Minutes

65th MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM
Tallinn, Estonia, 3-4 October 2017

Chair: Bernhard Url

Members	
Austria	*Klemens Fuchs*
Belgium	*Xavier Van Huffel*
Bulgaria	*Iliyan Kostov*
Croatia	*Andrea Gross-Bošković*
Cyprus	*Stelios Yiannopoulos*
Czech Republic	*Jitka Götzová*
Denmark	*Flemming Bager*
Estonia	*Martin Minjajev*
Finland	*Matti Aho*
France	*Charlotte Grastilleur*
Germany	*Andreas Hensel*
Greece	*Eirini Tsigarida*
Hungary	*Ákos Bernard Jóźwiak*
Iceland	*Jon Gíslason*
Ireland	*Pamela Byrne*
Italy	*Alessandra Perrella*
Latvia	*Vadims Bartkevičs*
Lithuania	*Snieguolė Ščeponavičienė*
Luxembourg	*Nathalie Welschbillig*
Malta	*Ingrid Borg*
Netherlands	*Antoon Opperhuizen*
Norway	*Danica Grahek-Ogden*
Poland	*Jacek Postupolski*
Portugal	*Pedro Portugal Gaspar*
Slovak Republic	*Petra Gerekova*
Slovenia	*Urška Blaznik*
Spain	*Ana Canals Caballero*
Sweden	*Per Bergman*
United Kingdom	*Javier Dominguez*

Observers	
Albania	*Pamela Radovani*
Bosnia-Herzegovina	*Dzemil Hajric*
FYR of Macedonia	*Zoran Atanasov*
Montenegro	*Vesna Dakovic*
Serbia	*Nadezda Dukic*
European Commission	*Péter Bokor*
European Commission	*Jeannie Vergnettes*

EFSA Representatives	
AF Secretariat: *Jeffrey Moon; Julia Finger*	
*Daniela Brocca**	*Stef Bronzwaer*
Guilhem De Seze	*Barbara Gallani*
Marta Hugas	*Juliane Kleiner*
*Ilias Papatryfon**	*Hans Verhagen*

**videoconference*

Guest Speakers
Jana Husu-Kallio, Chair of EFSA's Management Board
Tanel Tenson, University of Tartu, Estonia
Arvo Viltrop, Estonian University of Life Science, Estonia

Apologies:

Switzerland, Romania, Turkey

1. WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Bernhard Url, Executive Director (ED) of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and Chair of the meeting, opened the 65th Advisory Forum (AF) meeting in Tallinn, Estonia, current presidency country of the EU. Bernhard welcomed Martin Minjajev, host of the presidency country and the Chair of the Management Board, Jaana Husu-Kallio to the meeting.

Bernhard welcomed new member Iliyan Kostov from Bulgaria (standing in for Boyko Likov), Zoran Atanasov (FYR of Macedonia) and Vesna Dakovic (Montenegro). Bernhard also welcomed the new DG SANTE Head of Unit Péter Bokor. Péter started on his position on 1 September and wished for a successful collaboration with EFSA.

Bernhard also introduced Marta Hugas in her new role as Chief Scientist. Marta gave a brief overview of her new role as a central point in EFSA for scientific matters, looking forward to collaboration with the Member States (MS).

In line with the requirements on independence members were asked for any additional Oral Declarations of Interest (ODoIs) and none were declared.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The draft meeting agenda was tabled for additional items. Additional items were proposed under AOB from Germany (Announcement of a Joint Conference) and Denmark (reorganisation of Risk Assessment (RA) in Denmark).

The agenda was then adopted.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.a Action Points from last meeting

The Action Points from the last meeting were provided to participants. MS are asked to check ongoing Action Points that require their input.

Action Point 1: MS to check ongoing Action Points from 64th AF meeting that require their input

3.b ED country visits

Since the last AF meeting in June, the ED had visited Poland and the Czech Republic. Poland gave an overview of the visit which took place on 26-27 June 2017. Czech Republic informed about the visit of the ED on 12 September.

