

Communication and External Relations Department, EXREL Unit

# **Stakeholder Engagement Approach**

## **Interim evaluation report**

### **Pilot phase June 2016 – November 2017**

# Table of Content

---

1. Background.....	3
2. Implementation of the SEA in 2016-2017.....	3
2.1. Establishment of the list of registered stakeholders.....	3
2.2. Permanent mechanisms for engagement.....	5
2.2.1. First meeting of the Stakeholder Forum.....	6
2.2.2. First meeting of the Stakeholder Bureau.....	6
2.3. Targeted engagement mechanisms .....	6
2.3.1. Discussion Groups.....	8
2.3.2. Roundtables .....	9
2.3.3. Communicators Lab.....	9
2.3.4. Info Sessions .....	10
2.4. Innovative tools and communication technology.....	10
3. Scope of the interim evaluation.....	10
3.1 Objectives.....	10
3.2 Methodology .....	11
4. Results of interim evaluation and recommendations.....	12
5. Conclusion.....	16
6. Annexes.....	18

---

## 1. Background

On 15 June 2016, EFSA's Management Board adopted a Decision on the criteria for establishing of a list of registered stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau<sup>1</sup>. This Decision underpins EFSA's new Stakeholder Engagement Approach<sup>2</sup> (SEA) and is linked to a multi-annual, wide-ranging EFSA project: Transparency and Engagement in Risk Assessment (TERA). In line with the first objective of the EFSA Strategy 2020<sup>3</sup>, the overall purpose of the SEA is to provide stakeholders with a better understanding of EFSA's scientific decision-making processes and to improve the quality of EFSA's scientific outputs to better meet stakeholders' needs.

The SEA is designed to give representatives of consumer associations, food industry and business, farmer organisations, environmental NGOs, distributors, practitioners and academia the opportunity to engage with EFSA and to provide input at different stages of the risk assessment and risk communications process. A number of permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms have been set up to enable this to happen.

EFSA committed to carrying out an interim evaluation of the SEA, focussing on the activities and results of the pilot phase (June 2016-Nov 2017). The interim evaluation provides EFSA and its Management Board with an overview of how the registration system, categories of stakeholders, and engagement mechanisms delivered against expected results. Analysis and recommendations from the pilot phase should inform how SEA is rolled-out in the future.

The interim evaluation is designed to complement the mandatory requirement by Management Board decision (Article 9) to review the effectiveness of the new stakeholder approach within three years from the adoption of SEA, which coincides with the end of term in office of the members of the Stakeholder Bureau. This review will be carried out by 2019, as stipulated by the Management Board decision, and will also be informed by the EFSA external evaluation<sup>4</sup> that is currently ongoing.

The interim evaluation report begins with an explanation of how the SEA has been implemented during the pilot phase and an overview of the various engagement activities that have been carried out. This is followed by a description of the scope and methodology for the interim evaluation and the results of the stakeholder surveys. The report ends with overall conclusions and a look ahead at what comes next for the SEA.

This report was initially planned for discussion at the Management Board meeting on 12 December 2017 but the discussion around this item was postponed until the following Board meeting in March 2018. In order to provide the Management Board with the most up-to-date overview, the tables at page 5 and 18 have been updated.

## 2. Implementation of the SEA in 2016-2017

### 3.1. Establishment of the list of registered stakeholders

The Decision of the Management Board in June 2016 provided for the establishment of a list of registered stakeholders. Organisations interested in becoming registered stakeholders are required to submit an application to EFSA outlining how they meet a set of five eligibility criteria<sup>5</sup>. Organisations that meet the criteria are confirmed as

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Document18992.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFSA%20Stakeholder%20engagement%20approach\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFSA%20Stakeholder%20engagement%20approach_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/corporate/pub/strategy2020>

<sup>4</sup> Article 61 of EFSA [Founding Regulation](#) 178/2002

<sup>5</sup> [Criteria for establishing of a list of stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Bureau](#)

registered stakeholders and assigned to one of seven stakeholder categories under the SEA. The categories are: consumer organisations; NGOs and advocacy groups; business and food industry; distributors and HORECA; practitioners' associations; academia; and farmers and primary producers.

On 23 September 2016, EFSA published an open call for applications to become a registered stakeholder<sup>6</sup>. An initial selection was carried out by EFSA eight weeks after the opening of the registration process, following a promotional campaign that was targeted at wide range of stakeholder groups using a variety communication tools and existing EFSA networks.

