

SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION UNIT

Parma, 1 June 2010
EFSA/FP/M/2010/068/PUB/FIN

Minutes
EIGHTH MEETING BETWEEN FOCAL POINTS AND EFSA
MADRID (SPAIN), 5-6 MAY 2010

Participants

Chair: Bernhard Berger

Austria	<i>Johann Steinwider</i>	Italy	<i>Laura Toti</i>
Belgium	<i>Laurence Ballieux</i>	Latvia	<i>Dace Santare</i>
Bulgaria	<i>Reni Simeonova Petkova</i>	Lithuania	<i>Zenonas Stanevicius</i>
Cyprus	<i>Georgios Stauroulakis</i>	Luxembourg	<i>Nathalie Welschbillig</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Petr Beneš</i>	Malta	<i>Ingrid Busuttil</i>
Denmark	<i>Arne Büchert</i>	Netherlands	<i>Hub Noteborn</i>
Estonia	<i>Piret Priisalu</i>	Poland	<i>Iwona Wiśniewska</i>
Finland	<i>Kirsi-Maarit Siekkinen</i>	Portugal	<i>Jorge Proença Reis</i>
France	<i>Philippe Prigent</i>	Slovakia	<i>Marica Theiszová</i>
Germany	<i>Klaus Jürgen Henning</i>	Slovenia	<i>Blaža Nahtigal</i>
Greece	<i>Stamatina Louka</i>	Spain	<i>Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry</i>
Hungary	<i>Judit Sali</i>	Sweden	<i>Anita Strömberg</i>
Ireland	<i>Eileen Lippert</i>	United Kingdom	<i>Alisdair Wotherspoon</i>

Observers and Invitees

Croatia	<i>Sandra Bašić</i>	Switzerland	<i>Judith Beck</i>
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	<i>Marina Popovska-Domazetova</i>	Turkey	<i>Emine Güher Çeltek</i>

Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

<i>Bernhard Berger</i>	<i>Torben Nilsson</i>
<i>Stef Bronzwaer</i>	<i>Saadia Noorani</i>
<i>Kerstin Gross-Helmert</i>	<i>Ilias Papatryfon</i>
<i>Martina Kurisova</i>	

1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Ana Canals Caballero, assistant to the Executive Director of the Spanish Agency on Food Safety and Nutrition (AESAN), opened the 8th Meeting between Focal Points (FPs) and EFSA, on behalf of AESAN's Executive Director Ana María Troncoso González. She welcomed the participants and thanked EFSA for the organising the FP Meeting in Spain. She described the challenges of coordinating risk assessment in Spain and highlighted the importance of the work of FPs.

Bernhard Berger from EFSA's Scientific Cooperation Unit (SCO) and Chair of the meeting thanked Ana María Troncoso González and Ana Canals Caballero for their words of welcome, AESAN for hosting the meeting and, last but not least, the Spanish FP for their support in organising this event.

The Chair expressed his appreciation that representatives from 26 Member States (MS), Switzerland, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey participated in this meeting and welcomed those MS representatives who attended a FP Meeting for the first time.

2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Two new items were included under "Subjects raised by Focal Points", namely: i) Experiences and views on Article 36 cooperation of the Spanish FP; and ii) 5th anniversary event of the Croatian Food Agency. EFSA raised six items under "Any Other Business" (AOB), namely: i) request for data from EFSA's BIOHAZ Unit; ii) changes to EFSA's website; iii) colloquia; iv) possibilities of tele-meetings; v) future FP Meetings; and vi) feedback on FP Meetings.

The draft minutes of the 7th FP Meeting were sent to FPs for comments on 25 March 2010. The minutes were approved without comments from participants and will shortly be placed on EFSA's website. Participants were reminded that EFSA needs to receive approval of the draft minutes of the 8th FP Meeting in writing by at least two thirds of participants to allow the minutes to be placed on the web before the following meeting.

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Declarations of Interests, EFSA screened the Annual Declaration of Interest (ADoI) filled in by the participants who were invited for the present meeting. With regard to the ADoIs and this meeting, no other interests than those already declared in the ADoI and screened by EFSA in accordance with its Policy on Declarations of Interests and implementing documents thereof were declared by

experts. In addition, new participants were asked to fill in and sign the Declarations of Commitment and Confidentiality.