3.c Estonia Parliamentary visit

Bernhard Url thanked Estonia for the parliamentary visit the day prior to the AF meeting. Estonia gave a brief update on happenings during the term of Estonian presidency, mentioning also the meeting of the EFSA Communication Expert Network (CEN) the previous week.

4. ADDRESS BY THE CHAIR OF EFSA'S MANAGEMENT BOARD AND DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS

Bernhard Url gave the floor to Jaana Husu-Kallio, Chair of EFSA's Management Board (MB), who gave an overview on developments of EFSA's work since the last time she had attended an AF plenary meeting in June 2015 in Jurmala, Latvia. Jaana mentioned in particular the EFSA Strategy 2020, the update of EFSA's Independence Policy, evolutions in Stakeholder Engagement, an outlook on the Panel Renewal and emphasised the importance of scientific cooperation as a core business of EFSA. Sweden, Finland and Germany noted the recent achievements in the scientific cooperation area, in particular the support for expertise development through initiatives such as the European Fellowship Programme (EU FORA). Continued funding to ensure sustainability of the current panel system was considered essential. France appreciated the new strategy on independence and the innovative dialogue with stakeholders, whilst Finland raised the issue of increasing workload in the area of regulated products. Bernhard explained that many resources have been invested in the area of regulated products, due to high workload and short timelines. This has to be balanced with the resources in EFSA's other three main areas, the generic RA, communication and innovation and is a challenge to continue with a frozen budget and increasing workload. The European Commission noted that an impact assessment regarding possible fees had taken place 4 years ago, but could be revisited and added that fitness check of the EFSA Founding Regulation is currently in the final phase and the EFSA evaluation will be taken into consideration. Norway, Spain and Ireland commented on the importance of flexibility and common solutions to face the existing constraints. Jaana thanked for all the contributions and confirmed that the feedback of the plenary will be part of discussions of the MB meeting in the upcoming week.

5. EFSA STRATEGIC AND WORK PLANNING

Ilias Papatryfon, by video conference, gave a description of the EFSA performing cycle in terms of planning, monitoring and reporting and the identification of opportunities for AF

involvement both in 2017 and from 2018 onwards mentioning increasing resource pressures in the MS and EFSA and the reducing Grants and Procurement budget for the period in the coming years, particular with regard to the proposed plan for 2018. Norway remarked that a budget reduction at times of an unresolved independence policy and a change in Art.36 procedures was rather worrying, particularly with a view on attracting potential Art.36 candidates. Spain and Greece agreed, noting the huge effort that had been put into increasing scientific cooperation through new tools and initiatives. Stef Bronzwaer pointed to the EU Risk Assessment Assembly (EU RARA), an evolution of the EU Risk Assessment Agenda (EU RAA), to bring organisations and alternative funders together. Belgium recalled the ERA Network bringing funders of different areas together as one example where funding from other sources was being advocated. Ireland suggested more engagement with EC DG AGRI and DG RESEARCH. The Netherlands agreed that using the EU RAA to influence national agenda was important and asked for EFSA's engagement in influencing the agenda setting of DG RESEARCH. Marta Hugas explained that the network of agencies giving scientific advice to the EC, the so-called EU-ANSA, had developed a paper for the next Framework Programme (FP) cycle, which will be presented to DG RESEARCH and the European Parliament (EP). Ireland added that on 16 October a conference in Brussels will take place with DG AGRI which could be an opportunity to influence the next FP. Members requested more active support from EFSA in influencing the FP agenda and reporting back to the Forum. Bernhard Url agreed, highlighting the influence on research agenda setting as an essential point for obtaining financial support for RA projects in the future.

Action Point 2: MS to comment on the draft Grants & Procurement workplan 2018 until 6 October

Action Point 3: MS to take part in the preparation of a proposal for an annual plan on AF involvement in EFSA's work planning, to be tabled at the December AF meeting

6. COMMUNICATIONS AND EFSA PANEL RENEWAL

Barbara Gallani informed the plenary about updates in the area of communications since the last meeting including feedback from the CEN meeting held in Tallinn 26-27 September. Barbara also gave an overview on specific outputs communicated since the last meeting.

