used as a sounding board for food safety research related matters; and that further expanding on the main objectives of the draft ToR will help defining the audience to be targeted. FR further noted the challenge to bring different research funders to this event from food and non-food related sectors. The Chair encouraged AF Members to share their ideas and proposals directly with the RARA2020 Programme Committee.

Action Point 1: EFSA to share the draft ToR⁵ of the RARA2020 Programme Committee for any final comments from AF members by 13.12.2019.

³ <https://dms.efsa.europa.eu/otcs/livelink.exe?func=ll&objaction=overview&objid=22813961>

⁴ <https://dms.efsa.europa.eu/otcs/cs.exe?func=ll&objId=22814000&objAction=browse&viewType=1>

⁵ <https://dms.efsa.europa.eu/otcs/livelink.exe?func=ll&objaction=overview&objid=22755826>



4. Update on the implementation of the new Transparency Regulation in the food chain

Guilhem De Seze updated the plenary on the implementation of the new Transparency Regulation (TR). The information regarding EFSA's preparatory work was divided into the following thematic areas: Priorities in a nutshell; Transparency & Confidentiality; Scientific value status; List of newly mapped processes; Notification of Studies. Barbara Gallani presented the current planning process for new Regulatory provisions concerning Engagement and Risk communication. The latter included an update on engagement principles with stakeholders being prepared jointly by EFSA and DG-SANTE. Barbara informed the plenary about the increased budget for scientific cooperation, emphasising the new Focal Point tasks in support of the implementation on new provisions relating to cooperation with MSs and importance to kick-off their implementation as of 2020 on an optional basis.

FR asked clarification about the newly mapped processes, especially the one concerning verification of studies, and the respective stage of development. BE asked if any recommendations are being developed with regards to standard data formats. SE questioned how far all new processes have been developed, in particular the one on pre-submission advise. GDS clarified that EFSA is looking how to ensure preparedness in case of requests for verification of studies and that preparatory work is still in a design phase. With regards to preparatory work being carried out for the future development of standard data formats especially in the area of pesticides, Guilhem added that a technical user group for pesticides (IUCLID) has been set; that, in the short term, a technical group on IT systems aiming to implement the new Transparency Regulation will become operational; and that the design of the new process concerning pre-submission advise will be concluded in December. The Chair added that the provisions of the new Transparency Regulation concerning proactive public disclosure of all scientific data / studies supporting authorisation applications / requests for scientific output will be implemented by March 2021, and sought the support from MSs through their contacts with stakeholders in order to keep expectations at the right level and within a reasonable timeline. DG-SANTE added that current discussions on the long-term budget are critical for ensuring that additional resources will be made available to EFSA in order to ensure the implementation of all required provisions. Furthermore, DG-SANTE drew the attention of meeting participants that there is no deadline foreseen in the Transparency Regulation for the development of standard data formats. With regards to verification studies, DG-SANTE clarified that this is a risk management tool and it is up to the Commission to consider how to proceed with this.

ES noted that the current planned amendment of FP agreements for 2020 – in particular regarding the new optional tasks - is progressing at a fast pace and that it is important to keep AF members well informed, welcoming the opportunity of new resources to be allocated to the implementation of new collaborative opportunities in new domains. FR asked about the status of the preparatory work concerning the general plan on risk communication and how the risk management angle of such plan will be captured by DG-SANTE given that the Communication Experts Network (CEN) is mostly driven by a risk assessment perspective. On the amendment of the current FP Agreements for 2020, FR concurred with ES on the pace of the process, noting that some new data-related tasks may be rather technical and consequently duplication with the work of EFSA's Scientific Networks should be avoided. HU noted also that the role of Focal Points in data related issues requires further reflection and that the planned amendment of agreements on this domain will help in bringing clarity. Barbara acknowledged that discussions on the new FP tasks occurred so far at the level of the Focal Point network mostly as a result of time constraints; highlighted that EFSA's approach on data is to further invest in MSs; and that, with regards to the general plan on risk communication, the work done to date by the CEN network should be seen as a starting point for improvement and alignment of communication at EU level. The Chair acknowledged that Focal Points are not necessarily data owners and highlighted that, on data matters, Focal Points should continue to be seen as "ambassadors" for EFSA at MS level from an operational perspective, noting that the new tasks are an opportunity that can enable more clarity and consistency on certain domains. DG-SANTE complimented EFSA's progress on risk communication matters and mentioned that preparatory work on this has been initiated at DG-SANTE level in close collaboration with EFSA; however, there is no specific legal deadline for this deliverable. SE noted that