3 PRESENTATION OF AESAN

Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry, of the Spanish FP, showed a video on AESAN, its work and role in Spain. She further presented the organisation of AESAN, including its position within the Ministry, the regulatory framework and structure of the Agency, as well as the activities under the FP Agreement.

4 FOCAL POINT MANDATE

Kerstin Gross-Helmert from SCO presented the draft Focal Point mandate. The document was tabled at the meeting and has been uploaded onto the Extranet. Although the items specified in the mandate were not new to FPs, the document had been drafted to aid transparency. FPs were invited to send comments on the draft mandate to SCO (scientific.cooperation@efsa.europa.eu) by 23 May 2010.

Action 1: FPs to send comments on the draft mandate to SCO (scientific.cooperation@efsa.europa.eu) by 23 May 2010, if applicable.

5 FOCAL POINT REPORTING 2010

Kerstin Gross-Helmert presented the reporting template for Focal Point Reports on activities in 2010. Only slight changes had been made to the template, compared to 2009. These include:

- i) the linking of the item claimed for reimbursement to the activities carried out during the year, adding clarity to the reports; and
- ii) calculating the overhead costs as a flat rate, eliminating the need to submit documents for this item.

One FP suggested further tasks for inclusion in the reporting template for consideration.

A “Guideline for Statement of Financial Resources in Focal Point Report” is available on the Extranet (meeting documents), describing the types of documents to be submitted with the Focal Point Report to justify reimbursement of costs according to the Focal Point Agreements. It was stressed that meeting costs could only be reimbursed if the person attending the meeting represented the FP. For clarification, FPs could contact SCO before such meetings are being held. Following a request from FPs, SCO will check whether the above-mentioned guideline can be translated. FPs were invited to send comments on the draft reporting template and guideline to SCO (scientific.cooperation@efsa.europa.eu) by 23 May 2010. Finally, FPs were reminded to check the reporting periods and to plan their activities at an early stage to use their financial support in time.

Action 2: SCO to check whether the Guideline for Statement of Financial Resources in Focal Point Report can be translated and inform FPs accordingly.

Action 3: FPs to send comments on the draft reporting template and guideline to SCO (scientific.cooperation.@efsa.europa.eu) by 23 May 2010, if applicable.

6 INFORMATION EXCHANGE PLATFORM

Saadia Noorani from SCO gave an update of the Information Exchange Platform (IEP), demonstrating new features and improvements.

During the discussion, FPs made suggestions to further improve the IEP, including:

- the possibility of having clickable links in the reports produced by the reporting tool to facilitate access to documents;
- receiving a warning when the number of characters in the title field of the opinion upload box has been exceeded, to avoid truncation of the title; and
- revising the folder structure to reduce the number of empty folders.

FPs and SCO discussed why the countries had only uploaded a limited number of mandates onto the IEP. One reason identified was that the mandates in some countries are confidential and could therefore not be uploaded onto the IEP. To avoid confidentiality issues, it was suggested to share brief information on such mandates, rather than uploading the files. Another difficulty raised was the lack of an end date for some mandates, which is mandatory information requested in the upload box. It was clarified that the purpose of this “proposed end date” field is to enable the system to send an automatic reminder to move the mandate once it has been finalised. To facilitate the uploading of mandates, FPs were invited to inform SCO if any mandatory fields in the upload box cause hindrance for uploading mandates. In addition, FPs agreed to further investigate the possibilities to upload their national risk assessment mandates onto the IEP. SCO will check if also mandates and reports from scientific procurement or Article 36 grants should be uploaded onto the IEP and inform FPs accordingly.

FPs and SCO then exchanged ideas on how the use of the IEP at national level could be promoted. One FP encouraged all users to subscribe to relevant folders and offer training on the IEP to the users in the respective country. Another practice is to circulate information via e-mail. AF Members can also nominate individuals to receive access to the IEP. If FPs would like certain individuals to have access to the IEP, they should send the names to the IEP mailbox (IEP@efsa.europa.eu) via their AF Member.

One FP asked whether risk communication documents such as press releases could be uploaded to the IEP. It was clarified that risk communication documents do not fit in the remit of the IEP and therefore should not be uploaded. FPs were reminded that guidance on the types of documents for uploading is provided in the IEP user guide which is available on the IEP.

