



## **Stakeholder Engagement**

### **9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the EFSA Stakeholder Bureau**

### **Virtual Meeting, 5 October 2021**

## Introduction

The ninth meeting of the Stakeholder Bureau, that took place on 5 October 2021 as a virtual meeting, was an opportunity to provide an update on the adoption of the EFSA Strategy 2027, on the progress with the implementation of the Transparency Regulation and to exchange views on evolution of stakeholder engagement and the preparations for the Stakeholder Forum 2021. In addition, the Bureau was updated on the upcoming communication and engagement highlights, EFSA's technical assistance to support the General Plan on the Risk Communication, the ONE Conference 2022 and ongoing communication campaigns.

In his welcome address, the Chair of the Bureau, Bernhard Url, EFSA's Executive Director, stressed that EFSA continues to be committed in creating the right processes and tools to engage more effectively with interested parties. EFSA engages with its stakeholders to stay relevant, to improve the quality of its scientific outputs by ensuring access to the right data and expertise, and to enhance trust in the risk assessment process underpinning our scientific production.

After welcoming the Bureau members, Aivars Bērziņš, Vice Chair and Acting Chair of EFSA's Management Board, shared the Management Board's views on EFSA's Strategy 2027 and thanked the Bureau members for their valuable contributions during both the horizon scanning workshops and public consultation. Aivars Bērziņš reflected on the three strategy objectives aiming to address the opportunities and challenges of a rapidly changing environment in terms of political, societal, technological, scientific and economic dimensions.

## The evolution of EFSA's stakeholder engagement approach

Barbara Gallani, Head of Communication, Engagement and Cooperation Department, updated the Bureau on the progress with the blueprint of the stakeholder engagement. The recommendations from the stakeholder community collected during the 2019 SEA review and Stakeholder Forum, the new regulatory framework introduced by the Transparency Regulation and the lessons learned from the COVID crisis have informed reflections on how to evolve EFSA's engagement with stakeholders to ensure the relevance of EFSA's work for policymakers and society, the quality of scientific outputs, and EFSA's preparedness for the challenges ahead. Based on these drivers EFSA has redesigned the stakeholder engagement approach to fulfil the ambitions of the EFSA Strategy 2027.

The input collected from stakeholders at three co-design workshops (January – April – June 2021) focusing on each of the three streams of the new framework (preparedness, stakeholder dialogue, engagement during the risk assessment process), has been used to fine-tune EFSA's engagement blueprint. This new blueprint was discussed with the Stakeholder Bureau members and will be presented to all stakeholders at the next Stakeholder Forum to close the feedback loop and validate collectively the future way of working together.

The revised framework that we co-designed with stakeholders will also be presented to EFSA's Management Board in October 2021, and will progressively be rolled out as from November, after the Annual Forum 2021.

During the discussion that followed specifically on the newly proposed engagement framework, the Industry representative stated that the proposed approach reflects well the position of stakeholders and pointed out that additional consideration should be taken on the balance between virtual and physical meetings, since it appears that stakeholders got tired of virtual events.

The NGO representative stressed that remote meetings might be challenging but they contribute to reduction of the environmental impact. Still, he agreed that physical meetings are important and would support a balanced approach physical vs. virtual.

Consumers representative called for a more result-based engagement and proposed that EFSA should consider how to best provide feedback on the outcomes of engagement activities on an annual basis.

Overall, the Stakeholder Bureau members appreciated the time allocated to discuss on the stakeholder engagement approach with EFSA's management and the importance of broad representation of the whole society. They also appreciated information on the ongoing and planned communication and engagement activities. At the same time, some issues were highlighted including a lack of time/resources to allocate to engagement, difficulty in ensuring right level of representation of the whole category, and difficulty to quantify the impact of engagement to EFSA's work.

### **Stakeholder Forum 2021**

Max Blanck, Engagement & External Relations Officer at EFSA presented the concept and draft agenda of the Stakeholder Forum 2021 and updated the Bureau on the progress with preparations, objectives and the format of the Forum - taking place on 9-10 November 2021. The Forum will be an opportunity to present the evolved Stakeholder Engagement Approach. EFSA will use the Forum to introduce and launch the new online stakeholder platform and provide an opportunity to get a first user experience feedback. This year's Forum will also feature an innovative session designed to make up for the limitation of the online setting and allow for a fruitful real-time networking opportunity. The Bureau agreed with the proposed concept.

### **Upcoming engagement and communication activities**

As a standing point on the agenda, Barbara Gallani updated the Bureau on the ongoing communication activities, EFSA work in support to the General Plan on Risk Communication, and the ONE Conference 2022, communication campaigns and upcoming stakeholder engagement events.

The European Commission has asked EFSA to support the development of the General Plan for Risk Communication by providing insights from social research and mapping existing risk communication structures and best practices by food safety authorities across the EU. The Transparency Regulation introduced new provisions calling for an integrated framework for risk communication by EU food safety risk assessors and risk managers at

Union and national level. The package of four reports is developed jointly by EFSA, academic experts and partner organizations in the Member States.

Inspired by the One Health approach, the ONE Conference 2022 will bring together experts and professionals from a wide range of expertise from science to policymaking. The aim of the conference is to discuss how food and feed safety should evolve to ensure preparedness, while supporting the ambitions of the EU sustainability framework, and how new ways of engagement and collaboration can help in advancing the One Health approach in food safety and policymaking.

Encouraging Europeans to make confident food choices by explaining the critical role played by science in food safety is at the core of EFSA's new EU Choose Safe Food campaign. The campaign aims to raise awareness about the science behind our food and tell the story of the scientists who work to make sure it's safe. Its overall goal is to encourage citizens to think critically about their everyday food choices. The campaign promotes awareness to the target audience (citizens aged 25-45, with an extra focus on women and young parents) across Europe and with a particular focus this year on nine EU countries (Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain).

