



Final Minutes

82nd MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

Meeting details

Venue: Virtual meeting, Teams

Meeting hours: 9:30 – 13:00 (01.12.2021)

9:30 – 13:00 (02.12.2021)

Members	
Austria (AT)	Klemens Fuch
Belgium (BE)	Fabien Bolle Xavier Van Huffel (1 st Day)
Bulgaria (BG)	Iliyan Kostov (1 st Day)
Croatia (HR)	Darja Sokolić
Cyprus (CY)	Charitini Frenaritou Stelios Yiannopoulos
Czech Republic (CZ)	Jitka Götzová
Denmark (DK)	Christine Nellemann
Estonia (EE)	Mari Reinik (1 st attendance at AF) Piret Privalu
Finland (FI)	Pia Mäkelä (1 st Day) Pirkko Tuominen (2 nd Day)
France (FR)	Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Andreas Hensel (1 st Day) Tanja Schwerdtle (2 nd Day)
Greece (EL)	Stavros Zannopoulos (2 nd Day)
Hungary (HU)	Akos Józwiak
Iceland (IS)	Hrönn Ólína Jörundsdóttir (1 st Day)
Ireland (IE)	Pamela Byrne
Italy (IT)	Alessandra Perella
Latvia (LV)	Vadims Bartkevics
Lithuania (LT)	Deimante Bykneirite
Malta (MT)	Ingrid Busuttil
Netherlands (NL)	Antoon Opperhuizen (1 st Day) Dick Sijm (2 nd Day)
Poland (PL)	Jacek Postupolski (2 nd Day)
Portugal (PT)	Pedro Portugal Gaspar (2 nd Day) Filipa Melo de Vasconcelos
Romania (RO)	Simona Radulescu
Slovak Republic (SK)	Mylo Bystricky Katarina Kromerová
Slovenia (SI)	Urška Blaznik
Spain (ES)	Isabel Peña Rey Icía Fierros Sánchez-Cuenca
Sweden (SE)	Cecilia Hultén
Observers & Other Participants	
Albania (AL)	Pamela Radovani



Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)	Dzemil Hajric
Iceland (IS)	Hrönn Ólína Jörundsdóttir
Kosovo ¹	Kujtim Uka (1 st attendance at AF)
Montenegro (ME)	Vladimir Djakovic Ana Velimirovic
Norway (NO)	Harald Gjein Danica Grahek-Ogden (1 st Day)
Serbia (RS)	Tamara Bošković
Switzerland (CH)	Vincent Dudler (1 st Day)
Turkey (TR)	Serap Hanci
European Commission – DG SANTE (Observer)	Anastasia Alvizou
European Commission – DG SANTE (Observer)	Athanasios Raikos
European Commission – DG SANTE (Observer)	Luis Vivas-Alegre (2 nd Day)
European Commission – DG SANTE (Observer)	Alexandra Tuijelaars (2 nd Day)
European Commission – DG-AGRI (Guest speaker)	Jean-Charles Cavitte (2 nd Day)
European Commission – DG-RTD (Guest speaker)	Linda Salamé (2 nd Day)
National Research Council of Italy (CNR)	Veronica Lattanzio (2 nd Day)
National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (INRAE)	Monique Axelos (2 nd Day)
Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise (IZSAM)	Paolo Calistri (2 nd Day)

EFSA Representatives	
Bernhard Url (Chair)	Bernard Bottex
Barbara Gallani (Co-Chair)	Stephan Bronzwaer
Juliane Kleiner (Co-Chair)	Clemence Foltz
Guilhem de Seze	Mirko Rossi
Claudia Heppner	Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Marta Hugas	Maria Azevedo Mendes (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Victoria Villamar	Cristina Alonso Andicoberry (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Arthur Healy	Sofia Altesini (Advisory Forum Secretariat)

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of agenda

Bernhard Url, Chair of the meeting, welcomed all the participants to the 82nd Advisory Forum (AF) meeting. The Chair particularly welcomed:

- **Mr. Kujtim Uka** – new **AF observer alternate** for **Kosovo** (Food and Veterinary Agency)

¹ *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence



- **Ms Mari Reinik** – new **AF Member** for **Estonia** (Head of the Department of risk assessment, Veterinary and Food Laboratory, replacing **Hendrik Kuusk**)

The Chair also welcomed:

- **Anastasia Alvizou, Athanasios Raikos, Luis Vivas-Alegre** and **Alexandra Tuijtelaars**, representatives of the European Commission (EC).

The Chair noted the last participation in the Advisory Forum for:

- **Mr. Xavier Van Huffel** – **AF alternate** for **Belgium** (Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC))

Under AOB, no additional items were raised.

NL raised a comment inviting EFSA to allocate more time to the item on Crisis Preparedness, decreasing the timing of the item on the Focal Point Review. It was also requested to evenly distribute the Advisory Forum Plenaries throughout the year.

After providing an overview of the agenda for the meeting, the Chair informed the plenary that:

- the minutes of the 81st AF Forum have been shared with the AF for consultation on the 24.11.2021 (deadline: 10 December) inviting Member States (MS) to provide comments.
- 2 Action Items (Action item 1 on SPIDO and 2 on the Focal Point Review) out of the 7 agreed at the previous meeting were implemented.
- regarding Action Item 1 on SPIDO, the call for expression of interest for MS for the Workshop on Exposure Science (scheduled for the 24th February 2022) is ongoing with deadline 20.12.2021.
- the meeting would be recorded for minute-taking purposes.

The Plenary did not raise any objection to the recording of the meeting.

2. Update from AF Discussion Group

■ 2.1 - Update from the Advisory Group on Data

The Chair gave the floor to Akos Jozwiak (HU) as Chair of the Advisory Group on data to update the Plenary on the ongoing work of the Group.

Akos provided an overview on the outcome of 4th meeting of the Advisory Group on Data held on the 17.11.2021. The meeting mainly focused on (i) a discussion on project ideas (based on shared document) and next steps, (ii) a discussion on the group way of working, long-term vision and desired achievements (with a draft agenda for 2022 presented) and (iii) the Focal Points (FP) role in the data area.

On the first point, Akos presented the project ideas – commented and discussed by the Group – which are the following:

- a) Data mapping tool to convert national data to EFSA data formats: the project idea aims at mapping laboratory and national data format to SSD2/other format for data collection. It stemmed from the AF Discussion Group on Data recommendations, the SIGMA mapping tool and the Swedish pilot project on data linking.
- b) Build a business rule engine (BRE) for data quality checking: purpose of the project idea is data validation according to EFSA's or user defined rules, ensuring data quality throughout the whole data reporting chain.



- c) Mobile application to support data collection at sampling point: the project idea aims at creating a mobile app to automatize the process of getting accurate FoodEx2 descriptions. Comments received were mostly focusing on the challenges and solutions as for example that GS1 is a private organisation and membership is voluntary, the possibility of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) solution or blockchain technologies, mainly to overcome business roles preventing the finding of a valid FoodEx2 code at the point of sampling.

Regarding the vision for the Group, Akos remarked that its primary role is assisting EFSA in breakdown of the strategic objectives mainly through (i) providing input during EFSA annual update of the multi annual programme bringing the MS perspective, (ii) discussing the alignment with other EU strategies, (iii) reviewing the original Task Force recommendation identifying gaps and assessing completeness level.

It was also noted how the group functions as a steering committee for the data related project and as a think tank and knowledge hub mainly presenting good practices, project ideas, innovative approaches as well as considering lesson learnt from other projects results and formulating new recommendations.

In terms of expected deliverables, Akos underlined that reflections also covered additional deliverables as a group activity report and an initiative on a knowledge sharing platform on data related initiatives. The latter would enhance alignment with similar initiatives and areas as artificial intelligence and data science.

On the way of working, Akos stressed that the Group will ensure a contact with the external environment, channelling new ideas and providing a knowledge sharing function which can contribute to strategic planning and prioritization exercise, turning into data projects.

Akos provided also an overview on the agenda for 2022 and next steps i.e. a possible last meeting in December (online) plus a physical meeting planned in Q1 (end of January / beginning of February 2022).

The Chair thanked Akos for the presentation and praised the innovative way of collaboration established by the Group, bridging EFSA and MS needs and co-developing initiatives of mutual value in the data remit.

Sweden inquired about the connection of the presented project ideas with the SIGMA project. Akos clarified that SIGMA has been mentioned as an initiative which envisages a data mapping tool continuously under development, whose experience could contribute to the shaping of a new EFSA mapping tool.

