European Food Safety Authority

ENGAGEMENT & EXTERNAL RELATIONS UNIT

Final Minutes

84th MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

Meeting details

Venue: Virtual meeting, Teams

Meeting dates and hours:

08.06.2022, 9:30 – 13:00

09.06.2022, 9:30 – 13:00

Members	
Austria (AT)	Klemens Fuchs
Belgium (BE)	Fabien Bolle Axel Mauroy
Bulgaria (BG)	Iliyan Kostov
Croatia (HR)	Andrea Gross - Bošković
Cyprus (CY)	Charitini Frenaritou Stelios Yiannopoulos
Czech Republic (CZ)	Jitka Götzová
Denmark (DK)	Christine Nellemann
Estonia (EE)	Mari Reinik Piret Prisalu
Finland (FI)	Pia Mäkelä
France (FR)	Matthieu Schuler Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Nicole Gollnick
Greece (EL)	Stavros Zannopoulos Foteini Tzoumanika
Hungary (HU)	Akos Jóźwiak
Iceland (IS)	Hrönn Ólína Jörundsdóttir
Ireland (IE)	Pamela Byrne Wayne Anderson
Italy (IT)	Pierdavide Lecchini Alessandra Perella
Latvia (LV)	Vadims Bartkevics
Lithuania (LT)	Deimante Bykneirite
Luxembourg (LU)	Marc Fisher
Malta (MT)	Ingrid Busuttil
Netherlands (NL)	Antoon Opperhuizen Dick Sijm
Poland (PL)	Jacek Postupolski
Portugal (PT)	Pedro Portugal Gaspar Filipa Melo de Vasconcelos
Romania (RO)	Monica Neagu (1st attendance at AF)
Slovak Republic (SK)	Mylo Bystricky Katarina Kromerová

Slovenia (SI)	Urška Blaznik
Spain (ES)	Isabel Peña Rey Icíar Fierros Sánchez-Cuenca
Sweden (SE)	Cecilia Hultén
Observers & Other Participants	
Albania (AL)	Denisa Bundo (1st attendance at AF)
Iceland (IS)	Hrönn Ólína Jörundsdóttir
Kosovo[1]	Kujtim Uka
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Nikolche Babovski Svetlana Tomeska Mickova
Montenegro (ME)	Ana Velimirovic
Norway (NO)	Harald Gjein Danica Grahek-Ogden
Serbia (RS)	Tamara Bošković
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
European Commission – DG SANTE (Observer)	Alexandra Tuijtelaars
European Commission – DG-SANTE (Observer)	Fatima Darago
Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) (guest speaker)	Carsten Kneuer
Warsaw University of Technology - Faculty of mathematics and information science (guest speaker)	Radoslaw Pytlak
d-fine GmbH (guest speaker)	Todor Dobrikov
Jožef Stefan Institute (guest speaker)	Tome Eftimov

EFSA Representatives	
Bernhard Url (Chair)	George Kass
Barbara Gallani (Co-Chair)	Maria-Christina Andersen
Juliane Kleiner (Co-Chair)	Vos Sybren
Guilhem de Seze	Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Claudia Heppner	Maria Azevedo Mendes (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Victoria Villamar	Plamen Panayotov (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Didier Verloo	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 84th Advisory Forum (AF) meeting. The Chair particularly welcomed:

[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. Monica NEAGU – new **AF Member** for **Romania** – (The National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority of Romania), replacing **Simona Rădulescu**.
- Ms. Denisa BUNDO – new AF Observer Alternate for **Albania** (Inspector in Technical Assistance and Training Sector, National Food Authority) replacing **Pamela Radovani.**

The Chair congratulated the following participants for their recent appointment to the EFSA Management Board:

- Ms Pamela Byrne – AF Member for Ireland, (Mr Wayne Anderson, current AF alternate will take over the role of AF member as of the 9th of June) – formal communication received
- Mr Stelios Yiannopoulos – AF member for Cyprus - formal communication received
- Ms Isabel Peña-Rey Lorenzo – AF alternate for Spain
- Ms Ingrid Borg – AF member for Malta
- Ms Jitka Gotzova – AF member for Czech Republic
- Mr Pierdavide Lecchini - AF member for Italy

The Chair also welcomed:

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

Under AOB, NL asked to inform the Plenary about the publication of the report on the revised dietary reference values for energy, otherwise known as the reference values for daily calorie intake, from the Health Council of the Netherlands. EFSA add the item in the agenda.

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

- the minutes of the 83rd AF Forum have been shared with the AF for consultation on the 01.06.2022 (deadline: 15 June) inviting Member States (MS) to provide comments.
- 5 Action Items out of the 8 agreed at the previous meeting were implemented.
- 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 the AF Discussion Groups – Part 1

2.1 - Proposal for the new FP operational framework

The Chair gave the floor to Antoon Opperuizen (NL) and Barbara Gallani, co-chairing the Advisory Forum Steering Group on the new FP operational framework (AFSG), to outline the proposal for the new FP operational framework and proposed way forward.

Antoon first referred to the intense work carried-out by the AFSG during past months and thanked the Member States (MS) and EFSA staff for the commitment and support in building the new FP operational framework. He then provided an overview on the journey of the Group, from its establishment in December 2021 and the nine meetings organised from February until June 2022 during which the AFSG defined the main features of the FP framework. He also stressed that the framework is subject to the endorsement of the AF and that, following the Plenary, EFSA with support of MS will detail the agreements. The planning exercise and signature of the contracts is scheduled for October-November with the entry into force of the new framework as of the 1st of January 2023.

He reminded the AF about the strategic orientation of the new framework which was already endorsed during the 83rd AF meeting. He noted the opportunities and ambitions for EFSA and the MS brought by the Transparency Regulation and how the new framework for the FP fit within this context. He also

emphasized how, due to limited capacity and resources, there is the need to make a shift towards a new model of FP intended as connecting hubs and a FP function.

Antoon then presented the core of the proposal, a model that is multiannual, flexible and tailor-made, giving the MS the possibility to choose activities in line with their priorities. The financial instrument will be a framework partnership agreement lasting for a period of 4 years. Antoon explained that the principal and tailor-made activities will be choice-based and that they will be implemented within different timeframes in the context of the 4-year agreement; principal activities, with a stable list through the framework, with implementation period of one year, and tailor-made activities with specific timelines, with possibility to subscribe to them at a later stage or to change them. He also explained that some of the principal activities would have the possibility of sub-contracting. For tailor-made activities – implemented with different grant agreements – Antoon clarified that not all countries have to participate to the same extent.

Antoon also presented the five overarching areas of work under which activities will be implemented: 1) knowledge and information management and support to scientific production, 2) engagement, collaboration and partnerships, 3) capacity building, 4) data, 5) risk communication. The five areas were identified by the AFSG and agreed on the 1st June.

Regarding the retro planner following the AF Plenary, Antoon noted that the detailing and finalisation of the new FP activities will occur in the period June-August, followed by the finalisation of the agreements in September. As of October-November, EFSA will start the planning exercise, leading to the signature of the agreements for the new FP agreement cycle. In terms of engagement activities, EFSA plans a standing meeting with the AFSG and ad hoc meetings if considered useful– in July and September – and weekly meetings with the FP during the months of June-July and August.

Barbara thanked the AFSG members and the EFSA team for the contribution and support in the work carried-out during past months. She also stressed the importance of AF and FP participation to bring MS perspective in the discussion on the new framework.

The Chair thanked Antoon and Barbara and opened the floor for comments.

Denmark positively welcomed the presented framework and emphasized how the work carried out together with EFSA allowed a better understanding of EFSA's ambitions and vision on the FP as well as to bring MS perspectives and needs at the core of the new model. She also stressed how the new framework will make EFSA closer to the MS and will also foster cooperation between MS.

Hungary thanked Antoon and the AFSG for the positive outcome of the work and focused on the strong connection between the new FP framework and the activities of the Advisory Group on Data (AGoD). He praised the shift in a new direction, which fosters the opportunities for collaboration on data related projects.

Barbara noted that the new framework will represent a shift towards a more consolidated collaboration with the MS also in the context of risk communication.

France thanked Antoon for leading the AFSG and the MS and EFSA for the work carried out. He also stressed how the AFSG led to a better mutual understanding of the expectations and constrains, which exist both at MS and EU level. He supported the new framework and praised its flexibility as it is able to address MS capacity in resources as well as to tackle MS needs.

The Chair thanked Antoon and the AFSG for the work carried out. He emphasized how the new model will allow structure and predictability to the planning but also flexibility, which is what MS-EFSA need to meet future needs. He also highlighted what the TR called for, which is an enhanced engagement with the MS to pave the way for more collaboration in the RA field, building expertise and scientific evidence to inform policy decisions.

Antoon commented that the way of working of the AFSG allowed MS to bring their perspectives, needs and ambitions to the table with the aim to co-create and co-shape a framework, which would fit both EFSA and MS needs. The Chair agreed with Antoon on the importance of setting common grounds and objectives for discussion, in line with EFSA's partnership strategy.

The Chair asked the Plenary to endorse the proposal for the new FP operational framework and proposed way forward, which includes the AFSG to continue its work (on need basis) until October. The Plenary endorsed the proposal with no objections.

2.2 - AF Discussion Group on the Future of Partnerships

The Chair gave the floor to Salma Elreedy (FR) and to Victoria Villamar, co-chairing the Discussion Group on the Future of Partnerships (AFDGFoP), to inform the Plenary about the timeline of the AFDGFoP, the FP thematic discussion on "Strengthening the role of the FPs in fostering Partnerships", and the AFDGFoP output.

Salma introduced the presentation by providing an overview on the timeline of meetings and activities of the Group. She then outlined next steps until the October AF meeting when the AFDGFoP will conclude its work and final deliverable. Salma then debriefed the Plenary on the discussion which occurred during the 7th Meeting, held in April, which had focused on two main topics: 1) the model of EU reference centres on animal welfare as possible source of inspiration for partnerships and 2) the preparation for the thematic discussion on "Strengthening the role of the FPs in fostering partnerships" organised during the 48th FP meeting in May.