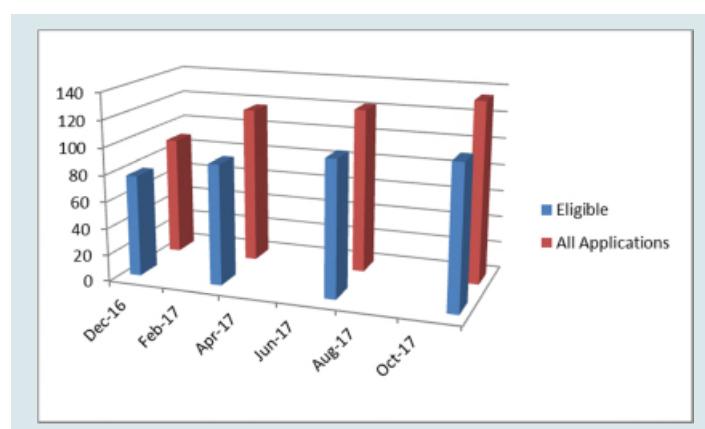
The list of registered stakeholders has remained open since the initial call and an assessment of new applications has been carried out on a quarterly basis by EFSA's Stakeholder team.

The selection process is carried out in line with the principles established in the Management Board Decision and according to the procedure set up by an internal Working Instruction on Stakeholder Registration<sup>7</sup>.

All personal data collected and processed in the context of EFSA stakeholder registration are treated according to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001<sup>8</sup>.

As of December 2017, the list, which is published on EFSA's website, includes a total of 107 organisations<sup>9</sup>.

**Table 1. Overview of applications, Dec 2016-Nov 2017**



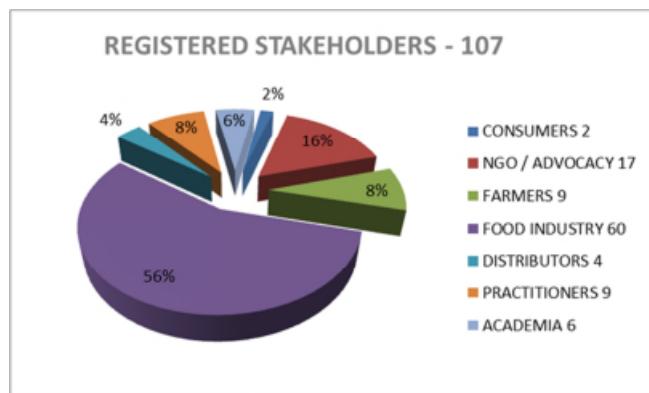
<sup>6</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/160922>

<sup>7</sup> Working Instruction on Stakeholder Registration, WIN No.35, 14 October 2016

<sup>8</sup> Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/engage/stakeholders>

**Table 2. Overview of registered stakeholders by categories, Nov 2017**



### 3.2. Permanent mechanisms for engagement

The two permanent mechanisms that have been established under the Stakeholder Engagement Approach are the Stakeholder Forum and the Stakeholder Bureau.

#### **Stakeholder Forum**

The Stakeholder Forum, which takes places on an annual basis, gives all registered stakeholders the opportunity to provide strategic input to EFSA regarding its work plan and priorities, the development of horizontal policies and processes, and on how the various engagement platforms function.

The Terms of Reference for the annual event are set out in a Framework for Interaction for the Stakeholder Forum<sup>10</sup> that was developed jointly with registered stakeholders and endorsed at the first meeting of the Forum in May 2017.

The themes and topics of each Forum meeting are determined by the demands of registered stakeholders and by the priority areas identified by EFSA in its Strategy 2020.

#### **Stakeholder Bureau**

The Stakeholder Bureau acts as EFSA's advisory group on stakeholder engagement and in particular on how to ensure a balanced representation of views and interests of all the registered stakeholders.

The Bureau provides input to EFSA at a high level with regards to societal concerns on issues in the Authority's remit. In addition, the Bureau's role is to contribute to the preparation of the upcoming annual Forum and to monitor the actions EFSA takes as a result of the previous Forum.

The Terms of Reference for the annual meeting are set out in a Framework for Interaction for the Stakeholder Bureau<sup>11</sup> that was developed jointly with registered stakeholders and endorsed at the first meeting of the Forum in September 2017.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/stakeholders/proposal\\_stakeholder\\_forum.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/stakeholders/proposal_stakeholder_forum.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/stakeholders/proposal\\_stakeholder\\_bureau.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/stakeholders/proposal_stakeholder_bureau.pdf)

### **3.2.1. First meeting of the Stakeholder Forum**

The first meeting of the Stakeholder Forum took place on 30 and 31 May 2017. The event was structured as a two-half-day interactive conference with an external facilitator and three parallel breakout sessions. The meeting was attended by over 50 of the approximately 100 registered stakeholders representing all seven different categories. It was chaired by EFSA's Executive Director and was attended by the chair of EFSA's Management Board. The programme was developed with input from participants ahead of the meeting.

The Forum offered stakeholders the opportunity to engage directly with EFSA staff, take part in question and answer sessions, and attend various discussions on different aspects of EFSA's work. It produced recommendations for EFSA in areas including risk communication, open data, and transparency. The full report of the Forum and all supporting material delivered during the two-day meeting are available on EFSA's website<sup>12</sup>.