Juliane Kleiner presented details of the EFSA Panel renewal exercise. Juliane thanked AF members for their support in the promotion of the campaign, welcoming an increase in applications, better gender balance and age distribution and finally gave an outlook on the next milestones in the renewal process. On question from Sweden, Juliane explained that the better age distribution was most likely a result of the promotion of the call via social media. Germany remarked that the total number of applicants shows low motivation of experts across Europe to work in the EFSA panels, which has to be analysed. Scientists often have to collaborate with industry in order to obtain money for their projects, but are then not eligible due to strict independence policies. Bernhard Url agreed that lack of motivation of experts is a problem. Belgium and Bulgaria added that motivation of experts to participate in national RA is decreasing as well, often due to administrative burdens. Norway mentioned that a survey has been launched measuring the motivation of scientists during the current panel renewal and the outcome will be available and can be shared in spring 2018.

7. AMR IN ONE HEALTH CONTEXT – ESTONIAN EXPERIENCE

Tanel Tenson, professor in the technology of antimicrobial compounds, Faculty of Science and Technology, Institute of Technology, University of Tartu and guest speaker of the host country Estonia presented the national approach and related activities to tackle

antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in Estonia. The one Health context tries to have a view on AMR from different sectors, particularly from environmental perspectives, including farming and waste water management. Finland congratulated to the approach, underlining the importance of taking the environment, and particularly water into the assessment. Germany agreed that more attention has to be paid to the One-Health context regarding AMR and suggested that EFSA could set up a Panel in this area to work on a more comprehensive approach and maybe introduce collaboration with ECDC. Norway informed about an environmental risk profiling on AMR that is going to be published by the end of the year and can be shared.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Hans Verhagen introduced the first part of the session on the information exchange on risk assessment activities, thanking the MS for continuing to provide input and noting a large number of activities of interest in the areas of EMRISK, Insects, Bees, Botanicals, Risk/Benefit and Guidance from several countries including France, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, UK, Sweden and Poland. Colleagues from Scientific Units concerned will follow up on specific interests directly with the specific countries.

Guilhem De Seze continued the exchange on risk assessment issues on regulated products, noting a RA from France for hydroxyanthracene derivatives with a possible overlap or divergence with an ongoing assessment of the ANS Panel. France informed that the work had not continued once the possible overlap had been identified.

Fipronil

Guilhem invited Germany to present the national perspective on the recent fipronil issue.

Germany gave an overview on the chronology of the fipronil incident, RA and methods and contact with other MS from the national perspective. Challenges derived from differing consumption data leading to different RA in MS, lack of harmonized communication (particularly regarding vulnerable groups) and the general conflict of food fraud and illegal use of substances versus issues of food safety and public health.

Barbara Gallani provided an overview of the timeline of EFSA's involvement in the exchange of information through the CEN, followed by Daniela Brocca (via videoconference) who added details on the mandate received from the Commission on related data collection on 28 September. On question from Spain, she explained that the national contact points that had been identified in the MS have been found via several channels, mainly the VMPR Network and the Pesticide Monitoring Network.

France noted that differences in consumption data among the MS led to different perceptions in the public, questioning why the European Commission was not providing a mandate to avoid this divergences and duplication of RA. Spain, Sweden, Belgium and Ireland agreed that a harmonized approach would be favourable and acknowledged that interpretation had to be done from the national perspective of consumer exposure. France and Spain confirmed that communication went well, particularly through the CEN network. The Commission recalled the conclusion of the ministerial conference of 29 September on the follow up on fipronil: "Whenever deemed necessary, EFSA would be requested to perform a rapid risk assessment, in full cooperation with at least the affected MS". Bernhard Url noted the fipronil case could be seen as a lost opportunity for the EU to speak with one voice, and duplication of RA should also be seen from a cost perspective in times of budget constraints as well as a lack of trust among MS.