Salma gave the floor to Victoria, who debriefed the Plenary about the outcome of the discussion occurred during the 48th Focal Point meeting (18-19/05/2022). A discussion session focused on identifying the opportunities and the constrains regarding the enhancement of the FP's role – intended as connecting hubs - in supporting Partnerships. Among different initiatives proposed by the FPs, Victoria mentioned 1) the FP support in the preparation and launch of calls and the possibility for EFSA to provide guidelines and toolkits to facilitate this task 2) the FP support in the identification of organisations and importance to support FP with information on partners and competences in different remits, 3) the FP support in recurring activities, such as the ones linked to the Art. 36 organisations, and 4) the establishment of a partner search facility to enable consortium building, the latter being also at the core of the EFSA Strategy 2027.

Victoria also stressed how the discussion held in the context of the AFDGFoP and 48th FP meeting will feed the new framework of the Focal Point Network. She then passed the floor to Salma who concluded the presentation by outlining the structure of the final document of the AFDGFoP, to be drafted in the coming months.

The document will describe the vision for Partnerships and provide input that will fall under three broad thematic areas: 1) the opportunities for joint planning of work; 2) the steps that can further enhance ecosystem interactions, including the identification of new expertise in organisations and individuals; 3) the mechanism that can support the cooperation under Partnerships projects.

The Chair thanked Salma and Victoria for the presentation and opened the floor for discussion.

Matthieu Schuler (FR) expressed his appreciation to the idea of FPs assuming a role of intermediary in enhancing Partnerships and investigating possible organisational approaches. He then emphasized how the FP network is bringing to the agencies the opportunity to cooperate, connect and network with new actors. Matthieu stressed the importance of joint work planning in risk assessment but also noted its complexity. The difficulties in joint planning must be looked at in more detail so as to understand what may hide behind in order to overcome them.

Bernhard supported France's intervention and noted how Partnerships are distinguished by a long-term cooperation dimension, based on trust and joint objectives with mutual value and shared risks and benefits. To this end, Partnerships are a step further compared to doing cooperation since they envisage an element of co-creation, joint investment and joint risk. Building partnerships takes time, trust, planning and predictability and EFSA is trying to approach it from different angles as through the data working group, SPIDO and the new FP network intended as enabler.

Denmark praised the effort made in ensuring transparency and engagement in the Partnerships initiative. She encouraged MS to embrace the challenge of building Partnerships, despite the possibility

to encounter difficulties and bottlenecks along the journey. In reply to this comment, the Chair acknowledged the complexity but also reassured MS that technical means will be available to facilitate Partnerships. Germany raised a comment regarding work carried out by the different discussion groups and stressed how the joint work of AF and FPs demonstrates the value of such kind of cooperation also for future discussions.

3. Thematic Discussion on Systematic Literature Review and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Co-Chair, Barbara Gallani, provided an overview of the structure of the session starting from: 1) the introduction and overview of the journey on Systematic Literature Review (SLR), delivered by Didier Verloo (Head of the Knowledge Organisation and Partnership unit (KNOW); 2) the application of systematic literature review in NAMs, by Carsten Kneuer from the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, and Todor Dobrikov, from 'd-fine GmbH '; 3) the path from Language Models to Food Semantic Resources, by Tomy Eftimov, from the Joseph Stefane institute; and 4) a presentation of a project from Poland and Norway on Machine Learning-based system for the automation of systematic literature reviews in food safety domain, by Radoslav Pytlak from the Warsaw university of Technology.

The Co-Chair handed over the floor to Didier.

3.1 - Where we are and how we can jointly progress

Didier provided an overview of the SLR in the Risk Assessment process and the use of AI in automation and the current state of play. He referred to the previous Advisory Forum meeting where there was a discussion related to SPIDO where the use of AI and automation was mentioned. He also noted the discussion on Systematic Review, related to the Scientific Committee workplan, which led to this thematic discussion.

An overview was given on role of SLR in Risk Assessment as a transparent and reproducible process to deal with data coming from literature. This followed by the evolution of SLR and the use its key principles in the use of evidence in the RA process. The thematic discussion finally conclude with opportunities for automation with examples brought by the Member States by showing examples on application of automation of SR projects and Barbara concluded with the discussion and next steps.

The role of Systematic Review in Risk Assessment

Didier noted that Risk Assessment is triggered from a mandate, coming from a Risk Management/client and gives the RA specific terms of reference and delivery deadline. It is a decision-supported process. There is a planning phase dealing with the terms or the questions need to be answered. During the planning and formulation phase the questions are broken down to sub-questions that need to be parametrised and where the methods and needs of the RA are determined. SLR is a way to parametrise sub-questions, but the origin of the data comes from literature. By design SLR has a plan phase followed by an execution phase where the RA is executed according to plan.

As a final step in the RA process, there is a reporting phase providing the outcome of the risk assessment, including as much as possible the documentation related to the planning and data used.

Didier went on by focusing on Systematic Review namely how it became part of the Risk Assessment process and how the risk assessment and logical landscape changed over the years and it is still evolving.

For the ease of reference, Didier guided the Plenary through the main points that he would cover during his presentation, namely:

- The guidance and particularly the systematic review 2010

- The implementation Framework and the methodological approaches in evidence use 2014 -
- The process Integration - Quality PDCA cycle 2018 and End to End science 2019
- The Process Digitalisation and the customer relationship and business process management 2021
- The future and the robotic process automation 2020 – 2027

3.2 - Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for extracting and integrating data obtained through New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) for chemical risk assessment (AI4NAM)

Carsten introduced himself to the Plenary as the Head of unit for Toxicology of active substances, Department of Pesticides Safety in BfR. He started by noting that performing a full systematic literature search and appraisal engages a lot of resources and can already today be a challenge to perform and finalise it in the deadlines set by the EU legislation when it comes to data rich substances. As more data is being accumulated and we are moving towards an increasing use of new approach methodologies to replace, refine and reduce animal testing or to better inform risk assessment in other ways, the amount of information to be processed is expected to multiply. Noting that therefore the implementation of new enabling technology is needed to support the successful integration of NAMs in chemical risk assessment, he then set the scene for Todor to present the EFSA-funded project "Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for extracting and integrating data obtained through New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) for chemical risk assessment'' – the project has started at the beginning of the year.

Todor took over the floor to present the concept of the project and first results.

He explained that the project is carried out by a consortia of three partners (d-fine, BfR, Wageningen University and Research). He explained that in 'd-fine' they are responsible mainly for the technological part of the projects, the technical capabilities of the tools and the AI aspects, while BfR concentrates on the Risk Assessment part of the project and Wageningen contributes with their expertise on NAMs.

He explained that the project is divided in three phases or work packages – review, face prototyping and outlook.

The first phase (A) that was already completed was the review phase focusing on the review of all state of the art or actively developed AI tools and their specific capability of application to an extended systematic review workflow, entailing i) search an extraction of data, ii) harmonisation and pre-validation and then iii) the integration of the data for individual key events eventually leading to or supporting AOP like networks. In relation to the deliverables, he explained that the overview of tools is available as is the initial assessment considering two factors: AI capacity and scientific capabilities.

The next phase (B) is the prototyping and concerns verifying the exploration of the tools in practice by applying them in real-life scenarios. Here he explained that together with EFSA a selection of representative case studies and tools is made and executed based on study protocols.

The last phase (C), outlook, refers to the results from the prototyping phase, the evaluation and documentation of the lessons learned. It is also the repository and documentation of which tools have been assessed and how they performed in real-world conditions.

The ultimate goal of the project is to have the systematic exploration of the potential of these tools and to collect and integrate all the data currently available with the purpose of supporting better the risk assessment process, while at the same time reducing the testing on animals.

Todor explained that in Phase B of the project, selected AI tools and methods are applied on NAM data in the three-step workflow that was already mentioned.

In the first step of Search and extraction two types of data are processed: structured one (e.g. ToxCast) containing numerical information or text that is presented in a structured way and unstructured data, i.e. free text data from scientific publications.

The second step of the workflow is Harmonisation and Pre-validation. This includes harmonisation of all the different terminology (e.g. for substances, biological processes or effects) and normalisation of units (e.g. dosages and volumes). When referring to the second aspect of pre-validation of NAM data, Carsten highlighted the importance of assessing the risk of bias and the option for cross-validation of results between studies.

The last part of the workflow is Integration of the acquired data. The ultimate goal is to have an integration of NAM-data into AOP-like networks. Todor explained that while not part of the project the work performed would also lead to some input that has implications on the EFSA roadmap and how this topic is strategically seen as a whole as a result from the project.

Todor then presented the overview of the initial evaluation of tools according to different roles and dimensions that was completed in work-package A. The results were visualised using a heat-map, demonstrating that different tools typically support different workflow steps. The visualisation also made apparent that combinations of tools will be needed to support the entire workflow and may be useful also for the same work-step to optimise the outcome. Thus, for the next phase the most promising tools will be taken, and a chain will be built from them.

For this prototyping phase, 12 potential case studies each with a different focus were developed by the Consortium. From the 12 proposals, EFSA selected 6 cases to be taken forward for implementation as follows, belonging to different stressor groups, having various scientific complexity and data richness and exploring different workflow steps.

The case studies focus on the following topics:

- Pyrethroids causing neurotoxicity
- Bisphenols
- Cumulative liver toxicity
- Phthalates
- High potency polychlorinated dibenzodioxins and -furanes
- Hypothyroidism

In work package C (starting next year) an overall evaluation will take place and a proposal of recommendations for EFSA's SPIDO NAMs and AI roadmaps will be performed. Carsten also explained that an update of reviews of the AI tools performed in the first part of the project will be provided as well as a compilation of a digital list of AI tools for NAMs, including a set of relevant information characterising the tools and software.

On the second part of the output, Carsten referred to a proposal of recommendations and of development options or priorities for the use of AI to search, extract, harmonise, pre-validate and integrate NAMs data and to support of the implementation of the SPIDO NAMs and AI roadmaps

The Chair opened the floor for questions.