### **3.2.2. First meeting of the Stakeholder Bureau**

The first meeting of the Stakeholder Bureau took place in Brussels on 19 September 2017. The selection of the members of the Bureau was carried out prior to the meeting according to Article 6 of the Decision of the Management Board. The meeting was chaired by EFSA's Executive Director with the participation of the vice-chair of EFSA's Management Board.

The names of Bureau members were announced at the first Forum meeting in Parma in May 2017. It is composed of one representative from each of the seven stakeholder categories, following an election by members of each group.

The first Bureau meeting was focussed on following up on the recommendations arising from the Stakeholder Forum, exchanging views on the implementation of activities carried out to date under the SEA, and agreeing on operational issues such as the Framework for Interaction between EFSA and the Bureau.

## **3.3. Targeted engagement mechanisms**

In addition to the permanent engagements mechanisms, the SEA offers a number of targeted engagement mechanisms that allow stakeholders to interact with EFSA on specific topics or depending on their stakeholder categorisation.

### **3.3.1 Discussion Groups**

Discussion Groups are a flexible format for engagement inherited from the forerunner to the SEA, the Stakeholder Consultative Platform. They act as "learning systems" that allow EFSA to capitalise on stakeholders' specialist knowledge in specific areas and provide stakeholders with information about different aspects of the Authority's work.

Under the SEA, the selection process for Discussion Groups begins with a public call for expression of interest, where stakeholder organisations are invited to nominate representatives with specific technical expertise relevant to the group in question. Organisations that are already considered as registered stakeholders can proceed directly with the nomination of representatives for the Discussion Group, while other organisations interested in nominating a member must first apply to become a registered EFSA stakeholder.

---

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/170530>

An internal selection board is created for each call and the selection is carried out in accordance with the selection criteria presented in the Terms of Reference for each group. The selection procedure is carried out with respect to the principles of inclusiveness and the balanced representation of views and interests. EFSA informs all nominating organisations of the outcome of the selection and publishes the results of the selection procedure online.

The following lists Discussion Groups that were established before the SEA came into existence and that are still active:

- **Food Chemical Occurrence Data<sup>13</sup>**

EFSA benefits from working closely with organisations that deal with or have access to data on chemicals in food and feed. The group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data was set up to discuss and exchange information on the practical aspects and challenges regarding the provision of chemical occurrence data from stakeholders. The group's focus is mainly on food additives and chemical contaminants present in food and feed.

- **Emerging Risks<sup>14</sup>**

Stakeholders provide an important source of information on emerging risks and an important source of data concerning identified risks. This group brings together stakeholders representing consumers, food producers and food processors.

- **E-submission of Applications<sup>15</sup>**

This group consists of stakeholders, Member States and European Commission representatives who are directly affected by an EFSA project aimed at implementing in the future the electronic submission and processing of applications for regulated products at EFSA. EFSA aims to benefit from stakeholders' technical know-how and expertise at different stages in the development of the project, specifically collecting input, requirements and feedback, and running pilots and tests with stakeholders.

The following lists Discussion Groups that were established after the SEA came into existence and that are still active:

- **EFSA/ECHA Guidance on Endocrine Disruptors (early consultation)<sup>16</sup>**

The European Commission requested both the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and EFSA to develop a common Guidance Document for the implementation of the hazard-based criteria to identify endocrine disruptors (EDs) in the context of Regulations (EC) No 1107/2009 and (EU) No 528/2012. An ad hoc ECHA/EFSA ED Consultation Group was created to engage stakeholders on the initial versions the draft Guidance Document, prior to it being launched for public consultation. The group consists of registered stakeholders representing NGOs, industry, practitioners and academia.

---

<sup>13</sup> Terms of Reference of the Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data  
[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/tor\\_shp\\_dq\\_food\\_chemical\\_occurrence\\_data.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/tor_shp_dq_food_chemical_occurrence_data.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Terms of reference of the Stakeholder Group on Emerging Risks (2014-2015),  
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/emrisknetworksscg.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Terms of Reference of the Discussion Group on E-submission of Applications  
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/shpESubmissionToR.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/170113-0/>  
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/endocrine-active-substances>

- **EFSA Guidance Documents on the assessment of the efficacy of feed additives and the environmental risk assessment of feed additives<sup>17</sup> (early consultations)**

The FEEDAP Panel has adopted a series of guidance documents which aim at complementing Regulation (EC) No 429/2008 to help applicants in the preparation and submission of technical dossiers for the authorisation of additives for use in animal nutrition, according to Regulation (EC) No 1831/2003.

The Panel identified areas in which an update of existing guidance documents was needed and prioritised revisions to its guidance on efficacy and environmental risk assessment. The Panel considered it would be beneficial to engage with representatives of the industry, NGOs, consumer associations and other stakeholder groups at an early stage in this process to enhance the quality, clarity and usability of the final products. Two Discussion Groups were created to consult with stakeholders on initial versions of the draft Guidance Documents.