the mapping of Art36 competencies - as a new task of FPs – offers challenges from an implementation perspective as it will be difficult for Focal Points to make such assessment. The Chair clarified that this mapping exercise falls under EFSA's responsibility and that FPs will be asked to provide support to EFSA on the mapping of capabilities without qualifying them. DE suggested the formulation of minimum requirements for organisations that could support EFSA with its work and, in such way, enable the desired mapping the competencies. GR sought clarification on next steps with regards to the amendment of the new Focal Point agreements for 2020. The Chair concluded that the full list of activities to be included on the Focal Point Agreements for 2020 – including the new optional ones - will be shared with AF members for providing further clarifications via email or teleconference.

Action point 2: *EFSA to share the full list of activities of Focal Point Agreements for 2020, including the new ones, providing AF members with the possibility of raising any questions for clarification.*

5. EFSA's Work Planning and Strategy (Co-Chairing by Barbara Gallani)

Ilias Papatryfon provided AF members with an update on the current status of development of the future EFSA strategy 2021-2027. The latest survey that was launched followed the Environment Scanning exercise performed during 2018-2019, which led to the identification of three main clusters of strategic directions. Reference was made to how survey proposals are being addressed in the final Strategy Evolution Document, which will be presented at the Management Board (MB) meeting in December 2019. The final document will be shared with AF once endorsed at the upcoming MB meeting. MSs will be consulted during early 2020 on the draft 2027 Strategic Plan.

FR expressed appreciation for the MS consultation process, noting the challenge for MSs to keep full oversight of the different documents produced to date and respective interlinkages, and suggesting that, when EFSA launches such consultations, an oversight of these documents and how they fit into the "larger picture" is provided. The NL suggested ensuring complementarity among EFSA and MSs at strategic level. NO complimented EFSA for the work delivered to date, highlighting the need for the development of the future EFSA Strategy to run in parallel with ongoing initiatives aiming the implementation of the provisions in the Transparency Regulation.

6. Engagement & Communications update

Barbara Gallani updated participants on recent engagement and communication activities, and thanked MSs for their support. Barbara briefed the plenary on the main outcomes from the last Communication Experts' Network (CEN) meeting, noting the high level of participation, including from LU for the first time, and all IPA countries, as well as from DG-SANTE. The meeting was kindly hosted by BfR and provided an opportunity to agree the workplan for 2020, including preparatory work to inform the General Plan on Risk Communication. In this context, a dedicated session and workshop were organised, with strong EC involvement, which was highly appreciated by all participants. Special reference was also made to reflections on how the EFSA Social Science WG may assist MSs in further using the Eurobarometer data for national risk communication activities; to the context concerning micro- and nanoplastics and to the related 2020 event (the EFSA Scientific Colloquium on the topic); and to the leaflet on "Tips For Society", on Chemical Mixtures⁶.

DK questioned if EFSA is planning any initiatives to strengthen public trust in the light of the Transparency Regulation; NO suggested mapping initiatives that work best for increasing public trust. SE asked how to best ensure a good geographical distribution of candidates in the context of the EU-FORA programme. Barbara clarified that EFSA is looking into ways of improving the EU-FORA programme, e.g. in the context of the AF DG on Capacity Building and as well through leaning initiatives being designed in the context of the Transparency Regulation. Barbara noted that building trust is one of the key drivers under the Transparency Regulation and that an increase in public trust will be possible through improved alignment of risk communication initiatives across the EU; and through large scale

⁶ <https://dms.efsa.europa.eu/otcs/livelink.exe?func=ll&objaction=overview&objid=22813482>



engagement initiatives. The DG-SANTE representative noted the importance of involving risk managers at EU and national level in the development of high impact food safety communication initiatives.