The Netherlands raised a question asking whether the OECD QSAR Toolbox was considered as it is important to connect with existing databases and add to it as much as possible to have one overall system.

Carsten replied positively to the question confirming that they are considering QSAR based predictions as a source of data to be extracted and collected into a harmonised template. What has not been considered is the QSAR toolbox as such as a source of structured NAM data. Instead ToxCast and Pubchem have been used for the purpose.

3.3 - Towards Food and Health Knowledge Graphs: From Language Models to Food Semantic Resources (CAFETERIA)

The Chair invited Tome Eftimov to provide an overview on their work "Towards food and health knowledge graphs: from language models to food semantic resources".

He noted the collaborative work with EFSA on the project "Cafeteria". Bringing semantic resources, consisting of data examples that would provide AI to learn. The work focuses on textual data.

He provided an example with food consumption data and food composition data that can be normalised, linked together and presented as a graph. However, such structured data has a weakness that it is utilising only existing data. There is a need to update and dynamically trace all information related to food that is published in scientific abstracts and to use this information to make knowledge and how to make predictive healthcare.

When referring to language technologies and decision support, he went to provide an overview of how the entire AI process works – in the presence of textual date first is to extract the entities and concepts of interests, to normalise the standard to a semantic model, data examples are needed for AI to learn to extract relations between them such as how to treat them, cause, negative or positive relations. Then, further data examples are being created called (semi) automatic knowledge base construction, structured knowledge and question answering, and decision support stage is reached for AI to learn.

In reference to Information Extraction (IE) and what the "CAFETERIA" project looks like, Tome provided an example on Named-Entity Recognition (NER) and Named-Entity Linking (NEL) and extracting and linking entities (e.g. association of heart disease linked to excessive salt).

He then further provided an overview of the state of AI in the biomedical domain – genotype and phenotype information, disease and treatments, family history data, electronic health and insurance data etc.

He then moved to provide an overview of the "CAFETERIA" pipeline. The three main questions to be addressed are:

1. Which information we would like to extract?
2. What kind of resources we can utilise?
3. What application we should solve?

He explained the three stages of development, starting with the Under-resourced domain (as is the case with "CAFETERIA").

Tome explained that in the scope of the CAFETERIA they developed rule-based definition methods and corpus-based methods to extract the food methods. On the rule-based methods the tools used were spaCy and different food dictionaries and NCBO annotator with different ontologies, taking into account FoodOn and SNOMED-CT, because in most cases we are also looking into relations with chemical entities, additives, disease, treatment and drugs.

Once a golden corpus has been reached then state of the art AI and language processing is done and the corpus-based methods are trained through bi-directional long short-term memory network (LSTM) (BuTTeR) to extract the food entities.

He then provided an overview on the Human-Computer Interaction tool (web-based tool) where domain experts can go and select recipes and instructions and look into data examples and correct it, in order for it to become the golden corpus.

On the "CAFETERIA" Outcomes he summarised that we have resources on which AI can be trained, the accuracy of extraction of food entities has increased from 60% to 90%. The outcomes are semantic resources, consisting of:

- Annotated food consumption data:

- 1000 recipes annotated with regard to Hansard, SNOMED-CT and FoodOn

- BioC format

- Annotated scientific abstracts:

- 500 scientific abstracts annotated with regard to Hansard, SNOMED-CT and FoodON

- BioC format

He concluded by providing a few data examples of annotated scientific abstracts and the process that takes places and references.

The Chair Barbara Gallani thanked Tome for his contribution and gave the word to Radoslaw Pytlak for his presentation on ''Articles representations for the automation of the inclusion process in SLR

3.4 – Machine Learning-based system for the automation of systematic literature reviews in food safety domain (REFSA)

Radoslaw began his contribution by providing an overview of the agenda – describe the results from project REFSA, its support for SLR, semantic representations of articles and active learning process.

He explained that the title of the project REFSA is ''Machine Learning-based system for the automation of systematic literature reviews in the food safety domain'' and mentioned all the partners involved - Warsaw University of Technology (leader), Oslo Metropolitan University, Norwegian Institute of Public Health – Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment, National Institute of Public Health and Tecna (IT company).

He further elaborated on the used methodology for doing SLR - PRISMA, as this type of technology consists of many steps, which are supported by AI models of their systems.

He provided an overview of the PRISMA steps, supported by REFSA project:

1. Formulate the problem
2. Develop and validate the Review Protocol
3. Search the literature
4. Screen for inclusion and exclusion

He further mentioned that meta-analysis is not taken into account and at the end review of the findings is supported. The approach is based on active learning – the idea is to save some effort done by the expert and reduce the manual work.

In terms of the manual screening process efforts, he explained that an expert formulates the query on which basis articles are retrieved from the bibliographical database, which are then assessed and screened by the experts who decide whether the paper is relevant or not. The final aim is to have a fully automated process where the only involvement is at the beginning of the process when the formulation of the query is required. Thus, the retrieved articles can be directly passed to the module supported by AI tools where the papers can be annotated or represented as numerical vectors on the basis of representation of text, a classifier will be built and it will decide whether the paper is relevant or not.

Radoslaw further continued by explaining that in active learning approach, where experts are only involved in relation to the pipeline of ML modules. He explained that several stages of the active learning approach have been created. Starting with a query module through Data retrieval, processing, feature space generation and classification – active learning. The communication is done by Kafka and REST APIs and after each module the processed data is stored in a database. All processing are carried out using cloud computing technology and all modules can be substituted by other modules with the same functionality. Most modules are written in Python, while some of them are in Java.

Text is later transformed into numerical vectors. Documents are mapped to vectors in a multidimensional numeric space. During the process several approaches are investigated:

- Bag of words
- Bag of concepts - annotation based on ontology
- Word or text embeddings – semantic representation based on e.g. BioBERT

He then further elaborated on the specifics and methodology of each of the approaches. Bag of concepts – ontology – looks for the occurrence of concepts in the text. He also explained the importance of the extended bag of concepts which was created with the help of ontology tree and helps find similarities between different papers. The semantic text representations concerned the experiments with annotators based on NER models based on Deep-Learning Transformers and Long-Short Term Memory Network.

On the active learning approach Radoslaw explained the boundary between relevant and irrelevant papers and the used active approach – when the boundary is built at some stage of the process, some articles are very close to it. These few cases are they assigned to experts for manual assessment and review. He concluded with a brief summary on the categorisation of the articles and the approaches in relation to active learning.

The Co-Chair thanked Radoslaw for his contribution and invited the Plenary for a discussion, comments and remarks in relation to SLR using AI.

The Netherlands thanked all speakers for their presentations and commented on the different projects and systems ongoing and the need for systematic reviews and the need for a platform where people could learn from each other in the field of Systematic Reviews.

France took the floor and anticipated some questions that could arise from stakeholders such as: Why did you exclude this paper?'', "Did you take into account all the pertinent documents?''. He noted that the answer 'it was done by AI' could be deemed be insufficient.

He also noted that he had not heard during the presentation about "weight of evidence", - how different types of studies (for example toxicological versus epidemiological studies) would need different types of criteria and how one paper is distinguished from another, and which to keep as relevant. He also mentioned the importance of interconnectivity of systems among different institutions. Finally, he identified a third area to be considered which is what kind of standards can be established to guarantee a high level of traceability.

Hungary supported The Netherlands in the need for a platform for sharing knowledge and further elaborated that this is a knowledge-management questions – how to use the different methodologies and tools. Furthermore, in the current state of the AI there is no single tool that can do everything and while AI cannot yet substitute human effort there is a need to take action on the black boxes and how the algorithms work and how biases and uncertainties can be assessed in the tools.

Hungary also commented on the importance of onthologies and them being accessible. If onthologies are to be used work is needed on the basics of the food domain: provide onthology, technical expertise, databases and sets to be explored by AI tools and the importance of having different food-related onthologies in a queryable structure.

The Co-Chair commented on the link between traceability and transparency of algorithms and weight of evidence and alignment and interconnection of systems. The Co-Chair gave the word to Tome.

Referring to the question of the Netherlands he commented that Hungary already pointed out some of the main hurdles – it requires a lot of effort and is also a sustainability effort. Tome provided an example from his previous research experience and made reference again to the bio-medical and food-domain examples. He gave an example with a unifying medical language system, but this system or platform takes place over 30 to 40 years of work by starting from the simplest version of AI, building resource semantics.

In regards to France's question he noted the questions are also relevant if a person wants to reject a paper. And in his opinion what is actually done is bias analysis. When a relation extraction is done it also includes from how many abstracts it was found to check for truthfulness and it needs to be assessed by the subject matter expert. He emphasised the need to continue thinking about the platform as a vision and cooperation and the need to have anthologies, he further elaborated with concrete examples and how AI can help.

He concluded by complimenting Radoslaw on his contribution in the bio-medical domain. He also noted the differences in how these communities express themselves and that methodologies and tools when transposed should be used with care.

To conclude and focus on next steps the Chair gave the word to Didier.

Didier noted that a lot of the aspects brought up by France such as traceability, transparency, why some papers are included and others not, are part of systematic review process and done at the protocol level before the execution of the systematic review. He noted that this planning phase is a human, expert-driven process and not a data-science problem only. He suggested to move forward with a community working on sharing practices and the automation the systematic review process with hands on people involved in the SR process.

The Chair provided a comment on the variety of speakers digging into the matter and the need for science integration and to have the Risk-Assessment as a bridge in policy making, bringing the different pieces and actors together.

The Co-Chair thanked the Plenary and all the speakers and moved to the next item.

4. Risk Assessment Activities

4.1 - EFSA Mandates, upcoming Public Consultations, MS RA Plans

The Co-chair, Barbara Gallani, gave the floor to Guilhem to briefly inform the Plenary on the progress of RA activities, the MS RA Plans, and the upcoming public consultations.

Guilhem welcomed the ongoing sharing of MS RA activities through the MS RA Plans database, which is beneficial for identifying areas of common interest and potential collaboration. He outlined that where interest has been noted on MS activities, MS were invited to provide additional information to EFSA Units and EFSA Units representatives would contact the concerned MS. Guilhem proceeded by highlighting the MS RA plans of EFSA interest, namely from the Netherlands and Denmark.