The Chair asked how the initiative of the Group could be made sustainable in the long-term, particularly in term of resources and governance structure. Akos acknowledged that the sustainability dimension is indeed one of the most challenging aspects of the task force, which needs to be addressed and brought to the agendas of 2022 meetings, ensuring a system which goes beyond the individual participants. On the three project ideas presented, the Chair also raised a question on how to ensure MS support in projects with a strong impact on systems that MS might have implemented at national level. Akos referred to the differences between MS in terms of adoption of advanced solution, mentioning the importance of channelling the needs of those MS with less resources/voice supporting their shift toward the future. It was also highlighted how the project ideas presented are considered quick wins aimed at making the data collection process smoother and that even if broader initiatives are crucial, quick wins represents key steps to move forward.

The Chair also referred to a potential role of the FP in the data remit to be further investigated and reflected with MS.

Portugal congratulated the Advisory Group on Data for the results achieved and requested a clarification on the role and functioning of the steering committee for data related project. Akos explained that all projects have steering committees with a supervising role but that the steering



function of the Group is a different one (not legally defined), and it focuses mainly on providing advices on data related project making sure they are aligned with the recommendations of the Data Task Force and EFSA strategy.

The Chair concluded the discussion pointing out the importance of shifting from the current advisory role of the group toward a function in co-designing, co-developing and co-financing, building partnerships to contribute to EU food safety data ecosystem of the future.

■ 2.2 – Update from the AF Discussion Group on the Future of Partnerships

The Chair gave the floor to Salma Elreedy (FR) - Co-Chair of the Discussion Group on the Future of Partnerships (AFDGFoP) – to outline the main discussion outcomes of the 81st AF's thematic discussion on Partnerships and next steps of the group.

Salma provided an overview of the main timelines of the Discussion Group and summarised the main outcomes of the thematic discussion on Partnerships held at the 81st AF meeting placing them in the context of the effort towards Partnerships.

She outlined the possible topics that the Discussion Group is considering to focus on in its forthcoming meetings.

Among the topics to be discussed: (i) the FP tasks that could support the formation and functioning of Partnerships, (ii) the possibility to secure further support for Partnerships though discussion with the relevant MS authorities at national or multi-country level and the EC and, (iii) the mechanism under which EFSA and the MS could better engage in the planning of work, including the work that will be outsourced. Salma offered the possibility for the AF members to highlight additional topics that the Discussion Groups could consider.

Salma informed the Plenary that the next meeting of the AFDGFoP would take place in January or February 2022.

The Chair thanked Salma and highlighted the opportunities that Partnerships present. While acknowledging the existing common values shared by EFSA and MS, he emphasised that the challenge is to achieve common objectives for the partnerships. The driver should not be EFSA's will, but the perceived value MS can see to their organisation/their country, to trigger them to join forces together i.e do it in partnership – invest together, develop together, risk together and take the outcome together. This is the next level of maturity. It is about this EU food safety eco-system, based on trust and shared values.

The Chair opened the floor for questions.

The Netherlands referred to the importance of finding cross-links among initiatives and to ensure a win-win approach i.e. that cooperation benefits both the MS and EFSA.

The Chair highlighted that it would be useful for the Discussion Group to explore governance models or modalities that could make Partnership projects more beneficial for all participants. He also outlined the benefit of exploring synergies with developments or ongoing investments of the EC.

Barbara took the floor referring to EFSA's Strategy 2027 which reinforces the role of EFSA as facilitator of community interactions, providing spaces, enabling to address complexity together and to find joint solutions.

The EC representative intervened expressing an overall appreciation on the Partnership approach and the EC's belief in the added value of regional cooperation. Although the EC could not commit at that stage, the possibility of exploring potential synergies with other DGs, such as AGRI or DIGIT (e.g. on cybersecurity) was outlined. As an example, the possibility to establish a Partnership supporting Panels on literature reviews or on covering data gaps was mentioned.



Spain clarified that it may not be feasible to have "co-investment" or "contribution" from MS organisations in the form of monetary resources, for a number of issues including differences in the budget planning timelines. However, contributions in kind could be feasible.

Ireland emphasised that providing access at EU level to experts available in the national organisations ("brains") would be feasible only if (1) additional support could be given so to as to enable the MS to replace them during the time devoted to EFSA – this could be via additional state support (on top of any contribution that EFSA is willing to provide), and (2) there is advance planning, which could also allow for the clustering of topics and needs.

Germany highlighted that the involvement of actors should go beyond the AF members and the FP host organisations, as, among others, there are limitations not only in resources but also in the structures. The need for institutional cooperation was pointed out and a suggestion to involve the Network of Heads of Food Safety Agencies² was put forward.

The Chair confirmed the need for agreements among institutions and commitments, in particular so that staff can work for the European objective. However, he pointed out the vicious circle in which we find ourselves, which, so far, has had no immediate solution sufficient to overcome it, since MS do not have the resources. He expanded exemplifying the problem with the pesticides for which there are not enough resources in all Europe. He highlighted the need for a political involvement, but which goes beyond the remit of EFSA and the AF, mentioning that maybe that could be also explored via Heads of European Food Safety Agencies, stressing, however, that it is a different group.

France confirmed that the AFDGoFoP has already started considering different models of operation that could be of relevance to Partnership initiatives, taking inspiration from EU Reference Centres, WHO collaboration centres, etc. This is a basis in exploring institutional partnerships.

Action Point 1: AFDGoFoP to continue exploring modalities of (institutional) Partnerships

■ 2.3 - Update on MS Publication Taskforce

The Chair invited Arthur Healy to present the work carried out by the Advisory Forum Task Force on MS publication and the proposal for developing a new channel for Member State Publications.

Arthur reminded the Plenary about the background of this initiative, stemming from discussions at AF level in late 2020 (77th AF Meeting) and in line with the requirements of the Transparency Regulation (TR), EFSA Strategy 2027 and Partnerships thinking.

He provided an overview on the work carried out during 2021, in particular: 1) set-up of the taskforce with experts nominated by national agencies, 2) survey among national agencies and Article 36 organisations to investigate which kind of publications were issued, 3) discussion with Wiley on the feasibility in the context of the new contract, and 4) alignment with the WG on the Knowledge Junction running at the same time.

Regarding the outcome of the activities carried out, Arthur noted that most respondents were in favour of the proposal, recognizing the value of creating such a hub as a valuable repository with practical benefits for the community but also for their work. He also highlighted the governance of the channel was seen as a critical factor and the current Editorial Advisory Board would need to be revised ensuring that MS voice is clearly heard. The issue of preprints has also been tackled.

Arthur then outlined the expected benefits of a new channel, which are (i) the community-building dimension, based on knowledge sharing and collaboration, (ii) the standardization in terms of metadata, format and abstracts, and (iii) the visibility and impact as well as the efficiency, since it helps in avoiding duplication having a searchable repository. Standardization is important for having

² The Heads of Food Safety Agencies (HoA) represents governmental bodies in Europe responsible for food safety risk management. More information are available at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/hoa/page/show/613>



some degree of interoperability. However, the question is to what extent the level of standardization is desirable by MS.

There are risks involved, among others the possibility of poor uptake and usage of the channel, to be mitigated through outsourcing and limited contents, with promotion and the resources needed, which mainly in the initial stage can be intensive. Another challenge is the one related to the quality of the literature and a new Editorial Advisory Board will play a major role on this regard. Arthur also outlined a high-level estimation of cost from EFSA's perspective both in terms of budget and FTEs which is subject to further adjustments/changes.

In terms of next steps, Arthur informed the Plenary about the ongoing consultation with the current Editorial Advisory Board and the plan to agree on a roadmap on the channel with Wiley, in January 2022, with the intention of having a pilot content in place and launching it in autumn next year.

Arthur concluded by proposing to move to the next phase of the initiative, which would include working with MS agencies on operational solutions and governance mechanisms.

The Chair thanked Arthur for presenting the outcome of the taskforce and opened the floor for comments.

Norway raised a comment on the duplication issue and asked clarifications on how to manage the co-existence of MS's publication channels and EFSA's one.

Italy, taking also into account EFSA's commitment to bear the costs for budget and FTEs related to the project, welcomed the proposal and agreed on the presented way forward.

France acknowledged the developing of this channel as a very interesting possibility for MS but with some aspects which require further discussion and reflection, namely: the importance of a better definition of the governance structure and process, as the new channel will for example publish outputs already validated and peer-reviewed at national level; the proposal of involving Art. 36 organisations requires consideration together with the type of output the new channel is for, as it is very diverse between (and also within) RA authorities and other entities at national level, suggesting that it is important to think about the types of reports to be published and not just about which type of institution produces them; and (3) the role of Wiley as a publisher, though useful in the EFSA journal, perhaps this is short-medium-term since there are a lot of evolutions in publishing and requirements at European and international levels (UNESCO for example) about open science.

Ireland supported the comments raised by Norway and France on the need to clearly define the governance structure and raised the issue of alignment between the national provisions and system of publication of the RA outputs with the proposal of the channel for MS publication. On governance, an overview on MS procedures and processes within MS institution and countries could be a valuable information to be considered by EFSA. Ireland remarked the importance of such initiative with a note on the need to solve open questions.

