

REPORT

Pre-Accession Seminar on the Institutional Framework of EFSA

Brussels, 11/12 March 2009

Objective of the seminar

This seminar was organized within the EFSA Pre-Accession Programme 2008 for Turkey, Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia financed by the European Commission under the IPA Component. The aim of this seminar was for Candidate Countries to be introduced to the institutional framework of EFSA and how EFSA cooperates with the EU institutions in Brussels with a particular focus on risk analysis and their components. The work of the Commission and European Parliament regarding the Food Safety and their institutional relations with EFSA were also presented. Finally, a speech on the Slovenian experience and the work of EFSA Focal point was delivered.

Audience

Participants from three Candidate Countries from different authorities attended the seminar. 27 participants attended the meeting (9 participants from Turkey, 9 participants from Croatia and 9 participants from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) representing several national competent authorities, as follows:

From Turkey:

Different Departments from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA)- General Directorate of Protection and Control (GDPC) : Department of Food and Feed Registration Services, Department of Foreign Relations and EU, Department of Animal Health Services, Department of Public Health Services and Department of Animal Movement and Quarantine Services.

From the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

Ministry of Health-Food Directorate, Veterinary Directorate and State Agricultural inspectorate from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Republic Institute for Health Protection- Skopje and Institute for Health Protection- Kumanovo.

From Croatia:

Croatian Food Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Faculty of Agriculture in Osijek and Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology in Zagreb.

First day (11.03.2009)

General Considerations

The seminar started with the welcome speech by Mr. Finn Sheye, Pre-Accession Programme Coordinator, Policy Officer in the Legal and Policy Affairs Unit. Mr. Sheye informed that this seminar is the last seminar from the Pre-Accession Programme 2008. The Pre-Accession Programme 2009 will start as of the 1st of April. Topics for the new programme have been already discussed between the EFSA Pre-Accession Programme Steering Committee and the Turkish, Croatian and Macedonian authorities and stakeholders. Questionnaires were also sent to the EFSA contact points in Candidate Countries in order to collect the information regarding the successfulness of activities performed within the Pre-Accession Programme 2008 and needs and ideas of the competent authorities for the further activities and topics for the seminars for the Pre-Accession Programme 2009.

In addition to the three Candidate Countries already part of the programme in 2008, for 2009 the programme will also include the Countries with the potential candidate status (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo).

The programme continued with the presentation by Mr. *Sheye* on EFSA and European Institutions. Firstly, a brief history of the European Economic Community - European Union “project” was presented. The speaker shortly explained the basic institutional structure of the EU and the functions and responsibilities of the European Institutions. The EU food safety structure was presented with an accent on the roles which EFSA, European Commission, EU Council and Parliament and Member States have regarding the risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. The relationship between EFSA and European Commission, European Parliament and Council was also clarified.

Mr. *Xavier Pavard* from DG Health and Consumers of European Commission then gave in-depth overview of the institutional relations between the Commission and EFSA. The speaker briefly recalled the reasons behind the reorganization in EU institutions regarding the food safety and the steps leading to the creation of the EU food safety law. The role of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health was also explained. The interactive process involving risk managers and risk assessors was explained by Mr. Pavard as well. At the end the speaker presented how risk communication is performed by EFSA and European Commission.

Representatives from the three Candidate Countries asked questions regarding the different topics in the area of risk assessment and risk management. The experts were interested in learning more about the changes in Lisbon Treaty, the roles of Standing Committee of Food Chain and Animal Health and the responsibility which the Committee has also. The speakers answered the questions and this resulted in a frank discussion between the participants.

Mr. *Christophe Wolff*, Policy Officer in Legal and Policy Affairs Unit of EFSA, gave then a presentation on the interaction between EFSA and the European Parliament. The structure and work of European Parliament was explained. The participants asked a few questions on the role of the European Parliament.

The programme continued with a presentation by Mrs. *Blaza Nahtigal* of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food in Slovenia, Directorate for Food Safety (also EFSA Focal Point for Slovenia). The speaker presented the institutions operating in Slovenia in the food

safety domain. Mrs. Nahtigal offered an overview of the typical work of EFSA's focal points and presented her experience regarding the activities which she had as focal point in 2008 and future activities in 2009. After the presentation the representatives from the Candidate Countries raised a number of questions. The participants were interested to know more details about the institutions competent for risk assessment and risk management.

Second day (12.03.2009)

The second day of the seminar started with Ms. *Daniela Lamer*, Second Secretary, Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy, Fisheries and Health Protection, Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union who offered a short chronological overview of the developments in the negotiations leading to the accession of Croatia. The speaker also presented the cooperation activities of Croatia with the Council and the European Commission.

The programme continued with the presentation by Mr. *Henk Visser*, DG Enlargement, European Commission who explained the scope and components of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. Three levels of IPA implementation were clarified and the Multi-annual Indicative Financial Framework was explained in depth. Reference was also made to the different European Agencies and to what type of support and activities they carry out.

The last presentation of the seminar entitled "Fostering the scientific collaboration on Europe" was given by Ms. *Saadia Noorani*, Junior Scientific Officer, Scientific Cooperation Unit in EFSA. The speaker presented the reasons behind the need of scientific cooperation. The speaker offered a detailed explanation of the Expert Database (EDB), the objectives of establishing the database and the eligibility criteria for interested experts. Figures were presented on the current number of applications received by country, including those from pre-accession countries.

Conclusions:

All the participants were very active in asking questions and participated in discussions on the different topics related to the institutional framework characterizing EFSA, cooperation between the Member States, the European Institutions and EFSA and more in general the relation risk management - risk assessment. The meeting demonstrated the validity of the concept of Pre-Accession Seminars and the interest of experts sent by national competent authorities in the topics on the programme. According to the evaluation questionnaires **74 %** of the participants considered that this seminar was an excellent/very good opportunity for improving their knowledge on this topic. **78 %** of participants found the overall value of the seminar excellent/very good while **22%** considered it as good. The Seminar was a very good opportunity for representatives from Candidate Countries to get more information regarding the Pre-Accession programs and to learn from the experiences of a Member State regarding the activities of EFSA Focal Points.