Guilhem explained that EFSA looked through the MS RA Plans database and identified two mandates where interest was present:

1. From Netherlands on reference values for allergens and assessment of public health risks of adaptation of current reference values for allergens
2. From Denmark on new plant-based foods in the Danes' diet and how plant-based alternatives to meat, fish and dairy products are included in the diet and the implications for food fortification.

Guilhem then noted two public consultations ongoing:

1. Public consultation on the draft opinion on review of existing health-based guidance values for copper with deadline 01/08/2022
2. Public consultation on the draft protocol for the hazard assessment of the risk assessment of phthalates. The public consultation on the protocol is ongoing until 05/07/2022.

Additionally, he provided an overview of the other public consultation that are ongoing, particularly in relation to pesticides, flavourings and GMO.

Guilhem passed the floor to Nik.

Nik informed the Plenary on two public consultations form the Scientific Committee on the Risk Benefit Analysis (RBA) of Foods. He noted that the old guidance is from 2010 and the update work is work in progress and the publication of the updated guidance is expected by November 2023 and anticipated a public consultation in April 2023.

Additionally, he also highlighted the guidance on protocol development for EFSA generic scientific assessments and remarked that there will be a public consultation on the draft guidance in March-April 2023 with expected publication of the guidance in July 2023.

On the MS RA Plans of EFSA interest, Nik informed that three (all from Denmark) were identified as of interest for the MESE unit.

1. Intake of dietary supplements: Examination of the Danes' intake of vitamins and minerals from dietary supplements to uncover any changes (in connection with the abolition of Danish reference values), which may also be relevant in risk assessment of the addition of vitamins and minerals to food.
2. Seaweed (macroalgae) and microalgae: Ongoing advice in relation to ingredients (both nutrients and unwanted substances) in macroalgae (seaweed) and microalgae and the possibility for using macroalgae as feed and food (including novel food, dietary supplements, etc.)
3. (Q)SAR: Development of new or improvement of existing (Q) SAR Models for hazardous effects and / or for mechanisms of action relevant to hazardous effects identified, for example, as initiating or key events in Adverse Outcome Pathways (AOPs)

The Co-Chair opened the floor for questions. No comments were raised and the item was concluded.

■ 4.2 - New network on Plant Health Pest surveillance

The Chair gave the floor to Sybren Vos (EFSA, Plants Unit) to provide an overview of the state-of-play on the plant health pest surveillance. Sybren started by introducing the internal structure of the PLANTS Unit. He noted that there are currently two teams dealing with Plant Health - Plant Health Risk Assessment team that works on different activities of pest categorisation, pest risk assessment and commodity risk assessment and the Plant Health Monitoring Team – that deals with Emerging risks: Media and Literature monitoring, Prioritisation of Pest and Pest Surveillance. He noted the three other teams that deal with pesticide residues.

He continued by providing a short historical overview of the pest surveillance activities conducted in EFSA since 2017, when a first mandate was received by EC tasking EFSA to develop a methodological framework for pest surveillance in Plant Health. The methodology of surveillance was initiated and inspired from the EFSA experience in surveillance in the field of animal health particularly with the examples of MS surveys for *Echinococcus multilocularis*, for demonstrating freedom from disease. The methodology was tailored to the requirements for surveillance of quarantine pests in the EU, in particular in relation to *Xylella fastidiosa* and other pilot organisms for developing guideline documents for the surveillance in plant health

Sybren emphasised that in 2020 the EC embedded the methodological framework developed by EFSA in the emergency measures for *Xylella fastidiosa* for the annual surveys of the bacterium in demarcated areas.

He further remarked on the EU priority pest in the new plant health law for which there are specific requirements for annual surveillance and the EC's desire for more robust surveys that are risk based and statistically sound for the 20 priority pests.

In 2020 the EC asked EFSA to further develop the toolkit and to reflect on how to better use survey efforts and optimise the surveillance from the level of a single pest to that of multiple pests within a same crop.

Sybren illustrated the two mandates (M-2017-137 and M-2020-0114) for which a toolkit was developed, composed of four different tools.

He briefly described the EFSA Pest Survey Cards – documents developed for each one of the quarantine pests, where they are characterised, as well the target population and the detection methods available for the pests.

The information collected and summarised in these survey cards is feeding a relational database that allows to have intelligent queries on the different aspects relating to the survey preparation and survey design for this pest.

This relational database prefills an experts system for designing statistically sound surveys on one hand and prefills the optimisation algorithm and application being developed for multi-pest surveys, optimising the survey effort, on the other hand.

He informed the Plenary that recently, in 2022, EFSA has received an additional mandate (M-2022-00069) from the EC to extends on training and the capacity building in the use of the pest surveillance toolkit in the Member States and in third countries. Through Mandate M-2022-00069 the EC requested to provide scientific and technical assistance and training activities on survey guidelines relevant for plant health for the EU territory.

In particular, Task A called for the establishment and support of a new EFSA/MS Network for pest surveillance;

EC mandated EFSA in continuation of its previous work, since 2018 EFSA has been working on developing workshops, training MS and increasing crisis preparedness on different pilot pests – *Agrilus planipennis* (emerald ash borer), *Phyllosticta citricarpa (*Citrus black spot*)* and *Xylella fastidiosa*. This was done through (i) grants on crisis preparedness in Plant health with Malta and Estonia, with a selected group of people in the MSs and training them for capacity building, also with (ii) the EFSA Network on Pest Risk Assessment with MS, and (iii) further for *Xylella fastidiosa* – with the EC expert working group on Pest surveillance where EFSA provided workshop and trainings to the NPPOs (National Plant Protection Organisations) of the MSs. In addition (iv) a series of workshops were organised with the regional authorities of MS to prepare them on the design of the surveys following EFSA's methodological framework.

Following this experience, DG SANTE asked to establish the Network on Pest surveillance, to ensure more effective outreach of EFSA's work and to prepare a stable group of key players in the field of surveillance in the MS. The EC request is to identify a community of pest survey ambassadors to exchange knowledge and expertise for preparing and designing statistically sound and risk-based surveys. Also, to train these potential trainers on the pest surveillance toolkit and to establish contact points in the Member States. In this context the AF are being informed of the establishment of the plant pest surveillance Network.

Main objectives of the Network are to ensure mutual understanding of the statistically sound and risk-based surveys in plant health, sharing development of survey methodologies, keeping the network members and network institution and participants at the forefront of the most recent and relevant progress in the field of pest monitoring and surveillance. Also sharing the MS experience in the implementation of the pest surveys for improving the current practices and the toolkit that EFSA is developing to assist the MS in the planning and execution of the surveys.

The second objective is to build capacity on pest surveillance by disseminating the knowledge, expertise and best practice in using the EFSA pest survey toolkit, in particular by training the key players in the MS within the institutions that are in charge of the planning and execution of surveys of quarantine pests.

The third objective is to harmonise the initiation, preparation, design, implementation and reporting of the surveys of the quarantine pests.

The last objective is that the Network Members would act as contact points for EFSA and the MS authorities, being competent in planning and execution of the specific surveys of quarantine pests.

The main outcomes sought are to improve the preparedness of MS to pest outbreaks, in particular focusing on the priority pests. The Network is also a mean for EFSA to provide a more effective support to the MS and to the National authorities dealing with the pest surveillance in MS. Through this network a more harmonised pest surveillance surveys across the EU, will contribute towards the comparison of pest status between Members states and from one year to another.

On the working methods and deliverables Sybren noted that the meetings will be chaired by EFSA and will take place one or several times per year. The expected deliverables are mainly an annual technical report, didactical materials and training programmes at Member State level and from EFSA to MS.

On the membership and next steps, Sybren reported on the type of members sought. He reasoned that the people needed are the ones involved in planning and the execution of the surveys in the MS that are analysing and reporting the results and are invested in the training and preparation of the inspection services for the surveys. He further noted that those people are not the same population as the one across other Networks.

The consultation that is foreseen with MS will lead to seek advice with the Chief Officers in Plant Health (COPHs) that have the knowledge of how institutions are organised and mapped and how competence in the area of surveillance is distributed in their Member State. Following the identification and selection of the member institutions, EFSA will seek endorsement from the Management Board in relation to the adoption of the network and its members. Foreseen start of the Network is first part of 2023.

Sybren finished his contribution and thanked the Co-Chair.

The Co-Chair emphasised that the decision for the establishment of new networks is not taken lightly as they are resource intensive for MS as well as for EFSA. She opened the Plenary session for questions on possible concerns, regarding duplication of activities.

The Dutch representative thanked Barbara and commented that he fully supports the need in the area of pest surveillance, however he expressed his doubts whether a new network is needed suggesting to explore a possible merge of the surveillance and risk assessment missions within the same Network, despite DG SANTE's request for establishing a new network. He also asked if there was a strategy foreseen for appraisal of new networks.

The Swedish representative, Per, thanked the Co-Chair and noted that ultimately his questions were asked by the Netherlands, thus providing more time for the next questions.

Spain thanked for the presentation and inquired for next steps, in regards to the nomination process - whether the MS would need to provide the general authority dealing with the area of interest in the specific country (e.g Ministry of Agriculture for Spain) or whether they should identify the exact member and send his official nomination.

Barbara gave the floor back to Sybren to address the questions on why the existing network on risk assessment in plant health is not able to cover plant pest surveillance, and what is the process of nominating the Network representatives.

Sybren thanked for the questions and referred to his presentation and outlined the differences between the two plant health networks.

He noted that EFSA tried to operate pest surveillance activities through the existing Network on Risk Assessment in Plant Health, but was this was not successful, because the required expertise is not the same for both Networks, neither are the member institutions. The focus of the Network on Risk Assessment in Plant Health is to share risk assessment practices and methodologies, whereas that of the Network on Plant Pest Surveillance is share and develop survey methodologies and training and preparation of MS for capacity building. The objective of the latter Network is to harmonise surveys and to be able to respond to phytosanitary crisis in line with the new Plant Health law, which is requesting for each priority pest to have a clear contingency plan and an annual surveillance. To support this activity in the field of plant health, the Commission wishes to have a dedicated stable group of experts that reflects the structure of the surveillance in the Member States that can function

as conveyor belts and transmit the survey approaches to the MS, in order to obtain more robust and harmonised surveys, thus the focus is different.