- **Discussion Group on EU Bee Partnership for Data Sharing<sup>18</sup>**

This initiative is firmly rooted in the objectives of EFSA's Strategy 2020 and the ambition of the MUST-B project, which highlights the importance to EU risk assessment of greater harmonised data collection and data reporting and the need for enhanced dialogue with stakeholders, Member States and institutional partners. Direct benefits for stakeholders include the creation of synergies, facilitation of data sharing and access, and ultimately increased evidence and best practice on bee health.

The Discussion Group, which will meet for the first time on 4 December 2017, is made up of organisations and individuals representing beekeepers, bee inspectors, industry, farmers, veterinarians, scientists and other stakeholders. The Discussion Group on EU Bee Partnership for data sharing is tasked with drafting Terms of Reference to assist discussions on the modalities for collecting, storing, managing and sharing data.

- **Framing of Questions**

The Discussion Group on Framing of Questions responds to an initiative that stems EFSA's broader Transparency and Engagement project (TERA). The objective is to improve the way in which EFSA captures societal needs and expectations at an early stage of the development of self-mandates or Guidance documents, particularly those that are sensitive or technically complex.

Specifically, the group will be tasked to: establish the criteria to apply to the identification of topics selected for pre-mandate consultation; decide how such consultations will be organised; and decide how the feedback from participants in the consultation will be addressed by EFSA.

An initial exchange of views on the best approach to setting-up this engagement mechanism took place at the Stakeholder Bureau meeting in Brussels on 19 September 2017. The Bureau recommended that EFSA launch a call for expression of interest among registered stakeholder representatives to take part in the Discussion Group, something which is planned for Q1 2018.

---

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/170331>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/170920>  
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/beeDiscussionGroup-m.pdf>

### 3.3.2 Roundtables

The purpose of this targeted engagement tool is to provide specific stakeholder groups with an opportunity to engage with EFSA on issues of relevance to the group in question. There are currently two Roundtable initiatives active under the SEA: one for the environmental NGOs and advocacy group; and one for the business and food industry group. Both Roundtable meetings were in existence prior to the establishment of the SEA, although they were attended by fewer organisations.

- **Roundtable with business and food industry<sup>19</sup>**

EFSA hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Roundtable with industry associations in Parma on 22 June 2017. The meeting was attended by 18 stakeholders out of approximately 50 that make up the whole group. The discussion touched upon several topics, including: a new pilot activity for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on the administrative check of draft dossiers; public access to data submitted during the risk assessment; the dialogue with applicants before and during the risk assessment process; and on communication of EFSA's scientific opinions. Members of the European Commission (DG SANTE) attended as observers.

- **Roundtable with environmental NGOs and advocacy groups<sup>20</sup>**

The Roundtable with NGOs took place in Brussels on 14 November 2017. It was the 9th NGO roundtable organised by EFSA and the first time under the SEA, allowing more NGOs to participate than on previous occasions. The meeting was attended by 12 of the 16 NGOs registered as EFSA stakeholders and members of the European Commission (DG SANTE) attended in an observer capacity. There was also a live video connection from EFSA premises in Parma allowing colleagues to join and deliver presentations remotely.

The agenda was co-drafted with participants and designed with a view to allow space for interaction and questions during the meeting. A variety of topics were discussed, including GMO allergenicity, endocrine disruptors, feed additives, data transparency, assessment methodologies and risk communications.

### 3.3.3 Communicators Lab

The Communicators Lab ("Comms lab") is a new initiative under the SEA designed to elicit feedback from EFSA's stakeholders on the usability of specific communication products that EFSA develops. In practical terms, this means that EFSA may consult stakeholders on, for example, the format or template for a new multimedia product to check its relevance and accessibility as a communication tool. It is not designed to be a channel through which to consult with stakeholders on the content of EFSA's risk communications.

The Comms Lab was launched in July 2017 with the testing of a new template for EFSA's topic pages on its website. A group was created using the social media Yammer for the purpose of exchanging information and gathering stakeholder input. Stakeholders provided 20 comments and ideas on how to make the topic pages more accessible for users. Consultation on a multimedia product on data visualisation and Antimicrobial Resistance in Europe will be launched for stakeholder input in November 2017.

Interactions between EFSA and stakeholders within this targeted mechanism are defined in the Framework for interaction<sup>21</sup> that was developed with the registered stakeholders.

---

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/170622>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/171114>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFSACommsLab-framework-for-interaction.pdf>

### 3.3.4 Info Sessions and Workshops

These targeted engagement tools provide opportunities to increase knowledge of EFSA's work among different groups of stakeholders. Typically they are organised on specific scientific topics, where EFSA might present current progress on work it is carrying out or to discuss the results of a public consultation that it has held. Recent examples include a workshop on the hazard assessment protocol for bisphenol A, details of which can be found on EFSA's website<sup>22</sup>.