7. Risk Assessment Activities - Combined Exposure to Multiple Chemicals (Co-Chairing by Juliane Kleiner)

■ 7.1 – Draft Roadmap

Bruno Dujardin presented to the plenary the draft Roadmap on Combined Exposure to Multiple Chemicals. Following the thematic discussion on the subject held at the previous AF meeting, EFSA, in collaboration with DE, DK, FI, FR and NL, developed a draft proposal for a high-level Roadmap. The updated version of the document was shared with all AF members on 15.11.2019.

DK thanked EFSA for having put together the draft roadmap, welcoming the initiative, and suggesting aligning EU and MS initiatives. FR thanked EFSA for the document and the collaborative process, and presented some suggestions: possible improvement of the title of the Roadmap with regards to the use of the expression “EU” given that it may give the impression that the work of other EU institutions (especially on non-food related aspects) such as ECHA or JRC, or of MSs on their own or among themselves (but without EFSA) is not considered; increase the visibility in the draft document of the participation in international initiatives such as ILMERAC should be made more visible in the document; a more positive wording on the paragraphs where priority is given to pesticides from an implementation perspective; include an Annex to the document mapping the main planned/ongoing MS activities (i.e. main working area and contact point) for further enabling future dialogue and collaboration. DE complimented the quality and structure of the document, highlighting that a second publication concerning the EUROMIX project will soon be out – where reference will be made to interactions between active substances and co-formulants. The NL advised EFSA to include in the draft roadmap a chapter on social science research, including harmonised terminology, to ensure common understanding and clear communication on this topic. Bruno welcomed comments made, that will be taken aboard as far as possible; and noted that alignment with national research projects could possibly be incorporated in the document via direct input to be provided by MSs.

DG-SANTE noted that this topic is of high interest to all types of stakeholders and the public. DG-SANTE is particularly committed to speed up the work on cumulative effects of pesticides in collaboration with EFSA and the MSs. In that respect, the REFIT study report on pesticides legislation - which is to be published in the coming months – has highlighted that the process so far had been very slow and more should be done to speed it up.

DG-SANTE welcomed the horizontal approach of the draft EFSA Roadmap for dealing with multiple chemicals, including pesticides. However, it emphasized that the progress on pesticides should not be delayed by the overall Roadmap on multiple chemicals and that both processes must run in parallel to create synergies. With regards to cumulative effects of pesticides, DG-SANTE expects EFSA to deliver an action plan by mid-2020 on such priorities and the further implementation steps. The currently proposed time-planning set out in the draft Roadmap would delay the ongoing process in the area of pesticides by a minimum of 2 years, a delay that would not be acceptable. The DG-SANTE’s approach on the draft Roadmap has also been supported by national risk managers the day prior to the AF meeting in the relevant PAFF Committee for Pesticides. DG-SANTE therefore proposed to proceed with a more ambitious planning for pesticides, including the foreseen action plan, by mid-2020 and a subsequent immediate start of concrete risk assessment on further target organs. The draft deadlines set out in the roadmap (Table 1) should therefore be amended accordingly. A wider consultation with other DG services of the Commission is also needed. Finally, DG-SANTE expressed its confidence that through further technical discussions these concerns will be addressed in a satisfactory way.

The Chair concluded discussions, noting that the plan and respective calendar proposed in the draft Roadmap is ambitious but needs to be revised; and that there is a need for further technical discussions



to continue to occur with DG-SANTE as well as with other European partners with regards to pesticides, keeping an holistic approach for the scope the document.

Action point 3: EFSA to collect additional comments on the draft Roadmap on Combined Exposure to Multiple Chemicals by Friday 31.01.2020; integrate comments received during plenary discussion in the draft Roadmap, including revision of the proposed timeline; inclusion of a chapter on social science; and to develop an Annex on the Roadmap, listing all relevant projects at MS level.