The Risk Assessment activities are performed in support to legislation. Plant pest surveillance is performed to support implementation of the legislation, and EFSA pest survey toolkit addresses the requirements of the legislation. Therefore, the type of experts and institutions are not the same.

Furthermore, for Risk Assessment the Member Institutions are experts from academia and national institutions dealing with RA, with a good knowledge of the national plant health status, but they do not always represent the National Plant Protection Organisations or the institutions in charge of the pest survey planning and execution.

For the Network on Plant pest Surveillance, the member institutions are the ones that at national level in the MS are involved in the planning and execution of the pest surveys and that are in charge of the training of the inspection services.

On Spain's inquiry on the nomination process, Sybren further explained that the institutional structure of the MS is different in regards to the competence of pest surveillance, providing additional argument for the need of the Network. As an example, *Xylella fastidiosa* outbreaks were recorded through several MS and in different regions and as a result training on the EFSA pest survey toolkit need to be provided at regional level, but EFSA does not have the capacity to address training needs at that level. Instead, the aim is to invest in capacity building and training on MS level, which would then provide training locally in turn.

Barbara thanked Sybren for his contribution and noted Finland's support expressed in the chat and acknowledge the point of France to address the link with the Chief Officers of Plant Health (COPHs).

Barbara noted that the terms of reference have been drafted and will be circulated to the AF for further comments. The next steps are for the MB to officially accept the establishment the new Scientific Network but EFSA committed to take action to build a review procedure to evaluate after a certain time if both Plant Health Networks are still required.

The Co-Chair invited the MS and EFSA participants for further comments. No contributions were raised and the Co-Chair dismissed the Plenary for a break.

Action Point 1: AF members to comment on the draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the newly proposed scientific network for plant health surveillance - by 23rd June.

Following feedback, EFSA will integrate the AF comments in the ToR.

5. Update from AF Discussion Groups – Part 2

5.1– Advisory Group on Data

The Chair gave the floor to Akos Jozwiak (HU) as Chair of the Advisory Group on data (AGoD), to provide an overview on the outcome of the 8th meeting of the Group, held on the 16th of May online and activities of the group.

Akos informed the Plenary that during the 8th meeting the members discussed 1) a synthesis of the initiatives of the last years 2) the new FP Operational Framework, 3) the link between the new FP framework and funding scheme with the effort of the AGoD and tasks of the sub-groups, 4) how to connect Strategic Advice to funded projects 2022-2027.

Akos explained that the main objective of synthesising data related strategies, recommendations, and initiatives was to define priorities and the role of the sub-working groups. Akos then described the exercise carried-out which focused on synthetising the 45 recommendations stemming from the Data task force, the prioritization survey of 2020 where the most prominent quick wins were identified, the project delivered by the Swedish food safety agency on data connection and the workshop held in

France back-to-back with the 83rd Advisory Forum. He also mentioned two additional elements considered in the exercise which are the pilot on data quality which took place between 2016-2018 and the FP Data tasks 2019-2020.

He went on by referring to the discussion on the new FP operational framework and to the positive impact of the new framework on the activities carried out by the AGoD as well as on the cooperation between EFSA and the MS. He noted how the multiannual and functional approach of the new FP framework would give an opportunity for data related activities to think outside the current paradigm and move to the next level, building a standing and continuously operating network of people engaged in data. He also clarified that the possibility to sub-contract some of the activities of the FP represents an enabler to engage with different organisations which are actively working in the data remit, connected with the MS and EFSA under the FP umbrella.

Akos highlighted two initiatives which are also relevant in the context of the new FP framework: 1) the development of tools enhancing data processing and connection at MS level and 2) the mapping of the data flows. Both groups of tasks will require resources and expertise and the new FP framework can be the place where such activities can be kicked-off, as very much related to the collaboration between MS. Both initiatives can be run as pilots and in case of a positive outcome, they can serve as a model for other discussion groups and networks.

Akos then focused on four projects (concluded and ongoing), which were presented during the last meeting of the group: IdRisk project, Rebuilt the Data Framework project (DAMA 2), Smart Coding App and SIGMA project. The group discussed how these projects can be applied and used by other partners. For example, the outcome of the IdRisk project can be used in development of the tool under the new FP framework with the support of MS by elevating the project to the next level to test whether the tool can be used widely.

Based on the synthesis exercise, the AGoD proposed the establishment of specific sub-working groups to discuss more in depth topics. Akos mentioned that three sub working groups - on 1) developing and sharing tools and technology, 2) digital platforms and ecosystems, 3) innovative data analysis & new data streams - will start operating soon while additional ones will then be established in a second phase.

On the next steps, Akos outlined that a synthesis of recommendations and their allocation to sub-working groups is under discussion with the group. He also informed the AF that next meeting will take place in late June, focusing on the appointment of the sub-Working Group members and chairs and the different EU strategies on data. The chair praised the work of the group particularly the progress made thanks to the support and commitment of the MS.

Portugal congratulated Akos and the involved MS for the achievements reached. It was referred the Id Risk project and stressed the importance of enlarging the consortium so to move towards an Id Risk 2, supporting even more MS in improving the interoperability of data.

The Netherlands intervened by highlighting how data science is getting more and more important in the food safety ecosystem and praised the switch in the activities of the group towards more operational fields, which is key to keep pace with current developments in the data remit. It was then stressed NL willingness to support this initiative and thanked the group for the work done.

The Chair emphasized the importance of having the MS on board in such initiative. He then referred to the opportunity brought by the new Focal Point framework to data related activities, particularly the concept of FP as connecting hubs, enabling cooperation in the data remit by bringing on board other actors at national level.

Akos supported the comments raised by the Chair and highlighted the role of the FP as enablers and connectors in the data field. He also stressed the possible several projects which will support MS in specific elements of the data related processes, to be explored by the group, where MS can join forces and work together through the new FP framework.

Barbara intervened by reiterating the shift driven by the new FP framework, where FP are intended as functions able to build capacity at EU level through the support of other actors. She then thanked Akos and the group for the effort made in bringing the activities a step forward.

Germany intervened by referring to the positive cooperation between BfR and BVL, the latter being a German organisation very active in the data remit and currently involved in the data discussion group and activities. She noted how this approach can be considered a possible way forward also by other MS in the way collaboration can be framed at national level in specific areas.

France expressed support to the new concept of Focal Points intended as connecting hubs, and raised a comment on the numerous number of sub groups, noting it might be challenging to cope with parallel activities.

Ireland intervened by stressing the importance of calling for joint actions in the data remit, involving not only MS but also EU institutions and building up on the experience of the AGoD work.

Akos addressed MS comments and agreed with Ireland regarding the relevance of discussing data related matters and AGoD group at the level of EU institutions as this might contribute to ongoing initiatives aimed at bringing the discussion on the data remit a step forward. Akos then emphasized the strong link between all parties involved in the data arena at EU level, as despite the work of the AGoD is mainly focused on RA, there are initiatives which goes even beyond.

He then addressed the comment raised by France on the sub-group and agreed on the coordination challenges of several sub-groups working in parallel. He also noted there is space to adjustments and improvements as this is a first phase.

The EC intervened by reiterating the appreciation to the AGoD ongoing work and activities and confirmed the interest in continuing to follow the discussion as observer in the group.

- **5.2 – State-of-play of MS Publication Taskforce: the new Editorial Advisory Board of EFSA Journal and next steps**

The Chair gave the floor Arthur Healy and Simon More, Chair of the EFSA Journal Editorial Advisory Board, for presenting the state-of-play of the MS Publication task force initiative particularly on the new EFSA Editorial Board and ongoing call for a network of publication specialists.

Arthur updated the Advisory Forum on the progress made since the 82nd AF meeting when the Plenary agreed to proceed with the project. He started by referring to the meeting of the EFSA Journal Advisory Board held in February, where an agreement was reached on the new structure of the board and on the need to review the Terms of Reference so to allow MS representatives' participation. He also mentioned the agreement with the MS Publication taskforce regarding the Editorial Advisory Board intended the main governance body and highlighted the postponement of the inclusion of Art. 36 organisations in the first phase of the channel.

Regarding the next steps, Arthur referred to the call for establishing a network of contacts in the MS and the call for the new editorial board members representing the MS. He then went on by thanking the MS who sent the nomination and he announced that the call would be open for few more weeks.

Arthur continued his update by informing the Plenary that the project entered in the phase of set up of the channel, a process which will continue throughout the summer with the aim to test it in September/October.

He then gave the floor to Simon More who highlighted the strong support of the Editorial Board to such initiative, which is considered important to increase the transparency and accessibility to MS risk assessment information and to create a searchable repository open to all. Increasing the awareness of the work carried-out by MS will also prevent duplication of efforts and work. Simon continued his intervention by focusing on the governance, particularly on role of the Editorial Board, a strategic and advisory body which will also take care of overseeing the MS publication channel and that will also include MS representatives. The Editorial Board will have a more formal structure with a renewed ToR and revised membership. In terms of governance the board will tackle issues such as 1) the aim of

the publication channel, 2) the scope, 3) the need for clear and transparent process, 4) the eligibility criteria for the material to be published and 5) the issue of authorship and quality control.

Arthur intervened by highlighted two other pillars of the governance structure - the network of contacts of national agencies and the Advisory Forum, the latter by providing an important oversight and promotion role, once the channel is launched.

He briefly outlined how the new channel will be structured and shaped on Wiley, also with reference to the two existing ones. He went on by answering to some of the frequently asked questions raised by MS particularly regarding duplication of publication, translation, and involvement of Art. 36 which are not intended to be involved in the first pilot phase.