## 3. Innovative tools and communication technology

As envisaged by SEA, engagement with Stakeholders will be established via a combination of traditional channels (conferences, meetings, newsletters) and modern, integrated digital tools as a mechanism for continuous multi-directional communication.

An EFSA pilot project on digital collaboration was launched in November 2017. The initial phase of the project, which will last until July 2018, will address issues related to collaboration within EFSA Expert Working Groups, Member State scientific networks, and EFSA's internal scientific knowledge communities. Where appropriate, lessons learnt from this initiative will be applied to activities under the SEA with a view to enabling a remote collaboration platform for stakeholder engagement.

Expected benefits of digital collaboration for stakeholder engagement include cost savings for EFSA and stakeholders and more flexibility and accessibility for stakeholders in their interactions with EFSA.

## 4. Scope of the interim evaluation

### 2.1 Objectives

The objective of the interim evaluation was to produce recommendations on the implementation of the main features of the SEA, including the registration process, the categorisation of stakeholders, and the functioning of the permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms. Specifically the evaluation focussed on:

- I. The appropriateness and clarity of the definitions applied to the seven stakeholder categories upon which the list of EFSA's Registered Stakeholders is drawn up<sup>23</sup>;
- II. The extent to which the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation among stakeholders have been applied during the pilot phase;
- III. The effectiveness of the first operations of the permanent engagement mechanisms established under SEA: the Stakeholder Forum and the Stakeholder Bureau, as per their Frameworks for Interaction;
- IV. The fitness for purpose of the targeted engagement mechanisms established under SEA: Discussion Groups, Communicators Lab, and Round Tables;

---

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/170914>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/partnersnetworks/stakeholder>

V. The extent to which internal processes address the fundamental aspects of openness and transparency, including the way engagement activities are made available to public scrutiny (e.g. timely announcement of events, publication of agendas, list of participants, outcomes of meetings with stakeholders, update of the list of registered stakeholders etc.);

## 2.2. Methodology

The interim evaluation was compiled on the basis of information gathered through:

- **Desk research** – this included an analysis of public and internal documents related to SEA, correspondence to and from stakeholders, and information about the profile of stakeholders provided during the registration process. Information about the approach EFSA's sister agencies and national authorities (e.g. ECHA<sup>24</sup>, EMA<sup>25</sup>, ANSES<sup>26</sup>, BfR<sup>27</sup>) take to stakeholder engagement was also assessed as part of a benchmarking exercise.
- **Feedback gathered directly from selected registered stakeholders** – this included targeted satisfaction surveys carried out with stakeholders after specific engagement activities and a general survey producing qualitative results on the overall implementation of SEA. In total, EFSA received 27 responses from individual stakeholders covering two different engagement activities for the targeted satisfaction surveys; and 15 responses from individual stakeholders for the general survey. Where relevant, ad hoc feedback on the SEA received by EFSA during the pilot phase from groups of stakeholders or individual stakeholder organisations was also considered.

The above methodology was chosen to align with the requirements of an interim evaluation, taking into account a) the depth and breadth of information needed to produce meaningful analysis and recommendations, b) the burden placed on stakeholders to take part in surveys and feedback activities, and c) financial constraints.

While the feedback from the surveys is sufficiently rich to inform analysis and recommendations, the qualitative research approach that was chosen is limited in that the results cannot be considered statistically significant or representative of the total stakeholder population or individual stakeholder groups.

---

<sup>24</sup> <https://echa.europa.eu/about-us/partners-and-networks/stakeholders>

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.ema.europa.eu/ema/index.jsp?curl=pages/partners\\_and\\_networks/general/general\\_content\\_001818.jsp&mid=WC0b01ac0580b982b3](http://www.ema.europa.eu/ema/index.jsp?curl=pages/partners_and_networks/general/general_content_001818.jsp&mid=WC0b01ac0580b982b3)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.anses.fr/en/content/expert-assessment-and-openness-society>

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.bfr.bund.de/en/risk\\_communication-1834.html](http://www.bfr.bund.de/en/risk_communication-1834.html)

## 4. Results of interim evaluation and recommendations

This section presents the results of the desk research and surveys carried out with stakeholders by EFSA (described in the previous section) and provides recommendations to improve the SEA going forward.

### I. The appropriateness and clarity of the definitions applied to the seven stakeholder categories upon which the list of EFSA's Registered Stakeholders is drawn up

#### Stakeholder feedback

- The business and food industry group raised concerns that the definition of the group is too broad in that it fails to distinguish between industry associations with an interest in the risk assessment of regulated products and industry associations with a more general interest in EFSA's work.
- This is considered problematic by stakeholders, particularly given the relative size of the group (more than 50 organisations), as it may mean a) that the representativeness of the group is weakened, and b) it is difficult for the group's Bureau member to encourage engagement and organise input on behalf of all organisations in the group.
- A small proportion of individual organisations faced difficulties at the point of registration when having to propose an appropriate stakeholder category to join as they felt that the seven available categories did not accurately reflect their organisational structure or interests.