8. Risk Assessment Activities (Co-Chairing by Guilhem de Seze)

■ 8.1 - Update on Thematic Grant on Determination and Metrics of Emerging Risks (DEMETER)

Ákos Jozwiak (HU) updated the plenary on the proceedings of the EFSA co-funded Thematic Grant "Determination and Metrics of Emerging Risks (DEMETER)". The objective of the project is to support current (and future) EFSA procedures for emerging risks identification by providing a set of integrated, open-source solutions that will allow EFSA and EU MSs to share data, knowledge and methods in a rapid and effective manner. An overview of intermediate deliverables of the project was provided as well as a plan for the final outcome.

The Chair raised the question on whether there is a need for any follow up action on this matter. SE complimented the exercise and expressed the view that the prototype platform should be tested before the start of any new initiative. GR expressed support to the tool developed and asked whether it is possible to present the platform to the Scientific Network of Emerging Risks. IE suggested launching an open call for the further development and implementation of the initiative and DE noted the need for this tool to continue being used in order to prevent crisis scenarios before they occur, thus supporting further development/use of the tool. NL expressed full support for the continuity of this activity; EE highlighted the importance of this tool for smaller countries with limited capacities, expressing as well support for continuation of this project. IT indicated that further views will be provided in writing after consultation at national level. The Chair concluded discussions noting that any follow up project on this matter will require viewing this activity on a wider picture, thus suggesting Ákos to liaise with the SCER Unit and prepare a proposal on the way forward at the coming AF meeting.

Action Point 4: Ákos to liaise with EFSA's SCER Unit and prepare a proposal on the way forward on the future use of the DEMETER platform at the coming AF meeting.

■ 8.2 – Evaluation of Listeriosis risk related with the consumption of RTE cooked meat products in Greece

Eirini Tsigarida (GR) presented the outcome and the main findings of this project, a grant co-funded by EFSA as a result of a past ED visit to Greece. The project included data collection from different sources (e.g. prevalence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in RTE cooked meat products, validation of available growth models consumption of RTE cooked meat products including estimates of the consumed quantities per serving, consumer practices after the purchase of meat products that can affect the safety of the product (e.g. transport time, handling, storage), and temperature profile in household refrigerators). The data collected will be used for future risk assessments in Greece. A Layman report was published, which provided a more simplified description of the results of the project including key recommendations. ES congratulated GR for its work, suggesting possible re-use of key messages via the CEN network; Marta noted the importance of *Listeria monocytogenes* as a zoonotic agent with a high burden of disease.

■ 8.3 – Results from BG-EFSA project on vector-borne diseases in Bulgaria

Georgi Georgiev (BG) briefed the plenary about the outcome of this project, an EFSA co-funded grant following a past ED visit. Georgi noted that the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA) has limited capacity for vector identification and surveillance; and that the aim of the project was precisely to increase such capacity through training of experts in the use of molecular (DNA barcoding) technologies for the purpose of vector identification in the context of the multi-annual monitoring of vector-borne



diseases (VBD). One of the great achievements of this project was the development of a national vector database with information comparable to the European Reference entomology laboratory and other institutions. This project provides a solid base for future upgrades of the national database by introducing and using also the MALDI-TOF mass spectrometry for identification of protein profile of the competent vectors. The Chair complimented the positive results for Bulgaria in applying modern molecular technologies for vector identification as a routine tool for competent vector identification.

■ 8.4 – Consumption advice regarding mercury in fish from AESAN 2019

Ana Canals (ES) updated the plenary on recent recommendations from the ES Scientific Committee on fish consumption by different groups of consumers. AESAN recommends for pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and children from 2-10 years old to avoid consumption of certain species of fish. A poster was produced with the aim to explain to consumers what mercury is, the risks associated with its intake, as well as the benefits of consuming fish and fish products. The recommendations issued in 2011 were updated considering the new scientific evidence and monitoring data from official controls. Awareness raising was achieved via posters distributed to primary care centres and hospitals in Spain. The posters are available in Spanish and English languages. Juliane Kleiner raised a question on whether other contaminants have been analysed in conjunction with mercury. Ana Canals clarified that during this campaign they have targeted only mercury.

