

Focal Points – Guidelines for new Focal Points

1. Introduction and Context

The **European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)**, founded in 2002, is the keystone of European Union (EU) risk assessment regarding food and feed safety, animal health and welfare, nutrition, plant protection and plant health.

In order to strengthen cooperation and networking between EFSA and the Member States (MS) a network of **EFSA Focal Points (FPs)** was established and is operational since 2008.

The overall objective of the Focal Points is to support the members of the EFSA **Advisory Forum (AF)** in the practical implementation of activities related to networking and scientific cooperation between and among MS and EFSA. The Advisory Forum, with a representative from each national food safety institution in the 28 EU MS, Iceland and Norway, is at the heart of EFSA's collaborative approach, enabling EFSA and MS to work together to address risk assessment and communication issues in Europe

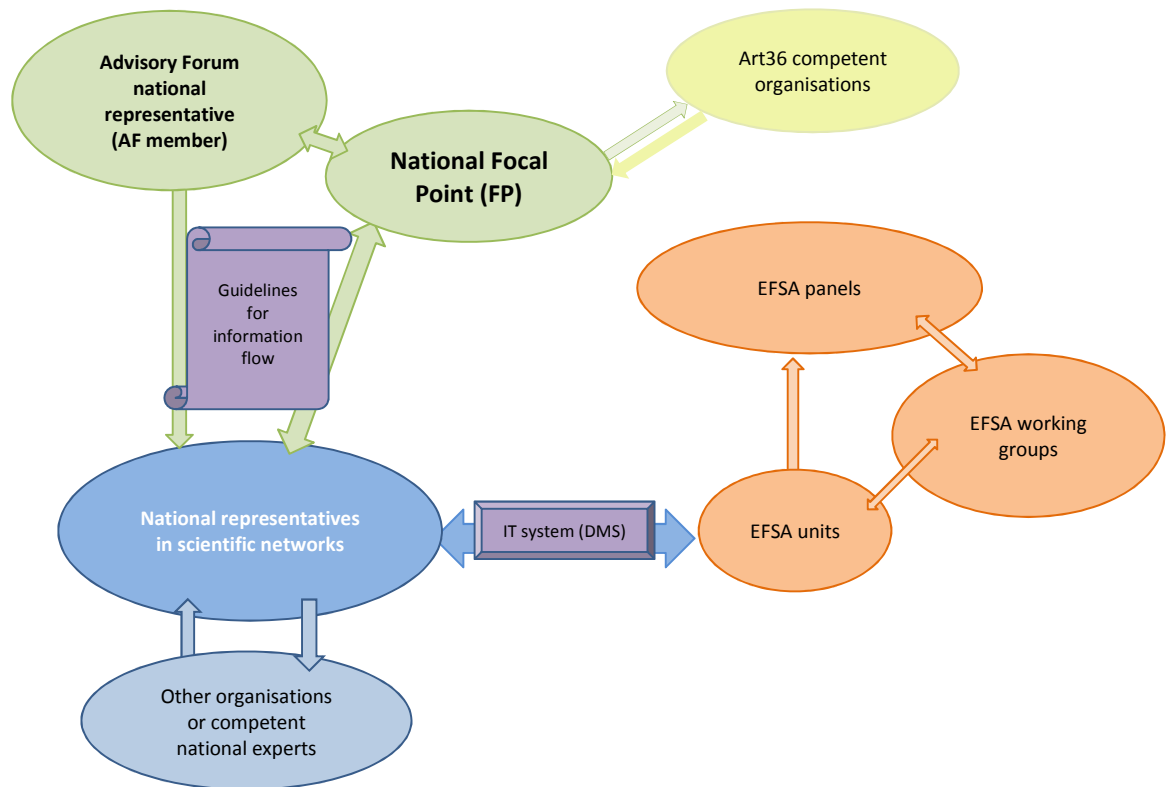
According to the tasks laid down in the specific FP agreements, FPs also provide support and advice regarding the cooperation of EFSA with institutions in the MS, particularly through the EFSA Scientific Networks and the Art.36 list:

Scientific networks, supporting the various EFSA units, are networks of nationally appointed EU MS organisations, with expertise in the specific scientific subject matter of each network (e.g. emerging risks, animal health and welfare, pesticide residue monitoring). The FP supports both the AF member, who is nominating the organisation and its representative and the representative in the Network.

Competent organisations under Article 36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 are legal entities that pursue public interest objectives, have technical and scientific capacity on and are active in one or more of the fields of work of EFSA, which could undertake tasks assigned by EFSA and perform them with independence and integrity. FPs provide advice on proposals for new designations by the Member State and support to the organisations on the list to network and participate in calls and joint projects. Each focal point organisation itself should be a competent organisation of Article 36.