Discussion followed on translation of documents available on the IEP. It was suggested that before deciding to translate a document, one could contact the author of the document, to receive more information on the document itself, to aid assessment if the document is really of interest. If a document is identified as important and needs to be translated, particularly into English when uploading the document or into the national language when downloading the document, the financial support under the FP Agreement could be used (FPs were asked to refer to the guideline mentioned earlier).

Saadia Noorani also informed the FPs about the establishment of the new Working Group on the IEP, its Terms of Reference and deliverables. Further, she gave an overview of the discussion and conclusions of the first meeting of the IEP Working Group, held on 23 April 2010, including:

- feedback on the evaluation questionnaire, which will be distributed to all users of the IEP;
- agreement on the layout of the IEP Evaluation Report;
- proposal to integrate information on planned activities into the IEP and in the future to include it within the monthly IEP reports; and
- proposal that once a planned activity has started, and thus moves on from the planning stage, it should be moved or archived; ownership of the information will stay with the respective uploader.

FPs agreed with these proposals.

All FPs were encouraged to look at the IEP, to get more experience in using the various tools, and to train others. The Chair thanked the FPs for uploading information onto the IEP and stressed the importance of their work.

Action 4: FPs to inform SCO if any mandatory fields in the risk assessment mandate/request upload box on the IEP cause hindrance for filling in and uploading mandates/requests and to provide SCO with any suggestions to improve the uploading of mandates/requests.

Action 5: FPs to further investigate their possibilities to upload their national risk assessment mandates onto the IEP.

Action 6: SCO to check if mandates and reports from scientific procurement or an Article 36 grant should be uploaded onto the IEP and inform FPs accordingly.

7 ARTICLE 36

7.1 Article 36 Extranet Workspace (ART36-NET)

Martina Kurisova from SCO demonstrated the dedicated workspace on EFSA's Extranet for Article 36 organisations (Art36-NET). The aim of the workspace is to:

- foster active networking between and among Article 36 organisations and EFSA; and
- facilitate project management.

Martina described that the Art36-NET home page functions as a reference page for three main pages on:

1. *networking*, providing a search tool to find an organisations' contact information and fields of competence;
2. *open calls*, giving information on currently open EFSA calls for proposals; and
3. *ongoing and finalised projects*, providing an overview of all expired EFSA calls for proposals (ongoing and finalised projects, projects under evaluation, as well as unsuccessful ones), and offering project partners the opportunity to have a project-

specific workspace to facilitate project management through sharing of documents. Access is restricted to project participants and folders are administered by the project leader and the EFSA Unit involved.

In the following discussion, it was pointed out that Art36-NET only lists Article 36 calls for proposals, while all EFSA calls, including the calls for proposals and procurement, are published on EFSA's website. By subscribing to the EFSA newsletter (http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/newsletters.htm?Newsletter_type=HIGHL), information on what is new on EFSA's website is e-mailed to subscribers midweek each week.

Further, SCO clarified that when EFSA receives a question in relation to a call, within the indicated timeframe, all answers are published under the respective call on EFSA's website. SCO will also look into the possibility of informing the person who sent the question that the answer had been published.

Following a suggestion from a FP, SCO will also look into the possibility of including a section for Frequently Asked Questions on the Art36-NET.

The Chair encouraged all FPs to use the tool and to promote it during meetings with Article 36 organisations. He assured SCO's support to demonstrate the tool at national meetings. To facilitate potential Article 36 organisations (and others) to contact the relevant FPs, SCO suggested publishing the FP corporate e-mail addresses on EFSA's website. FPs were asked to send an e-mail message to the scientific cooperation mailbox confirming the agreement to share the corporate e-mail addresses.

Action 7: SCO to look into the possibility of informing the person who sent a question on an Article 36 call when the answer has been published on EFSA's website.

Action 8: SCO to look into the possibility of including a section for Frequently Asked Questions on the Art36-NET.

Action 9: FPs to send an e-mail message to scientific cooperation mailbox (scientific.cooperation@efsa.europa.eu) confirming agreement to publish the FP corporate e-mail addresses on EFSA's website.

7.2 Article 36 Organisations Database (ART36-DATABASE)

Ilias Papatryfon from SCO presented the Article 36 Database, which assists MS and EFSA in managing (maintenance and updating) the list of competent organisations. The database allows users to fill-in questionnaires for new Article 36 organisation designations, to update questionnaires of existing Article 36 organisations, and to search for contact persons and competencies of Article 36 organisations.