Hepatitis E

UK presented information on the recent publication by Public Health England of human cases of Hepatitis E associated to raw pork meat products. Recommendations following EFSAs recent opinion had been taken into consideration in the advice being given by UK

authorities not to consume raw pork. Action taken in China and South Korea on products had serious implication on risk communication at national and global level. Finland pointed at difficulties to communication when still lacking the epidemiological knowledge of the case. The Netherlands added that it is particularly important to name the vulnerable groups instead of focussing on risk communication in a general sense. Barbara Gallani agreed that it was a challenging case from a risk communication perspective. EFSA aimed at communicating to the scientific community and tried to align with RM before the outcome of the RA. EFSA also clearly highlighted existing and lacking knowledge. Ernesto Liebana from BIOCONTAM Unit added (via videoconference) that data on occurrence was scarce, thus EFSA was collaborating with ECDC on better tracing of the virus. As the Panel opinion was going to be updated soon, it was agreed that the Forum will come back to this issue in the near future.

Action Point 4: EFSA to include update on Hepatitis E at a future meeting
Action Point 5: EFSA Scientific Units to follow up on specific interests in RA activities with MS

African Swine Fever
Arvo Viltrop, guest speaker of the hosting country Estonia and professor of veterinary epidemiology at the Institute of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Sciences of the Estonian University of Life Sciences presented Estonian projects regarding African Swine Fever. He emphasised that African Swine Fever is not a European, but a global problem. Czech Republic confirmed that research is ongoing on an isolated case with no clear mode of transmission, but no other related case had been identified yet. Bernhard Url agreed, noting the problem of finding the transporter of the disease. Belgium informed about a RA done in 2016, where workers associated with pork production had been identified as transporter. Bulgaria informed that due to national studies, backyard farms are the biggest risk for the epidemic, whereas Estonia pointed out that in their studies backyard farms did not display higher risk than other farming methods. Hans Verhagen informed that EFSA has released one report[1] on African Swine Fever and a second report will follow in the upcoming weeks.

9. EXTENSION AND HARMONIZATION OF SSD2 SYSTEM AMONG MEMBER STATES

Hungary gave a presentation questioning the possibility to extend and harmonize data col lection among MS according to the SSD2 system. The Hungarian AF organisation NEBIH is currently running an IT development project with the aim to serve all areas related to the food chain safety supervision and to facilitate national and international data reporting and noted the limitation in the classification system. Hungary pointed at the common interest of MS and common challenges for national authorities and the development should not be iso lated but done with a common approach. Stefano Cappè from EFSA's Evidence Management Unit (via videoconference), aknowledged the need for standardisation. Denmark favoured that the SSD2 system was extended but not changed. Spain questioned the use of a Frame work Partnership Agreement for all MS and asked about similarities of the new EC tool to EFSA's tools. The European Commission remarted that international standards also have to to be taken into consideration. Germany and Finland pointed out that the question overlaps with RM issues and should be discussed at the Head of Agencies meeting in November in Ta llin. Spain, supported by Hungary, France, Ireland and UK suggested a Working Group to pro ceed. Bernhard Url, welcomed the suggestion of a Working Group and suggested further dis cussion was needed to agree a way forward, noting the different technical and governance issues and the overlap with RM and possible discussions with the HoA.

[1] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4732

Action Point 6: EFSA to consider further how to progress the discussions following the HoA meeting in November with feedback to be given at the December meeting.

10. SPANISH FOOD LIST FOR THE CONTAMINANTS AND ADDITIVES DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Spain presented national experiences in implementing IT solutions for data management: A major problem in implementing common tools provided by EFSA is the language barrier, as data collection is mainly carried out on regional level. The Spanish AF authority AECOSAN developed a catalogue according to FoodEx2, which not only translates, but also categorises food with a view of Spanish food consumption on regional, local and national level. Food names have been harmonized on national level and codified in FoodEx2, which enables data collection in formats fit for EFSA data collection. This initiative not only facilitates data collection on EU level, but also supports food inspection on regional and local level.