Spain also raised the issue of involvement of the Art. 36 as it requires further discussion and enquired on the possibility to translate not only the abstracts of the outputs but also the full text.

The Netherlands supported the comments raised by France, in particular the ones regarding the need for defining the governance structure and process (inclusive of the new Editorial Board) and on the actors eligible to submit outputs, in particular referring to the complexity of involving Art. 36 organisations.

The Chair thanked the MS for the questions and comments and summarised the main points where further clarifications are needed, in particular with regards to the governance structure and process of publication, as well as the involvement of Art. 36 organisations.

The Chair summarised the proposed way forward by taking into consideration the comments and reservations expressed, asking the Plenary if there were any objections; the Plenary agreed on the proposal with no objections.



Arthur informed the Plenary that some clarifications would follow in writing after the meeting. See Annex I for more information. The Chair closed the item.

Action Point 2: EFSA to provide written feedback after the meeting on the questions raised by MS (post-meeting note: **action point concluded** -see Annex I for more information).

3. Focal Point Review: way forward

Barbara Gallani, Co-Chair for the second part of the first day meeting, provided a short introduction to the topic, acknowledging the discussions held with MS after the 81st AF meeting, where questions and concerns were expressed, mostly regarding the speed of the process.

Then, she gave the floor to Victoria Villamar to present the revised EFSA proposal informed by the discussions with volunteers from Germany, France, the Netherlands, Cyprus, and Italy. Victoria explained and acknowledged the intensive work performed by the volunteer group of MS and EFSA Team during the four weeks in November that followed the 81st AF meeting.

In her presentation, she first provided a brief overview of the timeline of the Focal Point review, stressing the inclusive process that led to the first proposal and now to this revised plan, where AF and FP representatives, as well as different EFSA Units, were involved. She explained that, during the discussions in November, the group went back to the three main intervention areas identified by the external evaluation and recommendations from EFSA, linked to 1) the EFSA Strategy, 2027; 2) the FP operational framework; and 3) what the added value for EFSA and MS is in this moving forward.

After a summary of the plan presented at the 81st AF meeting, Victoria went deeper in the concerns reported by the volunteer MS, which were around four main areas: (i) lack of clarity about the FP operational framework and the link between the current and the future frameworks; (ii) lack of understanding about the “quick-win” working packages (process for identification and possible overlap with current FP activities; (iii) inclusiveness on the analysis of review outcomes and formulation of actions for 2022; and (iv) time constraints for processing information shared by EFSA and for consultations in view of decision making at MS level.

The revised plan for 2022 includes two streams of work: implementing the FP agreements as per current framework, while shaping the new FP operational framework together with MS. For this, EFSA proposed the creation of a Steering Group of volunteer AF and FP representatives, together with EFSA, whose composition and ToR would need to be defined. This Group, Co-Chaired by EFSA and one MS, would support EFSA to identify, the main areas to be implemented in the operational framework as of 2023.

The Group would report back to AF and FP Plenaries, as well as by written procedure when needed.

Post-meeting note³: As per EFSA’s proposal, the Group is expected to produce the following deliverables: i. ToR of the AF SG FP Review to be drafted and agreed by the group during February 2022; ii. Draft FP operational framework to be prepared by the AF SG FP Review during Q2 2022; iii. Final FP operational framework and draft FP agreements to be endorsed by the AF by end of July 2022

Barbara opened the floor for discussion.

Denmark thanked EFSA for taking into account the expressed concerns regarding the timing for this process and commented on the successful example of other AF Discussion Groups, like the Advisory Group on Data or the AF DG on the Future of Partnerships, in the commitment of MS in finding solutions together.

³ The information included under the post-meeting note have been provided to the Advisory Forum via email on the 13th December 2021 as a follow-up stemming from agenda item 3.



France thanked EFSA's flexibility in revising the proposal and welcomed it, indicating that FPs are a valuable tool. The French representative expressed some concerns about the timeline for ToR and progress report and noted that dedicated meetings will need to be organised before the first AF and FP Plenaries in 2022 to ensure that the full FP network is involved in the process. She also referred to the need for resources to contribute to the FP review and asked if this could be part of the FP tasks for 2022.

Spain also thanked EFSA for the work behind this proposal and expressed concerns on potential duplication of work at the FP level. The Netherlands welcomed the new proposal since it takes into consideration the points raised by the volunteer MS. However, he expressed concerns on the timeframe indicated in the proposal and asked to avoid having a discussion on the new agreements at the very end of the year 2022. He also asked to find a mechanism to identify the links between all the ongoing activities.

Barbara replied that from EFSA, the timeframe would be revised to avoid difficulties in reaching agreements by the end of 2022.

Germany also acknowledged that the new proposal takes on board concerns expressed. However, they reflected on the impact of this way forward on small countries with limited budget, and the difficulties they may encounter when clusters of FPs are made. He also commented on the switch in the role of FPs and that an increase in budget for FPs may not necessarily mean that the MS can meet the demands.

Barbara thanked Germany for their contribution during the discussions with volunteer MS and said that, during 2022, EFSA and the Steering Group will explore and assess new options.

Hungary thanked EFSA for allowing more time for discussion on this topic. They agreed with Germany on the differences between countries in capacities. They informed the Plenary that, in the Advisory Group on Data, as well as in other groups, there had been discussions on how they could support the redesigning of the cooperation with the FPs. There is need for a systematic and strategic approach for the role of FPs in a changing environment. They also volunteered to participate in the Steering Group.

Italy also welcomed the new proposal and requested clarification regarding the way the Steering Group would be created and if a call for expression of interest would be opened.

Norway also thanked EFSA for taking their expressed concerns on board and volunteered to be part of the Steering Group. Similar comments were received from other MS, like Sweden or The Netherlands.

Barbara gave the floor to Bernhard who indicated that the support to the AF members is a core task of the FPs, which will continue. However, there can be a flexible approach to different tasks, which may vary from country to country. This does not mean a change in the core task but an addition, for which also extra budget is envisaged. The concept of FPs as EFSA's ambassadors in the MS should be seen as an investment also of the MS, allowing FPs to be interlocutors and enablers on different topics of interest.

Barbara noted that a future FP function would be supported by different experts with diverse expertise at national level and that MS are knowledgeable of their local and national realities and will work together during 2022, to develop mechanisms that will allow turning budget into resources. These mechanisms can be different in the different countries.

The Czech Republic explained that the problem when meeting demands is not on the budgetary side but on the human resources side. Public administrations do not always have agile hiring mechanisms, and there is no direct way to use the FP money provided by EFSA for hiring new staff. Moreover, the different scopes of the different organisations acting as AF or FP representatives do not always allow a straightforward support to some tasks, like those risk-assessment related. There is thus need to acknowledge the position of FPs in each MS.



Finally, Portugal indicated that, across Europe, there is a process of multilateral institutional integration, so it is essential to take into account the specificities of the countries, to avoid some countries being unable to keep pace.

Barbara thanked for the comments and stressed the need to have contribution from a wide range of MS to reach a solution that is both versatile and inclusive, principles that will be part of the ToR of the Steering Group.

Victoria summarised the main discussion points. She first thanked the Plenary for supporting the way forward and reiterated that the system to be found needs to fit the needs of all MS. She then explained the next steps, starting with the launch of a call for expression of interest to take part in the proposed Steering Group, supported by a refinement of the timeline for 2022. The ToR will be developed by the Group at their first meeting. She then asked the AF members to convey EFSA's gratitude to FPs for their support.

Action Point 3: EFSA to launch a call for EoI to join the AF Steering Group on FP Review including a reviewed retroplanner (post-meeting note: **action point concluded**)

4. Crisis Preparedness

■ 4.1 - EFSA External Crisis Preparedness Exercise 2022

The Co-Chair gave the floor to Bernard Bottex, to debrief the Plenary on EFSA's crisis preparedness activities and Crisis Preparedness Exercise 2022.

Bernard provided an overview of the framework of the Crisis Preparedness by explaining that, as per EU General Food Law, EFSA is requested to provide assistance to the EC and MS in case of a food/feed crisis. To that end, Urgent Response Procedures have been created and crisis preparedness exercises are regularly organised with all parties involved in the urgent response.

He further expanded on the Crisis Preparedness Exercises-Domains that have been organised since 2016 and outlined the recommendations derived from the previous crisis exercises cycle.

Bernard introduced the new EFSA approach regarding crisis preparedness to address the EFSA 2027 Strategic Objective of strengthened EU governance on crisis preparedness, which will now involve the sister Agencies.