■ 8.5 - EFSA mandates, MS RA plans, Upcoming public consultations

Juliane Kleiner and Guilhem de Seze updated the plenary on recent EFSA mandates, MS risk assessment plans and upcoming public consultations. EFSA mandates available in EFSA's Register of Questions⁷ for this quarter included 26 new entries - 24 in the area of Regulated Products; and 2 in the areas of contaminants and emerging risks. Juliane Kleiner highlighted, among other, a mandate from the EC for a scientific opinion on the guidance on technical requirements of regulated food and feed product applications to establish the presence of particles in the nanoscale. The plenary was informed that this Technical Guidance will apply to regulated products such as additives and novel foods that may contain a fraction of small particles (e.g. powders or suspensions), in order to assess if the fraction requires assessment as nanomaterial. Guilhem de Seze noted, among other, the mandate from the EC on smoke flavourings. On the extracts of EFSA mandates being shared at each AF meeting, FR suggested the inclusion of an additional column with a preliminary end-date for each entry⁸ as is the case for the table of MS risk assessment plans.

On MS risk assessment plans, Juliane Kleiner expressed interest on the entries from BG on alternative methods replacing animal testing; and on controls of ASF by using a balanced approach to reduce the wild boar population in the affected regions; and on researching the causes of high prevalence of fluoroquinolone resistance in broilers, from BE. Guilhem de Seze expressed interest on the entries from BG concerning the influence of pesticides on the body of infants and young children, and on measures for limiting exposure; and on the analysis of genotoxic flavouring substances in foodstuff, from BE.

In order to ensure that contributions from all MS are in the extracts that EFSA makes available for the AF meeting, FR recommended setting a clear deadline for FPs to enter information on MS risk assessments plans into the relevant database through a pre-defined standard procedure (e.g. inclusion of this task on the working instructions for new FPs, reminders with a pre-set deadline timely sent to FPs ahead of each AF meeting). ES noted that the AESAN risk assessment on "Impact of the consumption of ultra-processed food on the health of consumers" will likely be delayed for later than the planned date (March 2021). BE reported to ensure an update of the information in the database after consultations at national level.

⁷ <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/login?0>

⁸ Note that this information is publicly available on the EFSA's [Register of Questions](#)



Action Point 5: EFSA to establish a pre-defined standard procedure for ensuring a timely update of the database with MS RA plans ahead of each AF meeting (e.g. inclusion of an explicit description of this task on the current working instructions for new FPs; send email reminders to FPs with a clearly set deadline ahead of each AF meeting).

9. Thematic discussion: Artificial Intelligence (Chair)

■ 9.1 – Introduction

The Chair briefly introduced the thematic discussion on Artificial Intelligence (AI) which aimed at enabling exchange of information on the subject.

■ 9.2 – EFSA Activities

Didier Verloo briefed the plenary on EFSA's activities on AI, namely on experiences gained and lessons learned. Didier further explained that successful implementation of AI machine learning algorithms require three elements: big data, computing power, and the applied knowledge of AI algorithms. In this period of implementation, data is the core element that drives AI. It is anticipated that any kind of labour where resources are used to take in and process information, and then support decisions or issue recommendations based on that information, will likely be replaced by AI - as this is precisely what the machine learning algorithms do best. Details were provided on the project "Joining forces at EU level on the implementation of Artificial Intelligence", made up by the following work packages, spread over 2019 and Q1 2020: (1) state-of-play at the EU level (EU-ANSA, JRC, DIGIT, CONNECT, SANTE) and relevant actors at MS level; (2) EFSA internal analysis of AI maturity; (3) external analysis refinement of AI maturity; (4) EU Common Roadmap Proposal (ENVI, JRC, DIGIT, CONNECT, JRC). The Chair suggested the organisation of a workshop with MSs to discuss how they can contribute to preparation and provision of input to this roadmap.