*** The Chair then closed the meeting for the first day***

11. ELECTRONIC MANAGEMENT OF REGULATED PRODUCTS - MATRIX

Guilhem De Seze presented the development and implementation of the EFSA Electronic Application System for regulated products. This MATRIX project marked a transition from paper-based submission and management of regulated products applications to an electronic data format and IT based submission pipeline and workflow. The pilot phase comprised applications in the area of FEED, GMO and Pesticides to introduce a refined automated process in early 2018. Guilhem raised the question of possible integration between MATRIX and systems of DG SANTE and the MS to create a one-customer-access as a single EU application dossier repository and single EU submission portal. Bernhard Url explained that the project focussed on dossier-related data, determined for the use by applicants and suggested that a discussion group to report back to the Forum on possible integration could be created. Germany, Sweden and France welcomed the project and supported MS involvement. The European Commission acknowledged the ongoing close cooperation between DG SANTE and EFSA in the development of IT based tools for regulated products applications and expressed interest in the foreseen discussion group. Denmark remarked that the Head of Agencies should be involved in the discussion as current systems of MS are diverse. Guilhem agreed that the view of different actors is important and the Head of Agencies could be involved and ideally integration should take place on global not European level, through alignment with OECD formats.

Action Point 7: MS to express interest in Working Group on MATRIX project

12. COOPERATION DEVELOPMENTS

EU FORA

Stef Bronzwaer provided feedback on the EU-FORA fellowship programme, giving an overview on final numbers of applications from MS hosting sites and fellows. The programme has kicked off with an induction training early September in EFSA for 15 fellows who are placed in 8 hosting sites. Importantly, member support was requested for the next call in stimulating fellow applications (most came from Academia in the first round) and to apply as hosting site to achieve a broader geographical balance. Latvia, Ireland, Spain and UK expressed their support for the programme. Ireland asked if transnational consortia are able to apply as a hosting site, allowing the fellow to be hosted in one country, while gaining also training experience in another. Sweden explained that

due to problems in payment linked to national tax rules it would be favourable to consider international consortia. Stef noted that transnational consortia could be welcome, if no financial legal obstacles are identified, as long as it did not require fellows to relocate. Points raised by MS will be taken into consideration for the 2nd call of the programme.

EU RISK ASSESSMENT AGENDA (EURAA)

Stef Bronzwaer informed the plenary on the latest developments in relation to the EU RAA, in particular about the Risk Assessment Research Assembly (RARA) on 7 February in Utrecht (back-to- back to AF and FP meetings). Members received a background paper on the Research Assembly indicating main objectives, target audience and expected outcomes, as well as providing a draft letter of support that EFSA can issue when MS partners submit a research application relating to one of the priorities of the EU RAA. Belgium and the Netherlands noted that EFSA could make links between the EURAA and the EFSA strategy, with the Scientific Committee to play an advisory role. Finland noted that not too many of the project proposals might receive opportunities of funding; projects could be realized with national money and an overall evaluation of the EURAA would need to be done in the coming years. Bernhard Url acknowledged the problem of funding with the AF playing an important role to bring national stakeholders to the RARA. Spain agreed, underlining that the priorities are common priorities of MS and EFSA and that a common approach is needed. Alisdair Wotherspoon, former AF/FP member of the UK, and facilitator for the EU RARA, will attend the AF meeting in December to give further insight in the planning of the RARA. Norway, Denmark and Sweden remarked that now action is required from the national institutions that proposed and joined projects. Germany agreed, adding that a platform for interested parties to meet would be necessary and could create the opportunity to establish a 'brand'. Bernhard concluded that the common approach to bring the EURAA forward could be to package the concept and communicate to national and international funders.