#### **Recommendations**

- Move to a system that allows each stakeholder group to appoint one primary representative and one alternative representative. This will ease the burden in larger groups with regards to the organisation of stakeholder input and involvement in engagement activities.
- Allow alternative members to represent their stakeholder group at Bureau meetings if the primary representative is not available. However, no more than one group representative (either primary or alternative) can attend Bureau meetings at the same time to ensure balanced representation among all groups.
- While recognising that the grouping of stakeholders into seven categories will occasionally give rise to cases where organisations do not feel they have been assigned to the appropriate group, the current approach has proved to be effective in the main, leading to the establishment of a large list of registered stakeholders.
- EFSA recommends maintaining the current approach (seven stakeholder categories) while ensuring it remains available to discuss specific concerns with individual organisations if they arise.

## **II. The extent to which the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation among stakeholders have been applied during the pilot phase**

### Stakeholder feedback

- Desk research and survey results indicate that stakeholders have been given equal opportunity to contribute to SEA activities, including the preparation of agendas and participation in meetings.
- Registered stakeholders new to EFSA, particularly those from the NGO group, appreciated efforts by the Authority to explain the opportunities open to them for engagement although some felt that this could have been done at an earlier stage during the pilot phase, for example during the first Stakeholder Forum meeting. This would have allowed for more common understanding among all groups.
- A number of stakeholders representing organisations that do not have direct dealings with EFSA through the application process for regulated products remarked that more might be done by the Authority to keep them informed about ongoing and upcoming work, particularly where contributions are sought from stakeholders through public consultations and other engagement mechanisms.

### **Recommendations**

- Invest in providing newly registered stakeholders with easily accessible information about the opportunities (e.g. permanent and targeted mechanisms) available to them under the SEA to interact with EFSA.
- Invest in providing regular updates to stakeholders, tailored according to the needs of different groups, on ongoing and upcoming work and consultations. This should go beyond the traditional channels already in place (e.g. newsletters) and should include, for example, personalised communication to individual or small groups of stakeholders depending on the issue at hand.

## **III. The effectiveness of the first operations of the permanent engagement mechanisms established under the SEA: the Stakeholder Forum and the Stakeholder Bureau, as per their frameworks for interaction**

### Stakeholder feedback

- Stakeholders expressed a high rate of satisfaction with the quality of the programme of the first Forum meeting, considering the structure of the meeting to be well balanced between providing information to stakeholders and allowing adequate space for discussion.

Stakeholders highly valued the opportunity to network with EFSA staff and with peers from other stakeholder organisations. In addition, the opportunity for stakeholders to contribute and shape the agenda of the Forum in advance of the meeting was well received, as were EFSA's efforts to give different stakeholder groups the possibility to present their own case studies.

- Some stakeholders present at the Forum that were interacting with EFSA for the first time commented that they would have appreciated general information about the Authority and how it works in advance of the meeting to increase their understanding of proceedings and discussions.
- Bureau members felt that during the initial phases of the SEA one meeting per year was insufficient and agreed to meet on a 6-monthly basis for the foreseeable future.
- There was overall satisfaction with the organisation of the Bureau meeting. Clear communication between EFSA and stakeholders, the exchange of supporting documents in advance of the meeting, and the opportunities available to intervene and contribute to the discussion all scored high in the satisfaction survey.
- Bureau members stressed the importance of continuous communication between physical meetings to facilitate the work of stakeholder representatives in liaising with their groups and gather relevant input.
- The active involvement of EFSA's senior Management Team and Management Board in both the Forum and the Bureau was highly appreciated by stakeholders.
- Stakeholders expressed a high level of satisfaction with regards to the logistical and administrative support provided by EFSA before and after the Forum and Bureau meetings (e.g. travel arrangements, reimbursements, etc.).

### **Recommendations**

- Provide all participants with a (digital) information pack about EFSA's work in advance of future Forum meetings, including links to general resources about EFSA and information about the specific topics on the agenda.
- Continue to seek involvement of Management Team and Management Board members at Forum and Bureau meetings.
- Organise Bureau meetings on a six-monthly basis in Brussels whenever possible. Review the frequency of Bureau meetings once a year with Bureau members.

### **IV. The fitness for purpose of the targeted engagement mechanisms established under SEA: Discussion Groups, Communicators Lab, Round Tables etc.**

- Stakeholders commented positively on the variety of targeted engagement mechanisms available to them. Some stakeholders expressed a view that more could be done to signpost when and why EFSA was seeking input from them and the resources required from them to take part.
- Stakeholder Roundtables are generally recognised as very interactive engagement mechanisms but which for the time being are limited to the NGO and Industry stakeholder categories. Other groups have proposed a similar mechanism be established to cover their categories.