He elaborated on the Multi-annual (2021-2024) Crisis Preparedness Training Package and briefly introduced the 2022 Crisis Preparedness Exercise, which will be co-organised by Bulgaria, having as a scenario a chemical hazard. For 2023, it is foreseen an Inter-Agency Crisis Preparedness Exercise, co-organised by the EU-ANSA (EU Agencies Network on Scientific Advice) and to be delivered either in a physical or hybrid format.

He finalised the presentation by informing the Plenary on the 2022 IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) Countries Crisis preparedness Exercise, to be held virtually possibly in June/July 2022, aiming to ensure that IPA countries understand their role in a possible food-feed-safety incident involving EFSA and EU MS.

The Co-Chair thanked Bernard and gave the floor to Paolo Calistri, Head of the Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Assessment Unit of the National Reference Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology at the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "G. Caporale" (IZSAM), Italy, to present Italy's experience as host country for the 2021 crisis preparedness exercise.

■ 4.2 - MS experiences from last crisis preparedness exercise



Paolo Calistri provided some background information of the exercise, which EFSA jointly devised, developed and delivered as an online workshop on animal health crisis preparedness, with IZSAM, focusing on Rift Valley fever (RVF). The simulation scenario was the introduction of RVF infected vectors in the EU through sea cargo from Africa.

Participants were risk assessors/risk managers/risk communicators of National Veterinary and Public Health authorities of 27 participants from 6 EU MS and 3 EU candidate countries. Participants were divided into 5 working groups.

The outcomes of the groups' work included relevant indications about the importance of a One Health and multidisciplinary approaches for the correct management of a crisis like that posed by RVF, the need for reinforced skills and competencies in entomology and mosquito control, and the necessity to develop and manage proper communication strategies in case of severe zoonoses like RVF.

Barbara thanked Paolo Calistri and closed the agenda item.

■ 4.3 - Crisis Communication Roadmap & Guidelines

Barbara provided an overview of EFSA's Crisis Communication roadmap and on the planned update of the crisis communication guidelines. Regarding the Roadmap, Barbara referred to an increased investment in further training specifically on crisis communication and the reinforcement of platforms and technology to improve the ability to respond to a crisis. She also highlighted the ongoing review of the crisis communication guidelines, where the contribution of the CEN network has been acknowledged and praised.

The Co-Chair opened the floor for question or comments.

The Netherlands stressed the need to always have the exercises in virtual mode, since in real life, in a crisis situation, we will have to deal with incidents virtually. He also pointed out that the number of exercises should be increased, since if training is not available, countries will end up writing and developing the orientation during the heat of a crisis. He highlighted the need to discuss the Strategy aspect in one of the next two meetings. He further mentioned that we should address the need for training, communication and documentation review, keeping in mind that this should be a living process that will allow us to find the relevant documentation, have an updated crisis manual on hand and the tools we will need in case a crisis happens.

5. Thematic Discussion on Research Engagement under Horizon Europe

The Chair welcomed the participants for the 2nd day of the meeting and presented an overview of the sessions and topics, selected in anticipation of the next Risk Assessment Research Assembly (RARA) event, now scheduled in December 2022. He also welcomed the external speakers invited to contribute under this agenda item.

■ Setting the Scene

The Chair gave the floor to Marta Hugas to open the thematic discussion on Research Engagement. Marta indicated that the topic of regulatory science was very relevant to EFSA and the MS, where there is wide room for cooperation.

Since the first RARA event, in 2018, EFSA has become more active in research activities, with the Research Platform being set on EFSA's website, and with an increasing involvement on other research tasks, like providing active advice to the Commission on priority areas and also engaging in research projects, as an advisory body.

In preparation to the next RARA (scheduled for 7 December 2022 in Berlin), the thematic discussion aims to provide an update of the most relevant developments in the Research landscape and to



highlight how AF members and the national food agencies can contribute to the research priority setting and be involved in research initiatives, since, as a regulatory community, the AF and EFSA know where the gaps in knowledge are.

Marta introduced the three main areas of the Discussion: 1) EFSA's involvement in research activities, especially since the first RARA event, under which discussion on how AF members could collaborate was expected. For this, the FoodSafety4EU project has been selected as an example since EFSA and MS have been involved since its first conception in discussions on the need to evolve food systems; 2) European Partnerships under Horizon Europe, with main focus on safe and sustainable food systems partnerships, where it would also be explored how AF members could provide input; and 3) the research planning cycle, with invited speakers from different DGs at the EC, where there would be indication to the AF on the mechanisms to contribute on the EC's planning work.

■ 5.1 – EFSA's involvement in research activities

➤ 5.1.A EFSA's research involvement and RARA22

The Chair gave the floor to Stef Bronzwaer to present EFSA's policy on research involvement, as well as an overview of the research projects where EFSA is involved. He also explained the objective to align national and EU funding, the research needs identification and the preparations towards RARA.

Stef introduced the topic by reminding the Plenary about EFSA's policy on research engagement. He noted that (i) EFSA cannot formally support applications for research funding as per the principle of equal treatment; (ii), EFSA can engage in selected external research project (once awarded) if it is in EFSA's remit and if it is compatible with EFSA's workload, and generally with an advisory role; (iii) exceptionally EFSA might become (associated) partner as for example it is the case of the European partnership for the assessment of risks from chemicals (PARC). The list of external projects involving EFSA is available on the EFSA's website and general updates on the project are provided through the official EFSA social media channels and twitter accounts of colleague involved in research activities.

Stef went on outlining the current research priorities, among others the (i) FoodSafety4EU; (ii) the One Health European Joint Programme (EJP), now a 3-year old project with a total budget of around 90 M€, supported by the EC and MS, under which EFSA is supporting the "One health surveillance initiative on harmonization of data collection and interpretation" (ORION) pilot project and a pilot with ECDC. Stef stressed the relevance of such initiative in the context of One Health and the idea to replicate a pilot project, possibly with a MS on board. (iii) PARC, for which the pro-activity of France was praised and the positive return on investment of the Research and Innovation (R&I) Partnerships was remarked.

On other activities stemming from RARA18, Stef mentioned the need for being active in the context of research priority input. To this end, EFSA conducted a search on the EFSA Journal's output covering the past five years, which collected a number of outputs dealing explicitly with research priorities; examples as African Swine Fever (ASF), Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), bee health, pesticides were identified.

Stef informed participants about the recent updates on the research platform⁴ which is characterised by a more user-friendly view aimed at giving visibility to recently introduced national funding opportunities section.

Stef concluded the presentation by reminding the plenary that RARA22 will take place in Berlin on the 7.12.2022; among its objectives, he reiterated, it is the support to the alignment of national and EU funding and the important role of the FP network in this context. Stef also informed the Advisory Forum that during 2022, EFSA will come back to the Plenary with a proposal for a draft Advisory Forum statement on how to support research, similar to what has been done for RARA18.

⁴ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/engage/research-platform>



The Chair thanked Stef for the presentation and intervened by highlighting the key function of the EFSA's involvement in research activities, which acts to bridge the gap between hypothesis driven research and the needs for science methodology for regulatory purposes, the latter mandate driven and with time and resource constraints.

➤ **5.1.B FoodSafety4EU (FS4EU)**

The Chair introduced Veronica Lattanzio (CNR), to present the FoodSafety4EU (FS4EU) project, its expected benefits and expected inputs from national food agencies.

Veronica outlined the main goal of the project: to design, develop and release a collaborative platform of Food Safety System actors, while activating a structured participatory process to make effective their cooperation. And ultimately, to provide digital knowledge, tools and competences as a "service" for the EC and EFSA. She then explained the three main areas of impact namely (i) fostering coordination and integration among the different food safety actors, (ii) co-creation and alignment of future research programmes, at national and EU level, (iii) enhancement of public confidence through transparency and access to integrated knowledge, this task being carried out under the edge of the new TR regulation. She stressed that the overall ambition of the consortium is to become a Competence Centre for Food Safety in Europe supporting the transformation towards a safe and sustainable food system.

Veronica went on providing an overview on the members of the consortium. There are six beneficiaries of the project, which are actively implementing the project actions, and a number of FS4EU supporting partners (food safety authorities, risk assessors, risk managers), who joined the network by signing a cooperation agreement envisaging different type of involvement (informative level, consultation or participation in the project actions). In this context, EFSA participates at advisory level in the Advisory Board, a body aimed at fostering alignment and building synergies during the development of the project. She also noted the support of an EU-FORA fellow in several project tasks, as CNR is an EU-FORA hosting site, and the good synergies with the network of EFSA Focal points.

Veronica also focused on how FS4EU would provide input for research needs, mostly by delivering the FS4EU Strategic & Innovation Agenda (expected to be released at the end of 2023). She explained that the agenda will be fed by four social labs, Food Safety Operational Labs, which will be activated on four food safety issues and composed by multi-stakeholder expert groups which will co-create input. Labs are built on the FS4EU hub strategy meaning that to ensure a good representation of the different geographical areas, the EU has been divided in four geographical hubs managed by a core group that takes care to catalyse experts from different areas in project activities and initiatives aimed at performing an analysis of the food system at EU and country level. All the outcomes of these activities are the background of the labs. In these labs there are multi-stakeholder expert groups which will co-create input for the agenda. These labs ensure a good representativeness of the geographical areas in which the EU has been divided (geographical hubs).