■ 9.3 – MS activities

■ 9.3.A – Artificial Intelligence: promises and pitfalls

Bjarne Kjær Ersbøll (from DK, connected via web-conference) provided a presentation on Denmark's activities on AI. Even for small projects, the effort of simply making data ready for analysis is usually underestimated. Sharing data between different companies and institutions is challenging not only for practical reasons but as well due to data protection requirements – thus efforts are needed to break down the data silos. Only through building trust and anticipating mutual benefits deriving from data sharing it will be possible to overcome such barriers. Bjarne also highlighted the importance of soft skills to overcome legal and privacy issues.

Guilhem de Seze asked for more details on soft skills; and the Chair raised the question on how to overcome the barrier of ownership of data and overcome non-technical issues i.e. compliance with the data protection issues. Bjarne clarified that, for some of these barriers, specialised "teams of people" (for example lawyers) will be required so to get familiar with regulatory provisions before and during project implementation. He also noted the existence of technical solutions to keep single data in privacy. DK noted the commonalities between this presentation and work / conclusions achieved by the EFSA Task Force on Data Collection and Data Modelling. HU highlighted the importance of availability of technical skills (e.g. data scientists) as well as other important elements such as cooperation, multidisciplinary, and a culture of openness.

■ 9.3.B – Watson: text mining using Artificial Intelligence

Cecilie Rolstad Denby (NO) presented Norwegian activities on AI, noting that the Working Group on use of AI in literature search and appraisal is working on an application for funding by the EEA Norway-Poland Grants. Participants in the application are the University of Warsaw (with one enterprise partner) and the Oslo Metropolitan University / VKM from NO. FR indicated that information on this work has been shared at ANSES level, and expressed interest in exchanging contacts with Colleagues



in charge of the project. FI informed that their national risk assessment unit started recently to use commercial AI tools. HU shared information that, for this grant, only Norwegian and Polish institutes can apply, while other members of the group will remain connected to the project in an advisory capacity - although their participation is anticipated in the testing of tools. DK informed to be working on an AI system aiming to rank abstracts as a first step in Systematic Review Literature. SI informed that the International Research Centre for AI (sponsored by the UNESCO) will be established in Ljubljana during 2020. The Chair noted the importance of establishing a joint undertaking on AI so to avoid different Agencies using different management systems.

The Chair concluded this Thematic Discussion on AI noting the opportunity and added value of a workshop with MSs on AI, possibly organised in Parma on February/March 2020. Majority of the MSs expressed interest in participating.

Action Point 6: MSs to express interest by Friday 17.01.2020 in participating in an EFSA Workshop to be held in Parma in February 2020 for sharing experiences on the use of Artificial Intelligence.

10. Data Collection and Methods

■ 10.1. – Update on TF on data collection and data modelling

Ákos Józwiak (HU) presented an update of the 6th meeting of the AF TF on Data Collection and Modelling, which took place the day before the AF meeting (26.11.2019). The meeting focused on several topics, namely discussion on the applicability of the ISA interoperability framework recommendations; good practices and their strategic connections to the TF; various draft report sections (on timeliness of data collection, data capture at the point of sampling, role of Focal Points, etc.); data modelling and data architecture; discussion on future visions. The TF will continue its work on the final report, including discussions on other identified priority issues as a next step, and on the influencing role of data analysis methods on data collection, modelling and architecture.

The Chair thanked the TF for the work achieved to date and raised the question on the way further. Mary Gilsenan expressed the view that a next step could be to translate the reports into tangible projects, starting as of 2020. The NL complimented the work of the TF expressing full support on its continuation. IE stressed the complexity of the report and asked for extra time to reflect on it. RO asked if data generated in the context of the multi-annual national control plans is being considered for us at the TF. Mary Gilsenan clarified that contacts are kept with the EC Health and Food Audits and Analysis Office⁹ located in Grange, IE, and that further discussions on this will occur in upcoming meetings of the TF. The Chair concluded that EFSA will support (intellectually and financially) the work of this TF and that a proposal on the way forward would be most welcome, highlighting as well that FPs – with the newly amended agreements - may act as enablers in providing support on data related matters at national level.