Arthur concluded the presentation by providing an overview of the nomination received for the Editorial Advisory Board (8) and network of contacts in the MS (16), the latter aimed at dealing with the day-to-day publishing of the reports. Arthur then invited the MS to put forward further nominations for both calls.

The Chair thanked Arthur and Simon for the presentation and intervention and praised the materialisation of such initiatives which were endorsed by the AF in December 2021. He reiterated the importance of handling aspects as the eligibility criteria, quality, transparency and authorship.

Barbara took the floor and asked if the allocation of 3-4 seats only for MS representatives in the Editorial Board was considered sufficient. Arthur addressed the question by highlighting the need of ensuring the efficiency and a manageable board, hence the need to keep a limited number of members. He also noted how the number was meant to reach a good split from a geographical perspective and size of RA capacity.

Simon then intervened by stressing the importance to learn the lessons coming from other experiences and the need to maintain a close consultation with the MS in the different stages of the project, for example on the guidelines for governance.

France intervened by thanking EFSA and the MS for bringing forward this project, based on openness and transparency. It was also stressed the relevance of establishing a MS publication channel for building a global approach to RA, but likewise in terms of rewards for panel members as their work is also valued as publications in the scientific community and not just as a contribution to setting public policies. He also noted the challenge of dealing with editorial aspects of an opinion already adopted at national level following a process with quality checks.

Spain asked a question on the decided competence for the members of the board and Arthur clarified that ideally the candidate should have experience in publishing the work of their agency but also in-depth knowledge of the scientific processes also, both goes hand in hand.

Action Point 2: Last call for any MS that want to nominate representatives for the call for interest for members of the Editorial Advisory Board of the EFSA Journal and the establishment of a network of contacts from national agencies.

■ 5.3 – Steering Committee on the European Excellence Label: report on the feasibility study and action plan

The Chair gave the floor to Nicole Gollnick (DE) and Maria Christina Andersen (EFSA) to provide an update on the state-of-play of the activity of the Steering Committee on the European Excellence Label (EEL) and the report on the feasibility study.

Nicole started by providing background information on the activities of the Steering Committee on the EEL. She stressed how recruiting risk assessors is a very challenging endeavour and highlighted the need for a significant increase in the European pool of highly qualified risk assessment professionals. In this context, following the discussions held at the 77th AF Meeting, a Steering Committee was created with the objective to support EFSA in commissioning a feasibility study on the creation of an

Excellence Label for Education in RA, as well as on developing criteria for courses awarded with the excellence label and on elaborating a core curriculum in parallel of the feasibility study. She mentioned that EFSA committed to the AF to fund the feasibility study by outsourcing the work to two contractors.

She then showed the main milestones of the activities of the SC, a group composed by 6 MS, a representative from EFSA and from SANTE as observer; she highlighted the 2018 reflection paper, then followed by a business case that proposed a two steps approach: 1) the establishment of a risk assessment label for existing courses in food safety RA until 2025 and 2) the development of a European master's degree in food safety RA until 2030.

Nicole then clarified the concept of excellence label in food safety RA and its objective, which is to provide guidance towards high level quality education in food safety risk assessment. She went on by listing some of the questions that were raised during the work of the Advisory Forum Discussion Group on Capacity Building and subsequently addressed by the feasibility study.

She passed the floor to Maria-Christina who provided a more in-depth overview of the report. Maria-Christina noted that EFSA proposed to fund the study and to manage the contract of the selected contractors. The steering committee had a fundamental role in providing intellectual capacity and expertise and in guiding the work of the contractors.

The feasibility study was divided in two phases:

1. A mapping one, concerning all the risk assessment training landscape and providers, which included also employers in the EU and EEA countries, and that was conducted by the contractors. The mapping phase was followed by a survey and interviews with training programmes providers aimed at exploring the programmes in more details. The work showed there is great interest for the EEL, that is perceived as an excellent initiative bringing added value to the education and RA landscape. The first part of the study concluded that the EEL is feasible but also marketable. The study also identified 5 areas considered as a priority for any training in food safety RA programme to be labelled: microbiological, chemical, nutritional environmental, and animal health and welfare RA.
2. A comparative analysis of similar labels and list of recommendations on the technical and operational requirements for EEL; potential modules were highlighted and identified together with a roadmap for the implementation.

Following the completion of the study and confirmation of the feasibility of an EEL, the Steering Committee had a brainstorming session to discuss potential partners: apart from academia and national institution dealing with RA, the FP network was identified as an obvious partner in such project, through the new operational framework which gives flexibility and an opportunity to work on different activities. Maria-Christina emphasized how the package on capacity building proposes a set of activities for the FP which represents a first proposal for discussion with them. She then mentioned the need to explore with the FP alternatives and opportunities to make the EEL a successful initiative.

Nicole took the floor and briefly outlined the roadmap until the final implementation of the EEL, particularly the continuation of the work of the current steering committee (with opportunities for other MS to participate) and the involvement of the FP network via the new framework. She then focused on the main element under discussion in the steering group which is the governance of the EEL, an element which should be developed taking into consideration the recommendation of the report but also build on the comprehensive work carried out by the steering group during 2021. The governance body of the EEL is meant to include a different range of actors, from EU institutions, academia and other partners. The steering group is working closely with other bodies to finalise the governance model. DG SANTE and EFSA would also be on board to support such activity, with roles to be defined depending on their mandates and capabilities.

Nicole concluded by seeking the endorsement from the Plenary to the Steering Group to continue its work and to further develop and implement the EEL. She also called for nominations for the Steering Group. The Advisory Forum endorsed the continuation of such initiative The Chair thanked Nicole and Maria-Christina for the presentation and opened the floor for discussion.

The Netherlands thanked Nicole and Maria-Christina for the presentation and praised the work carried-out by the group, reiterating support and continuation of the participation in the Steering Committee. He also noted the support of the FP in such endeavour.

Norway reiterated the appreciation for the project and progress made and asked clarification on the deadline to put forward expression of interest for the Steering Committee. Maria-Christina clarified the deadline is end of August as the work will start in September.

Hungary stressed its support to the initiative and noted the challenge of establishing such long-term project in the field of education, an area which is constantly changing. He noted the continuous need of abstraction and strategic thinking. He mentioned how it connects nicely to the data literacy question of the AF group on data and with the FP framework.

France praised the initiative and raised a comment on the need to reflect also on those competences needed by experts in their overall career, not only for the purpose of carrying out RA. She also referred to the connection with existing labels as like "Erasmus Mundus", where a mechanism to grant an EU label is already in place. She then suggested to apply incentive mechanisms to promote the label in the institutions adopting it, as for example through scholarships. Maria-Christina clarified that the option of the Erasmus Mundus was also discussed in the context of the Steering Committee and it will be one of the EU bodies that will be contacted to advise on the way forward having a consolidated experience on this matter. The proposal of scholarship is really valuable, and it might be considered in the future when the budget will be defined.

Sweden congratulated the group for this achievement and stressed Sweden's support in the continuation of the work. He also noted the importance of such project and the need of a wide support from the MS despite being challenging

Barbara intervened by thanking the leadership role taken by Germany and Nicole. She also mentioned how the EEL will represent an opportunity to test the new FP framework, particularly between MS which have capacity to actively support this project. She also referred to the complexity we have to face in order to set up the label as well as the governance challenge. She went on by noting that part of the governance will be building enough flexibility to include new disciplines required in the future and not traditional ones, ensuring flexibility and dynamism.

Nicole thanked all the MS and EFSA for the positive comments and for the support, and by referring to Barbara's comment reiterated how the flexibility is extremely important in the EEL, so to evolve the label and trainings in the context of a ever-changing food safety environment. She concluded by thanking the DG SANTE for the support and participation as observer which is fundamental to bring forward the EEL project.

The chair concluded by noting that the Plenary endorsed the continuation of the work, the way forward proposed for the development and implementation of the EEL, and to extend the mandate of the Steering Committee, as Steering Group.

Action Point 3: MSs to volunteer to join the EEL Steering Group, to express their interest - by September 2022

6. State-of-play on implementation of the Transparency Regulation (TR) in the Food Chain

■ 6.1 – Next steps on Scientific Panels renewal

The Co-Chair (Nik Kriz) took the floor to present the current state of the panels' renewal. He began by informing that the current panels run until 2024 and proceeded with the steps in the panel renewal process, namely the Update of the related Management Board Decision, concerning the establishment and operations of the Scientific Panels and their working groups, to be adopted by the new

Management Board in October 2022. In relation to further information on the expertise required he remarked that the details will be included on the call for interest (Feb-Mar 2023).

Nik emphasised two main issues, regarding the panel renewals: the process surrounding the launch of the call and the details on the expertise required. He referred to the last AF meeting in Paris and the discussions on the modalities surrounding the panels' work and noted that the specifics are based on the legislation.

Nik then moved to the main points currently under discussion, regarding the future Panel composition and its evolution and the current implementation that is under exploration and outlined the main points in the planning:

- **Eligibility for mandate renewal** – takes into consideration periods served before and after the TR and refers only to the years served and not the mandates
- **Maximum periods served –** a maximum total duration of 10 years (e.g. 2 full mandates, 5+5 or other configurations) for a total of 10 years for a specific Scientific Panel or Scientific Committee, which permits a change 'in participating in another Scientific Panel **Active experts -** conducting research and/or risk assessors in national competent authorities
- **Guiding criteria for Panel composition**
  - For the gender balance, the guiding criteria are as a minimum 40% Female and 60% Male
  - 1/3 new experts
  - Maximum 3 experts per nationality
  - Median age in the panel: 53
- **Facilitate succession planning – facilitation of the rules involving WG experts in the panel**

In terms of the **evolution of the panel composition**, Nik touched upon the topic of the 5-year mandate and the importance of the evaluation on effective contribution to the work of the Panel and the update of expertise requirements of the Panel, based on the unit's workflow.

In relation to the **replacement of experts** and the previously voiced concerns on the desire of experts to last the entire mandate, Nik informed the AF members that a reserve list will be used and for the possibility to launch an ad hoc call, in case of a missing expertise.