Although it has not yet been decided when the list of competent organisations will be updated, questionnaires for new Article 36 organisation can already be submitted to show an interest in joining the list.

Depending on the stage within the nomination process for new organisations, or within the updating process for existing Article 36 organisations, the questionnaires of organisations can have the following status possibilities in the Database:

1. *Draft questionnaire* - has (partially) been filled in/changed and saved to keep the information;
2. *Submitted questionnaire* - has been filled in/changed and submitted unofficially to EFSA (via the submit button in the Database), ideally after agreement at MS level, to check and store the information;
3. *Approved questionnaire* – has, in addition, been formally submitted to EFSA by the Permanent Representation (only if necessary for updates of existing organisations), assessed by EFSA, and approved to be on the Article 36 list.

The workflow for designating new organisations legally remains the same as before, i.e. although the questionnaire can, preliminarily, be submitted online, a paper version still needs to be sent to the Permanent Representation, which submits it to EFSA. Similarly, organisations can only be deleted from the list after the Permanent Representation has officially notified EFSA.

Some FPs expressed their concern about organisations having access to the Database and being able to submit a questionnaire without previously having contacted the relevant FP. Ilias Papatryfon acknowledged this concern, esp. since EFSA had also received direct applications in the past. However, in such situations, SCO has always contacted the FP and will continue to do so.

A big advantage seen by the FPs is that the Database offers the possibility of getting contact information of Article 36 organisations, esp. of those who had not previously contacted the relevant FP, as well as to see who has access to the Database. While the Database will help maintain an active list, it will depend on the active role of the organisations to input changes. SCO will continue to count on the help of FPs to support EFSA when changes to the list occur. Whenever possible, SCO directly follows-up with organisations when receiving undeliverable messages; otherwise SCO will contact the relevant FP for support.

Finally, some FPs indicated their interest in receiving information why an application to get on the Article 36 list had been refused to advise other applicants in future. A document mentioning reasons for organisations not being on the list was published on EFSA's website last time new designations were accepted (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/081218/docs/mb081218-ax8a.pdf>). SCO will determine if more information can be provided the next time the list is updated.

The Chair invited all FPs to familiarise themselves with the Database and ensured the continuous support by SCO Unit.

Action 10: FPs to familiarise themselves with the Article 36 Database and to continue supporting EFSA when changes to the Article 36 list occur.

Action 11: SCO to determine if more information on refused applications can be provided the next time the list is updated.

8 RELEVANT ISSUES FROM THE AF MEETING

Torben Nilsson informed participants on relevant issues from the AF Meeting held in Seville on 11-12 February 2010. The minutes of the meeting in Seville are available on EFSA's website.

9 EFSA Opinions

9.1 Workflow of scientific opinions at EFSA

Bernhard Berger gave an overview of the workflow of EFSA's scientific opinions, where to find the information, and the role of FPs. The presentation featured as an introduction for two presentations and the following discussion.

Anita Strömberg, of the Swedish FP, and Arne Büchert, of the Danish FP, had previously been involved in the development of scientific opinions. They gave examples of the development of:

- The scientific opinion by EFSA's Scientific Panel on Plant Health on the pest risks assessment made by Poland on *Ambrosia* spp. (Anita Strömberg);
- The scientific opinion by EFSA's Scientific Panel on Plant Protection Products and their Residues, 1. on the risks associated with an increase of the MRL for dieldrin on courgettes; and 2. on the risk assessment for a selected group of pesticides from the triazole group to test possible methodologies to assess cumulative effects from exposure through food from these pesticides on human health (Arne Büchert).

They described the terms of reference, the working procedures, the evaluation, drafting, conclusions, adoption, publication and communication of the opinions.

In the following discussion, further information was given on how EFSA ensures that the requests it receives are formulated correctly, the role of the Scientific Committee of EFSA, the importance of EFSA's Register of Questions (RoQ), and which documents are published in the EFSA Journal. SCO will send the Table of Contents of the EFSA Journal to FPs, asking them to distribute it further and to encourage their network to subscribe (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal.htm>), so that they receive this Table of Contents automatically in future.

Action 12: SCO to send the Table of Contents of the EFSA Journal to FPs.

Action 13: FPs to distribute the Table of Contents of the EFSA Journal further and to encourage their network to subscribe (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal.htm>).