- The NGO category expressed an interest in exploring how it might be involved in the thinking and decisions behind the launch of new targeted discussion groups to improve the likelihood that the topics chosen match their interests and to increase their participation.
- The Industry category sees established targeted mechanisms such as discussion groups and roundtables as useful and, additionally, requests the establishment of pre-submission meetings.
- The Communicators Lab received positive feedback from those that engaged with it although its purpose is still not fully understood by all stakeholders.
- Based on stakeholder input, as well as on benchmarking with sister EU Agencies ECHA and EMA, stakeholders would appreciate specific information and/or training to enhance their knowledge on internal procedures related to risk assessment.
- For the time being, and based on the technology currently available, stakeholders prefer face-to-face engagement rather than interaction through online platforms, with the exception of the Communicators Lab.

### **Recommendations**

- Review the feasibility of setting up additional Stakeholders Roundtables for categories other than Industry and NGOs, starting with Practitioners and Academia where requests have already been received.
- Continue to invest in communicating to stakeholders about the opportunities available to them for engagement.
- Explore ways to gather proposals from stakeholders for future targeted engagement mechanisms and topics of interest for stakeholder engagement opportunities.
- Explore ways to offer training and information to all stakeholder groups interested in understanding better EFSA's internal procedures linked to risk assessment.

### **V. The extent to which internal processes address the fundamental aspects of openness and transparency, including the way engagement activities are made available to public scrutiny (e.g. timely announcement of events, publication of agendas, list of participants, outcomes of meetings with stakeholders, update of the list of registered stakeholders etc.)**

- Feedback was generally very positive about the openness and transparency of the SEA, particularly with regards to the amount of information made available on EFSA's website about the different engagement activities.
- However, some stakeholders feel that the information is difficult to navigate and that it could be signposted on EFSA's website more effectively to allow users to find what they are looking for quickly.

- Some stakeholders commented that the approach to setting up targeted engagement mechanisms is not always apparent. This is reflected in the fact that the terms of reference for different discussion and consultation groups are not as standardised as they could be. According to stakeholders, increasing standardisation would help ensure understanding about the purpose of the engagement mechanism and improve consistency in the way they are delivered.
- A number of registered stakeholders that were also members of the previous Stakeholder Consultative Platform asked for the system, whereby information was shared under embargo shortly before publication of scientific outputs, to be reinstated. This was put on hold under the SEA due to the large increase in the number of registered stakeholders.

### **Recommendations**

- Consider ways of improving the lay-out of the pages on EFSA's website related to stakeholder engagement and topics of interest to registered stakeholders.
- Improve consistency and standardisation in the terms of reference for targeted engagement mechanisms such as Discussion Groups and other forms of consultation.
- Explore the feasibility of reinstating the system of providing communications under embargo prior to publication to registered stakeholders

## **5. Conclusions**

The interim evaluation was carried out to provide EFSA's Management Board with an assessment of the effectiveness of the SEA during the pilot phase of June 2016 – November 2017. The evaluation focussed on the system of categorisation and registration of stakeholders, the permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms that have been carried out during the pilot phase, and the extent to which EFSA has adhered to the principles of openness and balanced representation in implementing the SEA.

The results from the interim evaluation, which are based primarily on input gathered directly from stakeholders, indicate that the SEA is perceived in the main as an effective initiative for stakeholder engagement and is delivering on its stated aims and objectives.

EFSA received positive feedback overall on the permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms that it is running under the SEA and with regards to the openness of its approach. Stakeholders welcome the participative nature of the SEA, for example on the co-creation of agendas and the opportunities it offers for discussion and networking with EFSA and peer organisations. Stakeholders also expressed satisfaction with the logistical and administrative support provided to them by EFSA before and after engagement activities.

Notable suggestions and ideas that emerged from the evaluation include a request for general information about EFSA to be made available to new stakeholders upon registration and for tailored information on specific topics to be shared with stakeholders in advance of meetings to increase understanding and involvement. Stakeholders would

also be interested in having a greater say in decisions about the topics selected for targeted engagement mechanisms.

Concerns were raised by some about the rigidity of the system in place for the categorisation of stakeholders, which may not reflect exactly the structure and interests of those applying to become. The burden placed on stakeholder representatives that engage with EFSA on behalf of large groups, such as the one for Business and food industry, was also raised.

The above feedback has been considered carefully by EFSA, leading the Authority to make a number of recommendations to the Management Board to improve the effectiveness of the SEA. These are presented in detail in the previous section of the report and can be summarised as follows:

- **Categorisation of stakeholders** – maintain the current system of seven stakeholder groups but pay particular attention at the application stage to how stakeholders are assigned; allow stakeholder groups to nominate alternative representatives to act on their behalf.
- **Information to stakeholders** – provide general and tailored information to stakeholders at the point of registration and in advance of meetings depending on their interests, particularly to those that are new to EFSA; review how information about the SEA activities are presented on our website.
- **Engagement mechanisms** – explore ways to involve stakeholders in decisions about which topics are chosen for targeted engagement; consider expanding the Roundtable approach to include the Practitioners and Academia groups; hold Bureau meetings on a 6-monthly basis instead of annually.