### **Points raised by stakeholders**

The industry representative raised the point on the IT roadmap, the enhancement of the existing IT tools for applicants and stakeholders (e.g. Database of studies, openEFSA, EFSAconnect, information available at the website). Industry stakeholders were interested to know which functions EFSA is working on, what would be the planned date for implementation and when will stakeholders be further consulted on it. Industry stakeholders were also interested to better understand the process of identifying a topic where stakeholder event is organized along the risk assessment process (i.e. stakeholder event on a draft opinion). Finally, Maud Perrudin raised the point on user satisfaction with new IT solutions, how to measure it and how to ensure a swift response in case where applicants would face technical difficulties.

Distributors category representative expressed interest in the Ethylene oxide crisis and how to better involve stakeholders in food safety crises. Distributors wanted to discuss experiences and possible improvements in the future.

The representative of Academia category raised the points on the conflict of interests, impartiality of scientific outputs, and how the EFSA's strategy 2027 addresses those matters. Academia category wanted to know if the new strategy brings additional aspects on the criteria to establish declaration of interest and cooling-off periods (five and two years, respectively) for ensuring the independence of experts, as well as the 25% rate cut-off for contribution from the industry to the research performed by the experts.

### **Closing remarks**

Bernhard thanked the Bureau and DG SANTE colleagues for an open and frank discussion and invited the Bureau to continuous exchange on how to further improve the Bureau by integrating new elements to make it more efficient and prove that the time spent is well invested.

**Table 1. Follow up actions**

	<b>Follow up action</b>	<b>When</b>
1.	EFSA to propose a possible new role for the Stakeholder Bureau. To be discussed further with the Bureau.	Q4 2021
2.	EFSA to identify appropriate channels for applicants to convey feedback on their experience with the use of the implementing IT tools of the Transparency Regulation	Q4 2021
3.	EFSA to follow up with Els Bedert (EuroCommerce) on potential for cooperation with retailers for dissemination of 2022 campaign materials	Q1 2022

## Annex 1. Draft Agenda

Time	No.	Topic	Scope	Presenter
09.30-09.35	1	Welcome by the Chair	Welcoming the participants and presenting the outline of the 9th meeting of the Stakeholder Bureau.	Bernhard Url  Executive Director, EFSA
09.35-09.45	2	Welcome by the Acting Chair of EFSA's Management Board	Welcoming the Bureau and sharing the Management Board views on the EFSA Strategy 2027 and ongoing engagement initiatives.	Aivars Bērziņš  Acting Chair of EFSA's Management Board
09.45-10.40	3	The evolution of the stakeholder engagement	Exchange of views with the Bureau on the evolution of stakeholder engagement (SEA): - the evolved SEA resulting from the co-design events with stakeholders. - the possible role of the Bureau in the evolved engagement framework	Barbara Gallani Head of Communication, Engagement and Cooperation Department, COMCO, EFSA
10.40-11.00	4	Stakeholder Forum 2021	Exchange of views with the Bureau on the agenda of the Stakeholder Forum 2021.	Max Blanck, Engagement & External Relations Officer, ENCO, EFSA
11.00-11.10		<i>Coffee break</i>		
11.10-11.40	5	Communication activities	Insights into EFSA's technical assistance in the field of risk communication to support the implementation of a 'General Plan for Risk Communication'; update on upcoming communication and engagement opportunities.	Barbara Gallani  EFSA
11.40-12.00	6	Topics proposed by the Bureau Members	IT roadmap – enhancement of the existing IT tools for applicants and stakeholders; Stakeholder events on draft opinions – to understand the process of identifying a topic where stakeholder event is organised  Ethylene oxide crisis and how to better involve stakeholders in food safety crisis  Conflict of interests, impartiality of scientific outputs, and EFSA's strategy 2027	Industry  Distributors  Academia
12.00-12.10	7	Closing remarks	Closing remarks by the Chair	Bernhard Url  Executive Director, EFSA
12.10		<i>End of the meeting</i>		

## Annex 2. Participants list

### Stakeholder Representatives

	<b>Stakeholder Category</b>	<b>Stakeholder Organisation</b>	<b>Name and Surname</b>
1.	Consumers	SAFE Food Advocacy	Floriana Cimmarusti
2.	NGOs and Advocacy Groups	Pan Europe	Martin Dermine
3.	Farmers and Primary Producers	COPA-COGECA	Bruno Menne
4.	Business and Food Industry	Association of the European Self-Medication Industry	Maud Perrudin
5.	Distributors and HORECA	Euro Commerce	Els Bedert
6.	Practitioners	European Federation of Associations of Dietitians	Ayla Gulden Pekcan
7.	Academia	EuroScience	Josee van Eijndhoven

### EFSA's Representatives

1.	Aivars Bērziņš	Vice Chair and Acting Chair of the Management Board
2.	Bernhard Url	Executive Director
3.	Barbara Gallani	Head of Communication, Engagement and Cooperation Department, COMCO
4.	Victoria Villamar	Head of Unit, Engagement and Cooperation, ENCO
5.	Matthew Ramon	Team Leader, External Engagement, ENCO
6.	Cinzia Percivaldi	Engagement & External Relations Officer, ENCO
7.	Goran Kumric	Engagement & External Relations Officer, ENCO
8.	Max Blanck	Engagement & External Relations Officer, ENCO
9.	Petra Vojnovic	Engagement & External Relations Officer, ENCO
10.	Stephen Pagani	Engagement & External Relations Officer, ENCO

### European Commission Representatives – Observers

1.	Anastasia Alvizou	Deputy Head of Unit, D1, DG SANTE, European Commission
2.	Fatima Darago	Policy Assistant, D1, DG SANTE