Veronica also informed participants that the final step of the project will be the creation of the EU Food Safety Forum, a permanent interface with fixed and ad-hoc appointments where stakeholders can meet, present, co-create outputs, to continue the work. Indeed, among the steps to reach the creation of the Forum, stakeholders involved in the project are also asked to set their rules for their permanent cooperation, through a Term of Reference, since as indicated in the call, the platform should be self-sustainable after the project life time.

In terms of what the consortium expects from EFSA, Veronica mentioned and praised the fruitful collaboration with FS4EU built on several aspects of the project, to keep sharing the vision and strategy of the Food Safety System of the future providing advice and input to drive the platform toward a permanent science-policy-society interface, and to support the path towards the EU Food Safety



Forum. To conclude, she also referred to the pre-forum⁵ designed to drive stakeholders toward the Food Safety Forum organised for the 15.12.2021 and EFSA will participate.

The Chair thanked Veronica by praising the work carried-out by the FS4EU consortium and the three layers set-up “to include, to shape and to act”. He also opened the discussion by giving the floor to Portugal (Portuguese Economy and Food Safety Authority - ASAE) as one of the beneficiaries of the project.

Action Point 4: MS invited to visit the FoodSafety4EU website⁶ and explore ways of cooperation.

➤ 5.1.C Discussion

Portugal took the floor thanking Veronica, the whole FS4EU consortium, for the collaboration, and EFSA, for the standing support in the project. She explained the task assigned to ASAE which is related to collaborate with food safety authorities in the hub. Filipa also referred to a recent workshop focused on defining the difference between risks and hazards, stressing the enhanced connection with different food safety authorities and the importance of developing new approaches to communicate, see and detect what is emerging as risk and as opportunity. She also highlighted that an added value of the project is the positive mindset and perspective adopted, considering strengths and opportunities as a new paradigm to look at the future.

France intervened inquiring what FS4EU expects from MS and how institutions which are not involved can become partners of the project. Veronica replied mentioning that additional partners (risk assessors, managers or communicators) are always welcome to join the consortium and that there are different possibilities to join depending on the type of involvement and policy of each organisation, set through a cooperation agreement. She also stressed that the aim of the project is to discuss all together at the same table but that each actor will be guided in the process according to the policy agreed.

The Chair took the floor asking Veronica how the endeavour of FS4EU can be made permanent and self-sustaining and which are the elements needed. Veronica outlined that the project is moving in two directions, a first one related to the definition of a business plan for the platform, which takes into consideration stakeholders, their needs and possible services and a second one, more practical, where FS4EU is joining as a platform other horizon Europe calls to drive research towards supporting regulatory science, particularly working on new technological processes on food safety. The mission of FS4EU is to help research from technological area to think about the regulatory framework.

The Chair stressed how this project fits very well in what we see as future, which is a food safety ecosystem with a variety of different actors. He also referred to the importance of finding the place in the ecosystem by best aligning it with other activities that are going on and will continue in the future.

The Chair closed the item.

■ 5.2 European Partnerships under Horizon Europe

➤ 5.2.A Introduction

The Chair gave the floor to Clémence Foltz (from the EFSA Chief Scientist Office (CSO) to briefly present what European R&I Partnerships under Horizon Europe are.

Clémence explained that, in these initiatives, the EU teams up with private and public partners and commits to jointly support the development and implementation of a programme of research and

⁵ <https://foodsafety4.eu/pre-forum/>

⁶ <https://foodsafety4.eu/>



innovation activities. She outlined the objectives and provided an overview of the current European R&I Partnerships that are of broad interest to EFSA and highlighted those relevant to EFSA's remit.

The Chair thanked Clemence for presenting the landscapes of R&I Partnerships and the pillars in which they are harboured, and proceeded to introduce Monique Axelos (INRAE-France), to present the main aim of the Safe and Sustainable Food Systems (SSFS) Partnership, a topic that has an utmost societal interest and will be a challenge in the years to come.

➤ 5.2.B Safe and Sustainable Food Systems Partnership preparations

Monique introduced the topic by giving some background information on the start of the partnership in 2019 - a Co-Creation process under the patronage of: DG-RTD, Standing Committee on Agricultural Research Food Systems Strategic Working Group (SCAR FS SWG), DG-SANTE and DG-AGRI.

She remarked that food is one of the central issues for the transition towards healthier, more sustainable, safer and fairer food systems; stressing that, although imperative, it is also complex due to the barriers to change built into social systems and the many interconnections with feedback loops resulting in unexpected consequences, synergies and trade-offs.

Monique further expanded by explaining what this R&I Partnership is about and how it can contribute to overcome the existing obstacles, thus aiming to collectively develop and implement an EU-wide mission-oriented R&I Partnership, to accelerate the transition towards safe and healthy diets sustainably produced in resilient EU and global food systems. To achieve this, four areas should be addressed: 1) a change in the way we eat, so to improve availability, affordability, and uptake of nutritious, safe, and sustainable diets; 2) a change in the way we process and deliver food, to increase the diversity of healthy and safe food products based on sustainable production from land and sea; 3) a change in the way we connect citizens and food production, improving citizen engagement and consumer trust in transparent EU food systems; and 4) a change in the way the food system is governed, so to support the use of evidence-based levers and steering mechanisms in local, regional, national and global transition pathways toward safe and sustainable, zero-waste food systems.

In order to pool resources and support the research community (coordination and programming), as well as support the research, innovation and knowledge transfer for impact, there are five interconnected activities: 1) co-fund competitive calls and funding mechanisms; 2) creation of a food System Observatory, a platform for sharing metrics, assessment of sustainability performance of food systems, and data; 3) establishment of a food system knowledge Hub, encompassing a network of transformative research and innovation labs (FS-labs) at transnational, national or subnational level; 4) creation of a vitrine with best practices, so to learn from initiatives in the SSFS and MS; and 5) facilitation of knowledge transfer, training and education, including science for policy advice.

Monique outlined that 'food safety' is a broad topic to cover, so interactions with other R&I Partnerships are foreseen. She finished her presentation outlining the potential contributions of the AF: 1) sharing the overall ambition and establish jointly a long-lasting and inclusive R&I Partnership to reach SSFS; 2) to be involved in the governance of the SSFS R&I Partnership through the "food systems community of practice/ambassadors" of the collaboration partner platform; 3) mobilizing (national/global) networks and actors; 4) helping in aligning research, innovation, policy and education (RIPE) priorities in food safety domain at EU-level and national level; 5) liaising with other stakeholders organizations; 6) participating in workshops to share information and data and alert to potential or emerging risks; and 7) supporting dissemination of relevant outcomes and collect feedback on potential outcomes.

➤ 5.2.C Discussion

The Chair opened the floor for discussion.

Denmark intervened by stressing the importance of the Green transition, but highlighting the need to take into account the relevance of the complementarity of the health part and the food safety one,



since neither should impair the other. It was underlined that partnerships were the way to proceed in order to succeed and achieve a high level of food safety and human health. The Chair supported the previous comments by highlighting how food safety represents the entry point of One Health and by mentioning the interlinks between food, health and sustainability in the context of the One Health discussion.

Ireland endorsed the comments from Denmark and from the Chair. She emphasised that the call to sustainable food systems is highly important and expressed concern that food safety is maybe being addressed in a way that is not necessarily as critically and with much investment and resources as it would be required. Ireland proceeded by asking about the timelines for the R&I Partnership to be launched. It was also questioned if there was any alignment among R&I Partnerships. Ireland referred on the need to maintain communication as this evolves, namely in what concerns the interaction with other R&I Partnerships.

Monique replied on the deadlines, with the launching foreseen for middle 2023 or beginning of 2024. On the links among R&I Partnerships she outlined the real need for securing the links among partnerships and exemplified connections already started to be made with the Partnerships PARC, One Health Antimicrobial Resistance, Animal Health and Welfare (PAHW), Biodiversity and the European R&I Partnership for a climate neutral sustainable and productive blue economy.

On this point, the Chair sought the views of DG-RTD and DG-SANTE on the interconnectivity between the different R&I Partnerships and how this could be handled from a governance point of view.

Although not working directly with R&I Partnerships, the DG-RTD representative acknowledged the efforts DG-RTD is doing in informally enhancing synergies among partnerships but indicated that there is no governance framework in place.