Towards the end of his contribution Nik provided an overview of the timeline of the Panel renewal - Update Management Board Decision – Oct 2022. Furthermore, he anticipated a virtual workshop, currently in the making, addressing Advisory Forum Members. The workshop is foreseen to take place in the first two weeks of October and aims to gather MS views and input for the call for interest for experts, that will be launched in Feb-Mar 2023. Nik then reminded the Members of the upcoming physical AF meeting at (end of October 2022 in Prague). He further elaborated that on the next AF meeting, an update on the outcome of the Workshop would be provided as well as an opportunity for feedback, which format is to be clarified, depending on the outcome of the Workshop. Nik anticipated that EFSA would get back to the AF with a concrete proposal to gather input from AF members on the way forward concerning the longer-term on strengths and weaknesses of the current system and on a possible evolution of the current model

Nik concluded his contribution by informing that the mandate for the new panels start in July 2024 and Nik opened the floor for comments and discussions.

Netherlands took the floor and expressed their approval of the Workshop and inquired further on the composition of the panel in terms of size, flexibility and when the experts could join, as well as the role of a social science expertise to particular panels or opinions. They further inquired about on the particular focus of the workshop.

Germany endorsed the question of Netherlands.

France intervened by asking for further clarifications on the panel renewal discussion and the macroscopic processes and expressed their understanding of the need to for a good gender and geographical representation in the panels. However the expressed concern that some countries may be naturally overrepresented in particular scientific fields, in which case enforcing geographical distribution may not be compatible with ensuring that the right competences are included Concerning the renewal, he provided an experience from ANSES and commented that a 30-40% renewal of members provides a good continuity, while at the same time ensuring new views and experts are included in the panel.

Spain followed up with a comment and expressed their approval on the plan of gender balance representation and shared their own country-specific experience.

Norway inquired on the involvement on the CEN Network and the FPs and the participation of Member States in terms of coordination.

Nik took the floor to address the questions. Referring to the comment of Netherlands regarding the composition of the Panel, he noted that the maximum is 21 and comes from the legislation. He continued by addressing the questions of France and noted that the current focus is on the panel renewal and at this stage there is no plan to focus on the macroscopic view and a new legislation.

The Co-Chair (Nik Kriz) further acknowledged the aspects arising from the 2002 legislation – 10 panels (8+2) and the rather traditional model on how risk-assessment is done, together with the experts. He acknowledged the need to look for the opportunities in the future to change modify the terms of the legislation towards a more modern and adaptable setup.

The Co-Chair further emphasised the importance of having a composition of the panel with the right people, including a social science expertise and other experts apart from the subject matter experts. With the criteria that we have set it is impossible to have perfect nationality and gender balance. At the end it always comes down to who are the most suitable experts for the production of agile risk-assessments and scientific advice for the European Union and how do we balance that out with our desire to make as representative balance as possible.

Nik expressed his support from EFSA side invited the AF Members for further questions and comments. Nik gave the floor to Barbara to address the questions of Norway in relations to the CEN Network and the role of the MS and FPs.

On the communication, Barbara began by providing an explanation how the promotion of the calls for experts is done in a campaign mode, in close collaboration with HR colleagues. She emphasised the representation analysis – geographical, gender, age distribution and the preparation of a tool kit with information for the MS. She noted the importance of the FP in reaching the channels and networks that exist on a national level to disseminate the call. She informed that the FPs and the CEN network have been informed about the future support needed and noted that the details are still to be clarified after the analysis of the criteria for selection.

France further inquired about the requirements pertaining to EU MS nationality for experts in the panels. The Co-Chair (Nik Kriz) noted that experts outside of the EU should be viewed as a rare event.

The Executive Director emphasised that EFSA always looks for experts from the EU as the expertise is already available on European level and only in very exceptional cases there might be another case. He stressed that the focus of the campaign is how to attract these EU experts and make the participation attractive and increase the outreach for them to apply for this important work in Public health.

With final concluding remarks Nik pointed out that the situation is different in the working groups, where you may find more expertise from outside of the EU in certain cases.

■ 6.2 – Update on SPIDO NAMs

The Co-Chair gave the floor to Georges Kass, from the Chief Scientist Office, to provide an update on the current status quo of SPIDO activities in the area of new approach methodologies (NAMs) for

chemical risk assessment. Georges briefly listed them out: *in silico* approaches, *in vitro* approaches aimed at replacing the use of animals in chemical risk assessment for regulatory decision-making. Referring to the past 5-10 years, he commented on the quickly evolving and changing landscape of risk assessment, where EC fosters multidisciplinary research and digital innovations for advanced tools, meters, and models with the aim to move away from animal testing. He remarked on the correlation between innovation in safety testing of chemical risk assessment and the reduction of dependency on animal testing in the future with opportunities for improvement in the quality, efficiency and speed of chemical hazard and risk assessment.

Georges connected these developments to the EFSA Strategy 2027 and particularly pointed out strategic objective 2, whose key actions is to develop and integrate NAMs and omics for regulatory risk assessment.

In relation to the changed landscape (NAMs and RA), Georges further elaborated on EFSA's engagement in a number of these activities – interaction and engagement with the EC – JRC (EURL ECVAM), ECHA, OECD, and activities such as APCRA which accelerate the pace of chemical risk assessment and the global coalition for regulatory science research.

Georges also outlined EFSA's engagement in EU-funded projects, in the past in EU-TOXrisk which finished this year, but now with the ASPIS consortium (risk-hunt3r, ONTOX and PrecisionTOX) and also PARC (the European Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals) launched on 11 May 2022 and co-ordinated by ANSES[2]. All these EU-funded initiatives focus on the NAM landscape and integration of the use of NAMs in chemical risk assessment. On EFSA's side EFSA brings together organisations at international level to foster and facilitate innovation and collaboration in this area through its ILMERAC (International Liaison Group for Methods on Risk Assessment of Chemicals in Food).

In relation to the EFSA projects on NAMS, Georges noted the focus on developmental neurotoxicity, where a whole panel of NAM approaches was developed. The work was done in collaboration with OECD. Furthermore, there are other projects on neurodegenerative diseases focused on pesticides, nanomaterials: GI uptake and genotoxicity, PFAS: immunotoxicity, feed additives: essential oils interspecies metabolic differences and artificial intelligence for NAMs. He further explained that one of the important priorities was to define them and multiannual strategy and see how can NAMs be incorporated in regulatory hazard and exposure assessment of chemicals in food and feed. He further elaborated that this is the result of a work that was commissioned out and for which the report has been published a few weeks ago – development of a roadmap for action on new approach methodologies in risk assessment.

Coming back to the draft multi annual plan Georges provided an update that EFSA is currently working on the 2022 Programme, also with 2023 in mind and beyond - up to 2027, focusing on proof-of-concept case studies, generation of data and tools and translating them into scientific committee and panel guidance documents. He emphasised the importance of having these procedures aligned at international level (OECD, APCRA), so everyone can work from the same source on the global level.

Georges continued by outlining the NAM Project calls for 2022 and the main areas identified in the roadmap:

NAMs4NANO – focuses on data integration and will be composed of case studies with a focus on nano materials proposed by Member States. The results will form the basis of developing guidance documents and tools for the integration of data to make NAM data is useable, convertible, and exchangeable, based on IUCLID[3](which EFSA currently is using for pesticide applications). The call is

[2] https://www.anses.fr/en/content/european-partnership-assessment-risks-chemicals-parc

[3] https://iuclid6.echa.europa.eu/

expected to be launched as a 5.3 Mio € grant in June 2022 [4] with a submission deadline of 20 Sep 2022.

ADME4NGRA – focuses on case studies to advance *invitro* ADME models (ADME refers to absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion, of compounds within an organism). The emphasis is to use such models in IVIVE-PBK (in vitro-to-in vivo extrapolation for physiologically based kinetic) models, - models that allow us to transpose and convert what is happening in an *in vitro* setting in terms of a dose response into an external exposure scenario. The main aim is to develop guidance to integrate these tools into guidance documents focusing on human risk assessment. The open call is expected to be launched as a 3.0 Mio € procurement in June[5] 2022 with a submission deadline of 15 Sep 2022.NAMs project calls 2022: Series of calls focusing on AOP – Adverse outcome pathways and transcriptomics to predict target organ toxicity. This grant call launched in July is based on a novel two-step approach where are invited to submit outline proposals followed by a follow-up invitation to submit a full proposal for the applicants selected after the first step. The total envelope of this call is €10 million. Georges elaborated that this will provide a greater flexibility for innovative ideas that could have an impact on the proposed work in regulatory science, at the same time enabling co-creation with MS and Art. 36 organisation and to provide more time to identify partners and organise the submission. The focus of the call is on adverse outcome pathways (AOP) or AOP networks that are relevant to EFSAs remit, such as developmental peripheral neurotoxicity, endocrine disruption leading to metabolic syndrome or affecting the adrenal axis and on oxidative stress-mediated neurotoxicity. Another area of the call is on *in vitro* transcriptomics with the goal of identifying a signature response from gene expression in response to chemical stressors and challenges, thus helping us predict adversity and the target organ toxicity.

Georges further complimented that the calls will not end in 2022, and some are anticipated for 2023 to 2027 as there are areas still to be explored – advanced cell culture models including organ on a chip, exposome data to implement in AOPs, training and capacity building and others.

Georges also touched upon the opportunities and challenges by mentioning the anticipated hurdles when it came to the robustness of the tools being developed and whether they have been benchmarked properly for regulatory purposes. He also referred to the needed confidence and training in using these tools, the way we interpret the data coming from these tools and the future integrational of the data from the new tools with more traditional data.

Georges stressed the importance to work together to address these challenges through collaboration, accessibility and sustainability and the involvement of four pillars – regulators, MS, Academia, Society.

He also thanked the AF for the feedback received on the 83rd AF Meeting and voiced the main question for the future collaboration, namely, how to optimise the interaction with ongoing and future projects (e.g. ILMERAC, APCRA, PARC, ASPIS cluster, EFSA calls) and how to strengthen our collaboration towards NAM integration and capacity building.