■ 10.2. – From Prometheus to Quality

Didier Verloo presented the Prometheus approach for evidence use in EFSA scientific assessments. Drawing upon best practices in primary research and systematic review, EFSA has developed a 4-step approach for its regulatory science assessments (plan/do/verify/document) to further improve the impartiality, methodological rigour and transparency of its scientific processes and related outputs. The testing phase of this approach highlighted the need for EFSA's standards in protocol development (including problem formulation) and evidence appraisal. In this context, EFSA's Scientific Committee started two projects to cover these needs (a WG on protocol development; and WG on evidence appraisal) – both currently on-going; and that a project was outsourced to develop a framework for problem formulation (also on-going). The Prometheus approach provides for a theoretical basis for re-defining the concept of quality in EFSA's regulatory science practices, and implemented through an

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits_analysis_en



updated quality management system (QMS). This is fundamental in an ISO certified organisation like EFSA. As the Transparency Regulation foresees the possibility for outsourcing core EFSA activities to Article 36 organisations, the existence and application of a QMS will prove to be of high value. The Chair noted the need to find a right balance between the complexity of the QMS and the speed/pace required by scientific assessment processes, inviting MSs to use established protocols and to share them for up-front planning of risk assessments.

11. Scientific Networks

■ 11.1 - Update of the ToR of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data Network

Mary Gilsenan presented the updated ToR of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data Network. Content wise, no major changes have been introduced in the ToR, noting that the minor changes introduced aimed improved collaboration including with other EU Agencies. The ToR of EFSA's Scientific Networks are revised every three years and, before being due, are presented and endorsed by the AF. IT informed about minor editorial suggestions for improving the text of the draft ToR, to be submitted in writing after the AF meeting. The AF endorsed in general the updated ToR of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data Network pending any changes yet to be introduced as per proposal from IT, after which will be published on EFSA's website.

■ 11.2 - Update on the ToR of the Animal Health and Welfare Network

Yves Van Der Stede presented the updated ToR of the Animal health and Welfare Network. Yves noted that, content wise, no major changes were introduced in the ToR. Changes introduced included reference to the SIGMA project; increased collaboration with other networks; and the planning of two meetings per year, one of animal health and SIGMA and another focusing on animal welfare. IT requested the inclusion of references to legal frameworks which will be integrated as background information in the ToR. The AF endorsed in general the ToR of the Animal Health and Welfare Network, which will be published on EFSA's website as soon as updated per comments received in plenary.

■ 11.3 - Update on the ToR of the Novel Foods Network

Emanuela Turla presented to plenary the updated draft ToR on the Novel Foods Scientific Network, created back in March 2017 to deal with requirements set up by the new Regulation on Novel Foods (Regulation (EU) 2015/2283). Since its establishment, the Network on Novel Foods met three times in EFSA's premises to address issues on the assessment of Novel Foods, in particular in relation to Traditional Foods. During this period, information and data on Novel Foods, in particular in relation to Traditional Foods, were shared among EFSA and representatives of the Scientific Network. At the last meeting held on 14.11.2019, the network expressed interest in having its mandate renewed. NL expressed support to the renewal of the mandate of the network for an additional period of three years, which was endorsed unanimously in plenary.

On a more general note, SE suggested that the AF is informed on a regular basis of the activities of the different Scientific Networks, asking EFSA to come up with a proposal on the best way to achieve this e.g. through a standing agenda item. The Chair agreed with the proposal, asking the AF Secretariat to prepare such plan at the next AF meeting.

Action point 7: EFSA to present a plan for regular updates on the activities of its Scientific Networks in upcoming AF meetings.

12. Any other business (Co-Chairing by Marta Hugas)

■ 12.1 - Update on the AF Discussion Group on Capacity Building

Nicole Gollnick (DE) briefly updated AF members of the AFDG on CB and reported on recent activities of the DG. The meeting of AFDG on CB takes place on the afternoon of the 2nd day of AF meeting (28.11.2019). Nicole reported to plenary the latest activities of the DG since the 73rd AF meeting,



namely: a meeting by ES and DE in Berlin to further progress on work concerning the draft “Business Case” for the creation of the EU Label Programme; a physical meeting of ES and DE with the EC to seek support for further developing the EU Label Programme; a teleconference with ES, DE, EFSA and ECHA to discuss possible joint opportunities on capacity building, noting that other EU Agencies seem to prefer investing on risk management capacity building activities outside the EU (i.e. at an international scale); a teleconference between ES, DE, EFSA and EC regarding the EU Label Programmes European Master in Official Statistics (EMOS) and European Master's in Translation (EMT).