DG-SANTE representative outlined that the R&I Partnership on Safe and Sustainable Food Systems is already described in the F2F Strategy as an enabler. The way in which food safety is part of the R&I Partnership is indeed as a starting point for the innovative aspects that the R&I Partnership will address. He referred that food safety is not seen as a trade off in the context of the R&I Partnership or of the policy, in the sense that safety must come *a priori*.

Ireland intervened acknowledging the recognition that there are connections or potential connections with other R&I Partnerships ongoing or foreseen under Horizon Europe, but highlighted that there are some joint programming initiatives (JPI) that have already pulled in resources from MS. She asked for clarification on whether these existing or pre-existing R&I partnerships would become part of a broader ecosystem, as otherwise would be quite challenging for MS to fully engage with the foreseen future R&I Partnerships. She suggested EFSA to consider whether to establish an Advisory Forum Discussion Group on Research.

The Chair agreed that there are many interactions but outlined that the landscape is very complex.

Spain asked about the contact point in Spain so to contact them to be involved and contribute with one voice only. Monique informed that there is a SCAR member from Spain in the strategy working group and agreed to send this contact to the Spanish AF member.

The DG-AGRI representative intervened referring that the question about partnership landscape and JPI is transversal and under the responsibility of DG Research colleagues dealing with European Research Area (ERA). He highlighted that what is quite obvious is that the communication on the European research area and R&I, hardly has any reference to JPI. For the coordination among R&I Partnerships, he indicated that the dossier they have to build by the end of the year, for a Partnership planned to operate in 2024 will have to state to some extent how they intend to cooperate and interact with other R&I Partnerships. There will also be a coordination forum at EC level, managed by DG-RTD, with representatives from MS, to monitor all the R&I Partnerships. In addition, a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) needs to be developed for each partnership, which will have to include a whole section about interactions among partnerships. To a question about the duration of partnerships, DG-AGRI replied that it can be up to seven years. Replying to a question on the weight



of food safety in the planned partnership PAHW, DG-AGRI highlighted that PAHW will address microbiological hazards in live animals up to slaughter, but will not address further the food chain. A large number of zoonosis are not primarily transmitted by food.

Stef Bronzwaer asked MS to provide any feedback and welcomed AF members to discuss it further through *ad hoc* interactions, if considered.

The Chair gave the floor to Monique to conclude the session, who thanked EFSA and the Plenary for the input given during the discussion and for the further potential contributions.

Action Point 5: AF to provide written feedback on potential contributions and/or interest on the SSFS to AF Secretariat by 15 December (post-meeting note: **action point concluded**).

■ 5.3 Research planning cycle

➤ 5.3.A DG-RTD

The Chair introduced Linda Salamé (DG-RTD) to present the EC research and innovation framework and consultation structure with MS.

Linda started by explaining the framework of the EC research and innovation policy priorities.

Those R&I policy priorities are highlighted in various EC documents and one of them is the Food 2030 policy, the research and innovation policy to transform food systems. It is in line with, and supports, the goals of the European Green Deal and of the Farm to Fork strategy.

The policy adopts a systemic approach and thus covers the entire food system, linking multiple sectors and joining up research and innovation activities in different areas and across disciplines to find answers to interconnected challenges. The aim is to achieve a resilient food system fit for the future by providing co-benefits, i.e. to achieve jointly four key food and nutrition goals: 1) nutrition for sustainable and healthy diets; 2) climate smart and environmentally sustainable food systems; 3) circularity and resource efficiency; and 4) innovation and empowering communities.

The policy concentrates on ten pathways for action. Linda highlighted the 'Food safety systems of the future' pathway, which identifies key R&I leverage points for transitioning towards healthy and safe food systems. The pathway contributes to all 4 co-benefits.

She then explained how the Food 2030 policy is envisaged to translate into concrete actions. Funding will be made available under Horizon Europe, EU key research and innovation funding programme from 2021 to 2027, to support projects in line with Food 2030 R&I priorities.

Horizon Europe key strategic priorities are highlighted in documents called strategic plans. The strategic plan for the first four years of Horizon Europe is available [here](#). The second strategic plan will cover the period from 2025 to 2027 and has not been developed yet.

For each strategic plan, two Work Programmes are developed or will be developed. The Work Programmes incorporate the topics that have been or will be subject to calls for proposals.

The part of the Work Programme (WP) 2021-2022 related to 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment', is available at [this](#) link.

The development of the WP 2023-2024 started last summer, so the EC is currently fully engaged to work on the topics that will be included in this WP.

The DG-RTD representative then exposed the Plenary to some of the terminology used in Horizon Europe.

She highlighted two different ways of elaborating and funding topics:



- topics elaborated by EC services: this involves a co-creation process with different DGs and a consultation process of MS on the WP, through programme committee (PC) meetings with MS representatives. She also described the timeline of main steps for the elaboration of these topics for the WP 2023-2024. Topics are funded almost exclusively by the EC;
- topics elaborated and funded through partnerships between the EC and public and/or private partners. Discussions on the partnership take place within the SCAR strategic working groups.

The Chair thanked Linda for her presentation and explanations and introduced and gave the floor to Jean-Charles Cavitte (DG-AGRI), to present DG-AGRI priorities and the Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare.

➤ 5.3.B DG-AGRI

The DG-AGRI representative provided some insight on the relevant EU funding Research & Innovation landscape relevant to EFSA, focusing on livestock and health and welfare aspects. He emphasized how sustainable livestock systems bring many challenges which should be considered also as opportunities. He mentioned how DG-AGRI focuses on primary production, not as a silo, but in the context of the production chain considering issues related to economy, governance, etc. He summarised some of the challenges which are being tackled by the work programme of Horizon 2020 and now Horizon Europe, like emissions, alternative sources of protein, use of antimicrobials, animal health and welfare, breeding and genetics.

In terms of what is in the pipeline for the first two years of Horizon Europe (work-programme 2021-2022), the DG-AGRI representative showed through the slides a number of topics specifically relevant to livestock and relevant for EFSA's work, divided by "destination", which is a concept introduced in Horizon Europe work-programmes. He mentioned: (i) under Destination 1 on "Biodiversity and ecosystem services", a topic on resilient beekeeping; (ii) a number of topics are included in destination 2 "Sustainable food systems from farm to fork": animal welfare 2.0; vaccines and diagnostic; biosecurity in terrestrial livestock; ecology of infectious animal diseases; international research of infectious animal diseases; and (iii) under Destination 5 on "Land, ocean and water for climate action", a topic on Resilient livestock farming systems.

He then mentioned that for 2023-2024, there will be probably few, if any, topics for animal health and welfare, as the co-funded R&I Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare (PAHW) planned in the work programme 2023-2024, aims at covering virtually all R&I topics in the domain. The scope of the R&I Partnership is about animal infectious diseases, including impact on public health, and animal welfare. It covers all covering livestock (terrestrial and aquatic animals), wildlife and companion animals, where relevant. The aim is to reinforce preparedness against emerging threats, to promote animal welfare, to generate innovative methodologies with a better link with industry, to support evidence-based policy making, hence strengthening ERA and leverage resources in animal health and welfare.

It was mentioned that the content of the PAHW has been co-created under the umbrella of the SCAR Collaborative Working Group (CWG) on Animal Health and Welfare and the work of four working groups (WG): 1) a WG on surveillance (with participation from EFSA), 2) a WG on diagnostic, 3) a WG on farming practises, and 4) a WG on treatment and vaccines. There are also transversal working groups, as the one on AMR, on fish, with diverse affiliation of the people involved. He also informed that DG-AGRI is currently working on the "how" of PAHW, namely the governance structure of the activities.

On timelines, he highlighted that the draft on the partnership proposal (dossier for PAHW) should be submitted by the end of 2021 for review by DG-RTD. In parallel, the process of defining the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) will start to be concluded by end 2022. He also noted that following submission of the dossier on PAHW, MS and interested Associated countries (AC) will be consulted in January or February 2022 and those who want to co-fund the PAHW should provide their indicative commitment early 2022; he also stressed that the support of countries (funders) is



fundamental to make PAHW a reality. A possible governance scheme has been also presented and the agencies such as EFSA are foreseen to be an important stakeholder in the R&I Partnership.

When referring to the possible role of EFSA, he indicated how EFSA is already actively contributing in the stage of preparation, and how EFSA's contribution will also be important during the SRIA definition in 2022 and as well as in the implementation phase of the PAHW. Regarding the role of MS/AC, firstly he emphasized the importance of sharing such information at national level, making sure national organisations are vigilant, as there will be the circulation of the dossier and consultation with the countries on their level of commitment. Both research performing organisations and agencies who do not perform research can join the R&I Partnership.

The Chair thanked Jean-Charles for the comprehensive overview and introduced Luis Vivas-Alegre (DG-SANTE), who presented co-creation in practice providing a testimony to interaction between SANTE, as food safety policy DG, with RTD, AGRI and ENV as research and innovation policy DGs.