13. DIGITALISED LITERATURE SEARCHES

Norway gave a presentation on introducing digitalised literature searches, asking MS and EFSA about their experiences and suggestions. National discussions in Norway have considered an IBM based computer search engine. Denmark informed about similar considerations, followed by a meeting with IBM, however, IBM did not express interest in providing access to the whole set of literature available in order to make the system applicable to the needs investigated. Germany informed about a similar approach of the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) started 10 years ago and raised some major challenges. France remarked that a full literature search takes up to 1,5 years, questioning the efficiency of computerized searches. Denmark explained that the IBM system has including/excluding criteria and experts are included in the process. Didier Verloo explained that EFSA is currently exploring possibilities of how machine learning and artificial intelligence can be implemented in the long term. IBM was consulted in 2015 and discontinued. The UK informed having started work with IBM and information has been shared in the EREN Network. Sweden underlined that in this field European cooperation was needed, thus it would be favourable to deepen discussions during the EFSA Scientific Conference in 2018, which was confirmed.

14. FORWARD PLANNING

Strategic Topics

Jeff Moon presented information on proposals for detailed discussions during the 2018 AF meetings and the related calendar. The next meeting will take place on 5-6 December in Parma and particularly focus on Open Data. Possible Topics for 2018 included: Research, Data collaboration, Science and Society. MS are invited to propose additional topics.

Meetings 2018

The first meeting of the year (67th AF mtg) will be held in conjunction with the EU RARA event in Utrecht, the Netherlands: the AF plenary meeting will be held on 7 February and last only one day. Discussions on research would be favoured, taking advantage of the event to have DG Research attend the meeting. The meeting will be followed by the EU RARA on 8 February and by the 34th Focal Point meeting on 9 February. The 68th Meeting will likely take place mid-May in Bulgaria, on occasion of the presidency of Bulgaria. The 69th meeting is announced for 18-19 September in EFSA, preceding the 3rd EFSA Scientific Conference. The 70th Meeting is planned for 28-29 November in Vienna on occasion of the Austrian presidency and including a joint meeting with the CEN Network.

Action Point 8: MS to consider the topics for discussion and any additional proposals for agreement at the December meeting

15. AOB

Juliane Kleiner provided an update on the external evaluation of EFSA. MS have received correspondence encouraging their participation in the survey which has been launched and will run until 20 October. Juliane explained which MS institutions will be interviewed in the next months by the contractor and the following steps in the procedure. An invitation letter for participation in the survey and interview has been circulated among members and also shared as a background document.

Germany and Denmark announced the first details of a Joint International Symposium "Past, Present and Future Challenges in Risk Assessment – Strengthening Consumer Health Protection" which will take place 30 November to 1 December 2017 in Berlin, organised by BfR, NIFD, ANSES and DTU.

Denmark informed about reorganisation in the Danish RA system. In Denmark, all risk assessment within the areas of animal health and welfare, plant health, food safety, nutrition as well as environmental issues, including chemical product safety, is under the umbrella of The Danish Ministry for the Environment and Food. Contracts for RA are currently held by three Danish Universities. The Ministry has decided to put all contracts out for tender over the next four years. The area of animal health, previously held by the DTU, the National Veterinary Institute, was now awarded to a consortium consisting of the University of Copenhagen and the State Serum Institute and will be effective from January 2020.

Belgium informed about a Symposium of the Belgium Food Agency, and the invitation will be provided for circulation.

Stef Bronzwaer informed that the current Pre-Accession (IPA) Programme ends in November and that a new Programme starts in December, so that there will be no gap.

Action 9: Belgium to circulate invitation to Symposium in Belgium Food Agency

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Bernhard closed the meeting with thanks to the presenters, guest speakers and EFSA colleagues who supported the meeting.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

Action Number	Action
1	MS to check ongoing Action Points from 64th AF meeting that require their input
2	MS to comment on draft Grants & Procurement workplan 2018 until 6 October
3	MS to take part in the preparation of a proposal for an annual plan on AF involvement in EFSA's work planning, to be tabled at the December AF meeting
4	AF to discuss update on Hepatitis E at next meeting
5	EFSA Scientific Units to follow up on specific interests in RA activities with MS
6	EFSA to consider further how to progress the discussions following the HoA meeting in November with feedback to be given at the December meeting.
7	MS to express interest in Working Group on MATRIX project
8	MS to consider the topics for discussion and any additional proposals for agreement at the December meeting
9	Belgium to circulate invitation to Symposium in Belgium Food Agency

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