ES expressed the view for a more active role of EFSA and other MSs on this DG; Nicole further clarified that such support is welcome more from a content-driven perspective rather than from a financial one. Marta encouraged AFDG members to join the sub-groups set up under this discussion group. SE noted that, in the context of the EU-FORA programme, extra efforts are needed for engaging a higher number of hosting sites. Barbara Gallani complimented the work of the AFDG on CB noting that, from an EFSA perspective, support will continue to be provided to all initiatives while particular focus will be placed on further improving the EU-FORA programme, the sub-group led by EFSA. The NL highlighted the need for EFSA to share with MSs a more holistic view (possibly a roadmap) on capacity building, a proposal that was welcomed by the Chair of the meeting.

Action Point 8: *AF members of the DG on CB to consider expressing interest in joining the respective sub-groups (if not yet done), in particular for compiling the curriculum of the EU Master Programme on Risk Assessment and for liaising with potential partners - feedback to be provided directly to Nicole.Gollnick@bfr.bund.de.*

Action Point 9: *EFSA to consider the drafting of a Roadmap on Capacity Building to be presented at an AF meeting in 2020 for discussion and endorsement.*

■ 12.2 – Upcoming AF meetings

Sérgio Potier Rodeia provided an overview on upcoming meetings in 2020. Dates with HR and DE (who host the Presidency of the Council) are already confirmed (HR: 01-02.04.2020 & DE: 27-29.10.2020); anticipated that a new list of possible main themes for strategic discussions during the 2020 AF meetings will be shared with AF members following their input on main priority areas of work for the EFSA 2020 annual work programme. The Chair highlighted the importance for EFSA to continue to use a virtual input / collaboration from experts of other EU Agencies and bodies, and from Art36 organisations, as well as to organise a broad range of satellite events around AF meetings.

End of meeting

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking AF members and EFSA Colleagues for their input to fruitful discussions and support provided for the good running of this and all meetings during 2019.

LIST OF ACTION ITEMS

Reference	Who	What
Action 1	EFSA	to share the draft ToR of the RARA2020 Programme Committee for any final comments from AF members by 13.12.2019
Action 2	EFSA	to share the full list of activities of FP Agreements for 2020, including the new ones, providing AF members with the possibility of raising any questions for clarification
Action 3	EFSA	to collect additional comments on the draft Roadmap on Combined Exposure to Multiple Chemicals by Friday 31.01.2020; integrate comments received during plenary discussion in the draft Roadmap, including revision of the proposed timeline; inclusion of a chapter on social science; and to develop an Annex on the Roadmap, listing all relevant projects at MS level
Action 4	Ákos Józwiak (HU) & EFSA (SCER)	to prepare a proposal on the way forward on the future use of the DEMETER platform to be presented at the coming AF meeting
Action 5	EFSA	to establish a pre-defined standard procedure for ensuring a timely update of the database with MS RA plans ahead of each AF meeting (e.g. inclusion of an explicit description of this task on the current working instructions for new FPs; send email reminders to FPs with a clearly set deadline ahead of each AF meeting)
Action 6	AF Members	to express interest by Friday 17.01.2020 in participating in an EFSA Workshop to be held in Parma in February 2020 for sharing experiences on the use of Artificial Intelligence
Action 7	EFSA	present a plan for regular updates on the activities of its Scientific Networks in upcoming AF meetings
Action 8	AF members of the DG on CB	to consider expressing interest in joining the respective sub-groups (if not yet done), in particular for compiling the curriculum of the EU Master Programme on Risk Assessment and for liaising with potential partners - feedback to be provided directly to Nicole.Gollnick@bfr.bund.de
Action 9	EFSA	to consider the drafting of a Roadmap on Capacity Building to be presented at an AF meeting in 2020 for discussion and endorsement