➤ 5.3.C DG-SANTE

The DG-SANTE representative started by emphasizing the changes brought by Horizon Europe compared to Horizon 2020 in terms of (i) synergies between research and innovation programmes and policy programmes in DG-SANTE as well, (ii) outcome driven approach and (iii) providing the opportunity of co-creation, as it gives DG SANTE and other DGs, the chance of developing the strategic programming, the work programmes, and, ultimately, the topics, contributing to first ideas. From that end, DG SANTE's main engagement in Horizon Europe is in cluster 1, "Health", co-chairing it, and in cluster 6, related to "Food, bioeconomy, natural resources agriculture and environment", whereby DG SANTE is an active participant in the co-creation.

Luis noted that the DG-SANTE Unit that follows the F2F strategy coordination and the development of some of the key activities in the legal framework for Sustainable Food Systems, and the Unit that coordinates with EFSA and research is the same one, and it tries to provide coherence to the elements in different fora of discussion. He also highlighted how Horizon Europe R&I Partnerships are a real opportunity for research, innovation and scientific capacity building at EU level in the areas promoted in clusters 1 and 6, and how DG-SANTE sees this as a mean to create expertise, to pay back to regulatory science, and the work of EU agencies and at MS level, giving a long-term dimension of the investment in Horizon Europe.

He concluded by highlighting that the engagement dimension which is important for DG SANTE and EFSA comes not only at the level of definition of priorities for the content but also at the level of access to the results. He noted that we need to ensure that EFSA and other scientific advising agencies are able to access results throughout the progress process, to support as much as possible a strong science based on up to date knowledge to support evidence-based policy.

The Chair thanked Luis Vivas-Alegre for the intervention, summarised the main aspects discussed and opened the floor for discussion.

➤ 5.3.D Discussion

The Netherlands intervened by raising a comment stressing that despite MS, Institutions and other organisations being involved in the research arena the actual role is the one played by individuals. To this end it is relevant to have individuals of the same organisation involved at different levels in order to keep an eye on ongoing activities but also to provide steering and advices where needed. Only in this way EFSA and MS can play a role.

The Chair emphasized the relevance of the comments raised by The Netherlands, particularly when coming to effectiveness of collective actions and make the most out of available resources for public health.



Ireland thanked EFSA for the interesting and informative thematic discussion and noted the real need for MS to understand how to plug in strategically in different research layers so to ensure a return on investment for regulatory science. She also referred to the value of FS4EU and the opportunity for MS to engage and contribute actively in this initiative, remarking the clear call for support made to MS. Ireland also raised a question on how MS can effectively come together so to influence the agendas and convey the regulatory science needs, thus helping the research community to translate research into meaningful output to feed our day to day work. She also made the proposal of setting up a discussion group (DG) with MS considering the relevance of the topics and the need to get involved at different levels.

Denmark supported the proposal of Ireland to set up a discussion group and foster the idea of getting involved in different research initiatives and at different levels. She also referred to the work of high-level expert groups as the International Platform for Food Systems Science (IPFSS), which aims at mapping what is ongoing in the quite fragmented policy interface, providing advice to the EC.

Hungary thanked EFSA for the thematic discussion noting the relevance of this topic. Hungary also addressed the paradigm how big breakthrough solutions came from very disruptive innovation, which are usually linked to “very high risk investments”, by asking if there is any strategy or funding mechanism at EU level which might tackle high-risk project proposals and ideas.

The DG-AGRI representative, in reply to Hungary, brought to the table the issue of the scarcity of resources, particularly in specific areas as for example Animal Health & Welfare. He also mentioned that the aim of setting up R&I Partnerships is also to deal with scarcity, one of the big challenges where the support of MS is fundamental. Moreover, the idea of fostering the link with industry as envisaged in the PAHW was further mentioned.

The DG-SANTE representative intervened by noting that R&I Partnerships discussed today under Horizon Europe are mainly dealing with global challenges and have been shaped with a co-creation approach which defines the challenges and main impacts. At the same time, Horizon Europe has also introduced the new European Innovation Council (EIC) and continues supports the European Research Council (ERC) Executive Agency, which provide a strong bottom-up approach and a kind of tool for “high-risk investment” in research and innovations driven by researchers themselves.

The Chair thanked all speakers and the AF for the fruitful discussion and provided a summary of the main points tackled. He noted the main objective of the session which was to raise awareness, have an overview on the research and innovation activities and how they are organised and provide concrete examples, also to leverage the contributions at MS and EU level. He also mentioned that EFSA will take up the proposal made by Ireland of a discussion group on research to regularly update the AF and also EFSA on relevant developments at EU level.

Action Point 6: EFSA to investigate creation of an AF DG on Research

6. Engagement & Communication update

The Co-Chair, Juliane Kleiner, gave the floor to Barbara Gallani, to provide an overview of recent communications and engagement initiatives, covering hot topic calls, the result of EFSA campaigns and activities on bees and the EU FOR A calls.

Barbara informed the Plenary about latest media highlights and hot topic calls in Q4; the latter aimed at ensuring preparedness and alignment with MS in the communication initiatives and messages related to high-profile and sensitive issues. The last hot topic call of the year is expected to cover BPA, as the draft opinion has been endorsed by the CEP Panel in November and a Public consultation is planned to be launched on the 15 December accompanied by a stakeholder workshop.



On the 2021 #EUChooseSafeFood campaign, Barbara briefly reminded the objectives, MS involvement, and visuals, stressing the underlying principle of partnerships represented by the coexistence of the EFSA logo and the logo of the national authorities in the localised assets and campaign website. The fundamental role of the FP and CEN was noted, in particular regarding the decisions on assets, dissemination plans and engagement with stakeholders.

Barbara presented some preliminary figures on the campaign activities including the results of paid adverts, Instagram feeds and stories, and tweets, highlighting the successful outcome of the campaign in terms of interactions. 73 M impressions on material shared were recorded; 17 M views on the videos and 154.5 M impressions on social media. Part of the campaign was about engaging with stakeholders, an exercise which revealed to be, in terms of numbers, very successful, with a total of 102 stakeholder organisations engaged over the course of the campaign. For 2022, 12 MS have expressed an interest and the finalisation of the nature of the interactions is currently ongoing.

Regarding the Engagement initiatives on bees, Barbara informed the Plenary about the publication of the technical reports on neonicotinoids emergency authorisations and related public info session held on 30 November, with participations of more than 70 stakeholders. She noted that the same approach of making use of a workshop will be adopted with BPA.

She informed the Plenary about the EU Pollinator Week 2021 event; the EFSA/ECHA science session on bee health attended by more than 170 participants online; and the info session on the bee guidance document, which took place on 15 November.

On bees, Barbara also touched upon the activities of the EU Bee Partnerships, an initiative launched in 2019 following a direct request from the EP to support data harmonisation with regard to bees. She briefly outlined the EUPBP data platform prototype, which is foreseen to be fully operational as of 2023 to support the effort to protect bee and pollinator health.

To conclude, Barbara updated the Plenary on the new EU-FORA Programme, reminding MS about the calls for selection of hosting sites and fellows (deadline: 18.03.2022), and for the selection of a contractor for the organisation and delivery of trainings (deadline: 17.02.2022). Barbara also informed the Plenary about the ENCO/FIN info session planned for 15 December aimed at providing clarifications on the calls; she also highlighted the key role of MS, particularly of the FPs, in disseminating this information at national level.

The Chair thanked Barbara for the presentation and closed the item.

Action Point 7: MS (AF & FP) to support wide dissemination of new EU-FORA calls.

7. Risk Assessment activities

■ 7.1 - EFSA One Health WGS System - interaction with EU/EEA countries

The Co-Chair gave the floor to Mirko Rossi (BIOCONTAM Unit) for the presentation of the 'One Health Whole Genome Sequencing System' (WGS).

He provided background information on the EFSA One Health WGS System, explaining that the system has been developed by EFSA as the response to the EC mandate for the collection of WGS data of foodborne pathogens isolated from food, feed, animals, and the farm and food processing environment. The aim was to provide a single repository and collection point of WGS data of isolates of non-human origin to be used by EFSA, ECDC and the Member States as a supporting tool for the rapid detection of multi-country foodborne outbreaks.

He proceeded by informing the Plenary that the food and veterinary users from EU/EEA countries are invited to submit WGS data on a voluntary basis for the purpose of molecular surveillance and continuous monitoring of foodborne pathogens, and for supporting the investigation of foodborne



events. Two types of users at country level are defined: 'Country Officer', with coordination tasks, and 'Data Provider', with tasks related to data submission and analysis. Country Officers can access the data submitted by any user of his/her country, while Data Providers can access the data submitted by any user of his/her organisation.