Furthermore, FPs promote EFSA's scientific outputs and risk assessment initiatives to the relevant audiences within the Member States, disseminate and collect information and organise national events. The focal points cooperate closely with EFSA via regular quarterly meetings.

This figure illustrates the links between the different channels mentioned above



2. Mission

The main mission of the FP network, in support of the AF, is to ensure the sharing and dissemination of scientific information concerning food safety risk assessments helping to improve scientific cooperation and networking activities between and among MS and with EFSA. This is achieved by both mandatory and other tasks as described in the FP agreements.

The **mandatory tasks** include:

- A. Exchange of scientific information
 - Dissemination through the national networks of requests for specific information coming from EFSA or other FPs
 - Dissemination through the national networks of proposals information of importance to the function of EFSA (e.g. calls for tender or proposals, calls for data, job or placement announcements, etc.)
- B. Cooperation through article 36 and databases or networks of scientific experts
 - Provision of advice on actions of common interest that can be undertaken in the framework of article 36
 - i. Support to the identification and inclusion of relevant competent MS organisations in the article 36 list; Support in the regular review of the organisation of the MS in the list, at least every 3 years.

- ii. Support to MS new competent organisations in preparing and submitting their information to the article 36 database; Support to the overall designation procedure.
 - iii. Monitoring of changes in the MS article 36 competent organisations and communication with EFSA; Support in the identification and withdrawal of the entries of MS organisations that do not meet the formal criteria.
- Promotion and support of databases or networks of scientific experts
 - i. Set-up and maintenance or use of national databases or networks of scientific experts to facilitate the dissemination of relevant information received via the FP network.
- C. Networking and raising the visibility of EFSA and of its role in the EU and internationally
 - Maintenance of national or FP webpages to inform about EFSA activities, email alerts and scientific outputs.
 - Maintenance of contact lists of relevant organisations or stakeholders, other than the article 36 organisations or the databases/ networks mentioned above, to which information and communication materials about EFSA are disseminated.
- D. Training opportunities in Risk Assessment
 - Dissemination of information provided by EFSA and/ or other FPs regarding training opportunities in risk assessment to relevant national organisations (e.g. BTSF training, other EFSA risk assessment courses, training workshops/ activities on risk assessment shared by other FPs) contributing to the harmonisation of risk assessment practices across the EU.
- E. Coordination of EFSA's Scientific Networks at national level
 - Provision of relevant information to the AF member regarding Scientific Network meetings, e.g. draft agendas, background documents, presentations, outcomes of meetings, as provided by EFSA or the national Network representatives, as well as relevant aspects of work programmes, planned risk assessment activities and activity reports of the different Scientific Networks.
- F. International Cooperation
 - Sharing of information on planned international scientific cooperation activities related to risk assessment, e.g., projects, meetings, workshops, events, trainings, etc. planned in the FP's country to take place with third countries or international organisations.

FP agreements can be found [here](#) in a folder for each country on EFSA's Document Management System (DMS) including all relevant documentation. At the end of each year under the FP grant agreement, the Tasks foreseen to be carried out may be modified via a written procedure.

To carry out these various tasks, FPs have at their disposal a range of **tools**. An overview of such tools can be found in the table in ANNEX 1. *Add table as annex*

3. Operational procedures:

Meetings :

FPs meet 4 times a year, prior to the AF meetings. The agenda includes standing items in preparation and follow-up of the AF meeting and issues raised by both FPs and EFSA. Therefore, the draft agenda is sent to FPs for additions and suggestions a few weeks before the meeting and is uploaded on the DMS together with supporting documents and presentations.

Reporting:

Every year, FPs have to submit to EFSA an annual activity report by the end of October, explaining how each task was implemented and illustrating it with concrete examples.

EFSA performs checks on the received reports and may perform audits at the FP organisations. The link to the reporting template can be found on the folders [here](#) on DMS, sorted by year, including templates for the exchange of letters for payment of the running year and renewal of FP Agreements for the next year.

4. Administrative procedures

EFSA, in accordance with its financial rules, covers the travel costs on the basis of one FP member per MS.

Participants receive information on the procedures for reimbursement by the EFSA secretariat together with the invitation. The Experts Compensation Guide lays down the rules on reimbursement:

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Experts_compensation_guide.pdf

5. List of contacts, glossary

- List of functional mailboxes of the members and observers of the FP network and of the relevant EFSA unit
- Link to the EFSA webpage