These recommendations are presented to EFSA's Management Board for consideration at their meeting in March 2018. Based on the indications from the Management Board and Management Team, EFSA will continue with the implementation of the SEA.

## Annex 1. Members of the Stakeholder Bureau

1	<b>Consumers</b> - BEUC	<b>Camille Perrin</b> Senior Food Policy Officer
2	<b>NGOs and Advocacy Groups</b> - Pesticide Action Network Europe	<b>Martin Dermine</b> Pollinators Project Coordinator
3	<b>Farmers and Primary Producers</b> - COPA-COGECA	<b>Pekka Pesonen</b> Secretary General of Copa and Cogeca
4	<b>Business and Food Industry</b> - FoodDrinkEurope	<b>Beate Kettlitz</b> Director Food Policy, Science and R&D
5	<b>Distributors and HORECA</b> - Euro Commerce	<b>Els Bedert</b> Adviser, Product Safety (Food & Non-Food).
6	<b>Practitioners</b> - European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians-EFAD	<b>Ayla Gulden Pekcan</b> Professor at Faculty of Health Sciences, Hasan Kalyoncu University, Gaziantep, Turkey
7	<b>Academia</b> - Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry Europe-SETAC	<b>José Julio Ortega Calvo</b> Immediate Past-President of SETAC, Researcher at the Spanish National Research Council, Department of Agro-chemistry and Soil Conservation

## **Annex 2. Stakeholder Forum: Overview of the recommendations of workshops**

### **1: Quality data for risk assessment: What EFSA does with it and the role of stakeholders.**

Areas for EFSA to improve:

- Table 1: More collaboration with registered stakeholders in calls for data.
- Table 2: To take advantage of existing networks/channels of communication to reach their members.
- Table 3: More proactive work with stakeholder representatives to enable their constituents/members to provide data within deadlines.
- Table 4: Provide guidance to data providers e.g. defining/adopting data standards.
- Table 5: Explore how to better communicate with applicants when requesting missing data.

Areas where EFSA does well:

- Table 6: Early stakeholder involvement.
- Table 7: Comprehensive food consumption database.
- Table 8: Data standardisation which is key for interoperability, reuse and scrutiny of data.
- Table 9: Initiatives such as the Prometheus Project and 'Weight of Evidence' guidance which allow consideration of a wider spectrum of data, with their relative weight.

## 2: Usability of EFSA's outputs and clear communications: How EFSA presents and explains its science

Areas for EFSA to improve:

- Table 10: Stronger advocacy for science to engender trust in stakeholders.
- Table 11: Define target audiences and develop appropriate tiered communications.
- Table 12: Headline accuracy and align with content, including contextualisation of risk.

Areas where EFSA does well:

- Table 13: Dialogue with stakeholders.
- Table 14: New visual tools to improve communications.
- Table 15: Commitment to cooperation.
- Table 16: Quality of science.
- Table 17: New Communicators Lab project.

## 3: Transparency and open data in risk assessment

Areas for EFSA to improve:

- Table 18: Improve transparency of the risk assessment process (e.g. minutes, data and process).
- Table 19: Increase consultation earlier and at different stages of the process.
- Table 20: Improve clarity and accessibility of the website.

Areas where EFSA does well:

- Table 21: Proactive approach and continuous improvement.
- Table 22: Ability to listen and readiness to be challenged.
- Table 23: Opening better channels for feedback.

### Annex 3. Overview of upcoming activities

	Activity	Time
1.	<p><b>Targeted Mechanisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First meeting of Discussion Group on Bee Partnership</li> <li>- Info session on pesticides - technical meeting with stakeholders</li> <li>- Communicator Lab – testing of communication product No.2</li> <li>- Joint EFSA/EBTC scientific colloquium on evidence integration in risk assessment</li> <li>- Second meeting of Discussion Group on Bee Partnership</li> <li>- MATRIX Project Working Package 1</li> <li>- Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data</li> <li>- Second meeting of Discussion Group on Bee Partnership</li> <li>- Discussion group on Emerging Risks</li> <li>- Roundtable with Industry</li> </ul> <p><b>Permanent Mechanisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stakeholder Bureau</li> <li>- Stakeholder Forum</li> </ul>	Q4 2017 Q4 2017 Q4 2017 Q4 2017 Q4 2017 Q1 2018 Q1 2018 Q1 2018 Q2 2018 Q2 2018 Q2 2018 Q2 2018 
2.	<b>Innovative communication tools</b>	
3.	<b>Assessment of new applications and update of the list of registered stakeholders</b>	Every quarter
4.	<b>Full review of implementation of SEA</b>	2019