Mirko informed that on 10th November 2021, EFSA presented to food safety competent authorities at the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed section Biological Safety of the Food Chain (PAFF-BSFC), a proposal for the procedure of the nomination of the users for the EFSA One Health WGS system. Briefly, food safety competent authorities should nominate one 'Country Officer', who should identify the data provider organisations. Representatives of the identified organisations should nominate one or multiple 'Data Provider' users for their organisation. Since the data type to be submitted to the EFSA One Health WGS system falls within the remit of the EFSA's Network on Zoonosis Monitoring Data (Zoonoses Network), EFSA is suggesting the EU/EEA countries to assign the role of the 'Country Officer' to the Reporting officer of Zoonoses Network.

Mirko expanded by explaining the reasons behind the suggestion for the appointment of experts from the Zoonosis Network as Country Officer and the expected deadlines for each of the next steps in the procedure.

He concluded his presentation highlighting that the coordination at national level to ensure involvement of all relevant actors is paramount. Interactions between Advisory Forum and national food safety competent authorities would be beneficial, and the alignment with EFSA's FPs recommended.

The Co-Chair thanked Mirko and opened the floor for questions.

The Netherlands stressed its support to the system but suggested the name to be changed to 'Next generation Sequencing' instead of WGS as in the future it will uptake also targeted regions of DNA and RNA. Mirko answered that EFSA would take into consideration the suggestion of the name.

Finland questioned if the Country Officer could be someone from, for example, a laboratory as the task is quite technical.

Mirko replied that MS were to decide who they nominate. He outlined that EFSA just suggested the nomination of the Reporting officer of Zoonoses Network as 'Country Officer' namely, to reassign the people in the networks that already engage in data collections. He highlighted that the function was not so technical but more of coordination so to identify the correct organisations enabled to submit data. The reasoning behind is to have someone able to clearly interact with the food safety/veterinary authorities which provide the data. In an outbreak investigation, traceability data, which is handled by food safety authorities through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), are used. Indeed, the idea is to have a connection between the laboratory owning the data and the food safety authorities handling them through RASFF.

Juliane closed the session by stressing the importance of this system and of the engagement of countries, which is crucial to make the database useful by properly populating it with WGS data.

■ 7.2 - EFSA Mandates, upcoming Public Consultations, MS RA Plans

The Co-Chair took the floor together with Guilhem de Seze to highlight key RA activities particularly MS RA Plans covering the last quarter (07.10.2021-11.11.2021) and upcoming public consultations.

On MS mandates, Guilhem noted particular EFSA interest on six mandates: a mandate on the assessment of giant hornets from Asia (from Norway), relevant to EFSA in the context of the EFSA work on bees and other pollinators; a mandate on the screening of possible endocrine disrupting chemicals related to food evaluation of their estro/androgenic activity and dietary intake assessment (from Belgium), relevant as DG-ENVIRONMENT is now revising the CLP regulation; a mandate on the safety associated with cannabis edibles (from Ireland), highlighted as EFSA is interested in the outcome as there is a number of applications on CBD for assessment; and three mandates from



Belgium in the area of food ingredients and packages, in particular one on physicochemical characterization and exposure analysis of the fraction of engineered nanomaterials in food additives.

On MS activities, Juliane noted a project on combined exposure to multiple mycotoxins submitted by Italy and a mandate on assessing the confidence in pest freedom gained in the pas pine wood nematode surveys from Finland.

On public consultation, Guilhem noted two ongoing public consultations on phthalates, with deadline 16th of December, one related to the identification and prioritization for risk assessment of phthalates and another one on the protocol for dietary exposure assessment of prioritised substances. He also informed the Plenary that a consultation on Bisphenol A is planned to be launched in mid-December. On the latter, he stressed the pre-notification to MS and the public consultation, to remain open until January 2022, when EFSA plans to have an engagement event with MS and stakeholder. Publication of the opinion is expected for end 2022.

On other activities, Juliane highlighted the "EFSA Scientific Colloquium 26 on Risk Benefit Assessment (RBA) of combined exposure to nutrients and contaminant through food" taking place on the 15-17 February 2022 in hybrid format in Brussels (deadline for registration: 10.01.2022). The discussion and key outcomes of the colloquium will help to inform the future update of the EFSA Scientific Committee's guidance on RBA from 2010.

Due to time constrains, Juliane Kleiner informed the Plenary that the update on the new topics for the Scientific Committee work programme will be moved to the next meeting of the Advisory Forum.

The Co-Chair closed the item as no questions were raised by the Plenary.

Action Point 8: EFSA to provide an update on the new topics for the Scientific Committee work programme during the first meeting 2022.

8. Any Other Business

■ **8.1 – Meetings 2022**

The Chair gave the floor to Sergio Potier Rodeia who informed the participants about upcoming AF meetings in 2022.

■ **8.2 – Season's greetings & closure of the meeting**

Before closing the meeting, the Chair summarized the main action points agreed during the two-day AF session and thanking participants for their contributions and productive meeting. The Chair, jointly with EFSA management and the AF Secretariat, dedicated a farewell moment to Juliane Kleiner, Head of EFSA's Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance Department (RASA), and wished all AF members and Observers Season's Greetings and a Happy and Safe 2022.

LIST OF ACTION ITEMS

Ref	Who	Agenda topic	What
Action 1	AFDGoFoP	2.2 – Update from the AF Discussion Group on the Future of Partnerships	to continue exploring modalities of (institutional) Partnerships



Action 2	EFSA	2.3 - Update on MS Publication Taskforce	to provide written feedback after the meeting on the questions raised by MS (post-meeting note: action point concluded -See Annex I for more information)
Action 3	EFSA	3.Focal Point Review: way forward	to launch a call for EoI to join the AF Steering Group on FP Review including a reviewed retroplanner (post-meeting note: action point concluded)
Action 4	AF	5.1.B FoodSafety4EU (FS4EU)	invited to visit the FoodSafety4EU website and explore ways of cooperation.
Action 5	AF	5.2.B Safe and Sustainable Food Systems R&IPartnership preparations	to provide written feedback on potential contributions and/or interest to AF Secretariat by 15 December (post-meeting note: action point concluded)
Action 6	EFSA	5.3 Research planning cycle	to investigate the creation of an AF DG on Research
Action 7	MS (AF&FP)	6. Engagement & Communication update	to support a wide dissemination of new EU-FORA calls.
Action 8	EFSA	7.2 - EFSA Mandates, upcoming Public Consultations, MS RA Plans	to provide an update on the new topics for the Scientific Committee work programme during the first meeting 2022.



Annex I

Follow up on questions raised during discussion of Agenda item 2.3

1. Duplicate publication

Duplicate publication is primarily concerned with submitting research results to multiple peer reviewed research journals. This is not the case with this proposal. If you own the copyright to your own work (which I am sure all agencies do), you have full control of where you publish, when you publish etc.

Even if you assign copyright to a publisher for a research article, the authors can retain copyright, publish a preprint or publish the final version in an institutional repository. The vast majority of publishers are compliant with this approach, including Wiley.

Scientific publishing is becoming much more liberal in this regard driven by the fact that research is funded by the public purse and should be publicly available. We should align and exploit the opportunities this provides.

2. Would a national assessment/opinion be amended in any way by EFSA?

In short, no. EFSA will not amend or review the content in any way. EFSA can assign and register DOIs, provide an English abstract, standardized metadata etc. but we would publish exactly as provided. The key added value is aggregation of the content from MSs to provide a searchable and visible resource for the community and its scientists.

3. Would the national assessment/opinion be published first on the website of a national agency?

Yes, it would then be sent to EFSA to add to the Member State channel. This is analogous to publishing a dataset on your national website and then sending it to central EU open data repositories where it can benefit the wider community.

4. Use of commercial publishers in this context?

Working with commercial publishers has obvious practical benefits but can bring reputational baggage and dependencies if not managed properly. On the other hand, building a customised platform from scratch is expensive and risky, with little guarantee of success. As long as you have full control over your own content (which EFSA does), leveraging existing technology makes sense. This is very much in line for example with the Commission approach in building the Open Research Europe portal with F1000 (Taylor & Francis). Being clear on what your priorities are is crucial.

5. Overlap with the Knowledge Junction

Member States have indeed started to publish some "grey literature" on the Knowledge Junction but the feedback we have received is that it has little impact. The technology underpinning Zenodo, the hosting platform, is designed for datasets, not publications hence the poor usage, visibility, impact for publications.

6. Translation of full assessment/opinions rather than just abstracts

This would be ideal but realistically difficult to achieve. An English language abstract will get the article indexed in scientific databases, which are important for the food safety community. Automatic translation tools are now readily available and have improved considerably (especially the so-called neural tools) so they could be deployed to get an entry point into the document.



General comment

Many of the more detailed issues raised are operational in nature and, as indicated can be addressed by an operational Working Group, provided the Forum is in agreement with the strategic direction.