10 SUBJECT(S) RAISED BY FOCAL POINTS

The Spanish FP gave an overview of particularities regarding Article 36 work which had been identified as proving challenging and the potential solutions they identified. In the discussion, it was recalled that the survey on Article 36 includes some statistics, such as on the successful and unsuccessful applicants to EFSA calls for proposals by MS, which may be of interest and will soon be available on EFSA's website.

Croatia informed the FPs that the Croatian Food Agency is celebrating its 5th anniversary event on 10 June 2010. FPs and SCO were invited to attend and the agenda would be circulated.

11 AOB

Request for data from EFSA's BIOHAZ Unit

FPs were informed that they would soon receive a request from EFSA's BIOHAZ Unit to provide data on small ruminants slaughtered by MS.

Changes to EFSA's website

FPs were reminded that EFSA's website had been upgraded, as indicated in the e-mail message sent to FPs on 13 April 2010. FPs were asked to review the national FP web pages to ensure the links to the EFSA website are still functioning.

Colloquia

Stef Bronzwaer from SCO informed FPs about planned scientific colloquia organised by EFSA. The 14th Scientific Colloquium on Food Classification "Unambiguous ambiguity – the challenge of describing food" has been postponed, due to the volcanic ash cloud, to 23-24 June 2010 in Parma. The 15th Scientific Colloquium "Emerging Risks in food: from Identification to Communication" will be held in October 2010 in Parma. The Summary Report of the 13th Scientific Colloquium "What's new on Novel Foods" is available under <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/colloque091119.htm> .

Possibilities of tele-meetings

This presentation was postponed to the next FP Meeting in October 2010.

Future FP Meetings

The 9th FP meeting is scheduled for 6-7 October 2010 in Budapest. For 2011, the preliminary dates are as follows:

- 10th FP meeting: 9-10 February 2011;
- 11th FP meeting: 11-12 May 2011;
- 12th FP meeting: 5-6 October 2011;

FPs can inform SCO by e-mail if they would like to host a meeting in 2011.

FPs were reminded not to make any travel arrangements until receiving the formal invitation from EFSA.

Feedback on FP Meetings

FPs were asked to give feedback on the organisation and content of FP Meetings by filling in a short survey. The feedback will be used to evaluate FP Meetings to further improve efficiency. Summary of responses will be presented to FPs at the next FP Meeting.

12 CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting. He thanked again AESAN and the Spanish FP for hosting the meeting and for their invaluable support in organising it. He also thanked the participants for attending the meeting and for their active contribution in the various discussions. He stressed the continued commitment of the SCO Unit in supporting the work of FPs.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

Reference	Who	What
Action 1	FPs	to send comments on the draft mandate to SCO (scientific.cooperation.@efsa.europa.eu) by 23 May 2010, if applicable.
Action 2	SCO	to check whether Guideline for Statement of Financial Resources in Focal Point Report can be translated and inform FPs accordingly.
Action 3	FPs	to send comments on the draft reporting template and guideline to SCO (scientific.cooperation.@efsa.europa.eu) by 23 May 2010, if applicable.
Action 4	FPs	to inform SCO if any mandatory fields in the risk assessment mandate/request upload box on the IEP cause hindrance for filling in and uploading mandates/requests and to provide SCO with any suggestions to improve the uploading of mandates/requests.
Action 5	FPs	to further investigate their possibilities to upload their national risk assessment mandates onto the IEP.
Action 6	SCO	to check if mandates and reports from scientific procurement or Article 36 grants should be uploaded onto the IEP and inform FPs accordingly.
Action 7	SCO	to look into the possibility of informing the person who sent a question on an Article 36 call when the answer has been published on EFSA's website.
Action 8	SCO	to look into the possibility of including a section for Frequently Asked Questions on the Art36-NET.
Action 9	FPs	to send an e-mail message to scientific cooperation mailbox (scientific.cooperation@efsa.europa.eu) confirming agreement to publish the FP corporate e-mail addresses on EFSA's website.
Action 10	FPs	to familiarise themselves with the Article 36 Database and to continue supporting EFSA when changes to the Article 36 list occur.
Action 11	SCO	to determine if more information on refused applications to get on the Article 36 list can be provided the next time the list is updated.
Action 12	SCO	to send the Table of Contents of the EFSA Journal to FPs.
Action 13	FPs	to distribute the Table of Contents of the EFSA Journal further and to encourage their network to subscribe (http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal.htm).