Floor back to Nik and open to questions.

The Netherlands commented on some potential capacity building issues, based on previous experience with a workshop from their own country many years ago. They outlined the need for risk-assessors and legislators to be exposed to different way of dealing with information other than from animal tests and noted that some conservative assessors are experiencing challenges in adapting to new ways of information. They further explained that for some assessors the idea that animal tests are not necessarily always the golden standard, because they might fail to represent to represent the way humans react on a chemical level or any other type of species does not translate well. The Netherlands also emphasised that this is an important issue to deal through refinement and replacement when it comes to animal testing, but it is also important to improve food safety and chemical safety in general. They remarked that they see a possibility for future cooperation with OECD, cooperation on the QSAR

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/art36grants/article36/gpefsamese202201-nams4nano-integration-new-approach-methodologies-results

5 https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/cft/cft-display.html?cftId=11405

toolbox or AOP knowledge on a global scale, to improve the science move further. As an essential hurdle the Netherlands identified the current legislation and the way people assess and interpret risk, animal testing and NAMs. They conclude by emphasising the need to bring the conservatives into a more accepting mind state.

France thanked for the clear presentation and overview and noted the need to further explore the understanding of what is happening between the exposure and biological reaction within the "biological systems", in order to have a better assessment after and expressed approval of the idea of NAMs having an increasing role in the methodology of tomorrow and the importance for projects like PARC. Matthieu noted the importance of work on AOP and the precise impact of science and that it should be set as regulatory standards. Matthieu further noted that the term "regulatory science" may not be appropriate since it is just "science". He provided further input that in France a point, many discussion arise around the distinction between regulatory science and science, one being done by and for regulators and the other one is done in universities.

Nik noted the received support in terms of the implementation plan for NAMs and gave the floor to Georges to comment on the interventions.

Georges Kass expressed his thanks looking and emphasised the importance of ensuring that NAMs or *in vitro* projects can be used to provide solid scientific foundation to ensure that they are fit for purpose for universities and regulatory context.

The Co-Chair (Nik) thanked the Plenary for their consideration for the three upcoming NAMs calls and reminded that this is an excellent opportunity to join forces. He thanked to Georges for his contribution and passed the floor to Barbara for the update on Engagement and Communication.

7. Engagement & Communications update

The Co-Chair gave the floor to Barbara Gallani to provide an update on recent and ongoing comms activities, including feedback from the Communication Experts Network (CEN) meeting and CEN-Focal Points (FP) workshop of 17/18 May in Parma.

She started by providing some highlights on the CEN Meeting of May which was held as a hybrid meeting with participants in EFSA/Parma and joining online. After two and a half years of virtual gatherings, the meeting represented an opportunity to work collectively in a partnership approach on a number of issues which are moving forward in response to the Transparency Regulation request and linked opportunities.

Among the topics discussed during the meeting, Barbara referred to:

- The social science plans, in particular the research carried-out on new genomic techniques and perceptions related to this topic; the work EFSA is doing with a group of MS in the communication regarding hazard vs risk; and the completion of the Eurobarometer questions for 2022.
- Campaigns ((#StopASF, #EUChooseSafeFood, Plant health), focusing on the lesson learned and on the new approach based on the localization of efforts.
- The progress on the Food.eu platform, where EFSA is working with 4 MS as part of the pilot project to build a potential platform for Europe which will provide information on food safety, risk management and sustainability.
- The "Crisis communication roadmap", that EFSA with MS support is currently revising and updating building up on the lessons learned from the Covid pandemic and on sister agencies' (EMA and ECDC) experience in communication.

- Key country issues – Austrian redesign of the website and salmonella in chocolate issues involving Belgium and Ireland, and how they managed their communication on such a sensitive topic.

Barbara then moved on to inform the Plenary about the outcome of the FP/CEN workshop of May, structured with a plenary session and several breakout sessions tackling different coordinated communication issues.

She indicated that there is a gap in risk communication between risk assessment and risk management messages and between the national and European level of communications, which needs to be addressed. The way to tackle it is through strengthened capacity and capabilities in the MS so to work together on the production and dissemination of communication messages. Starting from this issue, Barbara then explained which were the main driving questions that the workshop envisaged to address, particularly: why coordinated communication matters? Why it is important? Why coordinated communication is possible? How do we make a case for coordinated communication so to gain the required political support at national level?

She then informed the Plenary that as outcomes of the workshop, EFSA will produce a report which will include follow up actions and a clear approach for coordinated communication so to build up and/or expand the coordinated comms function in the MSs with required capabilities and ad-hoc training programmes. She also concluded by reiterating the importance for the AF to get closer to the FP and CEN so to possibly pilot the strengthening of such function at national level.

Barbara touched upon the state-of-play of EFSA Campaigns. With regards to the #EUChooseSafeFood she noted that the Campaign is now rolling out in the targeted countries and three additional countries are also involved, Cyprus, Greece and Finland.

On Glyphosate, Barbara informed the plenary that EFSA together with ECHA developed a timeline which captures the progress made so far and what is foreseen for next months. She noted the revised deadline of July 2023 for concluding the work, due to the number of comments received during the public consultation by EFSA and ECHA. She also referred to the dedicated CEN space on this topic (also accessible to the FP) where EFSA, in coordination with ECHA, is sharing media monitoring, lines to take, FAQs and updates on what is happening across Europe.

Barbara concluded with an overview on EU-FORA. She reported the successful outcome of the call for tender for the organisation and delivery of training which is going to be hybrid and the successful outcome of the call for fellows where 16 applications were received. She also mentioned that this was the first year of a new approach to the identification of fellows and that there are lessons learned to take into consideration. Particularly she highlighted the need to improve the dissemination of information about the fellowship both to organisation hosting fellows and fellows themselves, to better support the creation of consortia pro-actively as this is a crucial step in the delivery of the fellowship and the role of the FP at national level when it comes to identifying experts and organisations.

The Netherlands thanked Barbara for the update and stressed the importance of the communication aspect in risk assessment. It was noted how the mandate on Glyphosate addresses the classification of the active ingredient but outlined the societal concern about the product glyphosate itself, which the communication around glyphosate should address as well. He then asked if EFSA plans to tackle this aspect. Barbara clarified that EFSA's effort was focused on explaining clearly the process of risk assessment and to its limitation as both EFSA and ECHA are acting within specific boundaries. What is possible to do in terms of communication is to acknowledge the existing concern and the fact that there are choices and issues going beyond the risk assessment remit, to be tackled at different levels.

Bernhard agreed with Barbara's intervention and stressed the importance of making clear the legislative framework within which EFSA is acting and carrying out its work and if this framework is still fit for purpose when new challenges and complexities emerge.

Spain and Italy intervened by praising the EFSA Campaign on #EUChooseSafeFood, which was launched a few days before the Advisory Forum Meeting in both countries and already registered a positive outcome.

The Chair thanked the MS for the comments raised and closed the agenda item.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 – Workshop organized by the Swedish Food Agency and the Finnish Food Authority on Risk Ranking of Hazards in Foods

Per provided the Plenary with information on the 'International Workshop on Risk Ranking of Hazards in Foods', organized by the Swedish Food Agency and the Finnish Food Authority.

The event, which aims to advance the understanding of the use of risk ranking to manage, prioritize, and communicate current food related risk, will be held in Uppsala, in October 19-20, 2022. The workshop is directed towards professionals within the sectors of risk analysis - primarily risk assessment, but also risk management and risk communication.

The 2-day workshop will provide room to discuss the state-of-the-art in risk ranking of hazards in food, but also an opportunity to networking.

During the first day of the workshop, an introduction and overview of the risk ranking area will be provided followed by presentations, also from speakers from a number of food safety agencies from different countries, on specific approaches/tools and related methods for chemicals, and both chemical and microbiological hazards. The second day of the workshop will focus on discussions on broader/key topics ("Purpose and value of risk ranking", "A common approach", "Challenges and future developments") assigned for discussion respectively to 3 smaller groups.

The registration deadline for online participation is September 5. Up to 200 persons can participate online, and online participation is limited to the first day of the workshop. Sweden invited the AF to participate and to disseminate the event with its networks and provided the link to the event page.

The Co- Chair thanked Per and handed over the floor to Dick who asked for a brief intervention.

8.2 – The Netherlands report on dietary reference values for energy

Dick informed the Plenary on the upcoming publication of the report on the revised dietary reference values for energy, otherwise known as the reference values for daily calorie intake, from the Health Council of the Netherlands. The Council's reference values distinguish between age groups, men and women, and different levels of physical activity. They also specify the additional energy requirement in each trimester for pregnant women and for women who are breastfeeding. The dietary reference values are based largely on the values published by EFSA and are adjusted to the average height and weight of the Dutch population.

The Co- Chair thanked Dick for sharing this information and gave to the floor to Jitka who asked to intervene.

8.3 – 85th AF meeting

Jitka invited the Plenary for the next AF meeting, which will be held during the Czech Presidency in Prague outlining the CZ Presidency would be pleased to have all AF members attending physically for a fruitful meeting and an interesting social event.

8.4 – Farewell from the AF members appointed to the New MB

The AF members from Malta (Ingrid Busuttil), Cyprus (Stelios Yiannopoulos) and Spain (Isabel Peña Rey) asked for the floor to announce their nomination to the new Management Board and consequently the cessation of their duties in the AF. Overall, they expressed their gratitude for being a member of the Advisory Forum and for the cooperation and the friendship made with within this forum. They

highlighted their belief in AF's continuing hard work to become an even stronger community, providing the proper advice for a sound science.

The Co-Chair thanked them for the work, collaboration and knowledge sharing while AF members, congratulated and welcomed them for the new functions in the MB and outlined the important role they would play in the MB given their background and experience in the AF.

The Co-Chair gave the floor to the Chair who, after a wrap-up of the main action points, closed the meeting, thanking all participants and reminding that the following 85th and 86th AF meetings would be held physically, respectively in Prague on 25-26 October, and in Berlin together with the RARA, in December.

LIST OF ACTION ITEMS

Ref	Who	Agenda topic	What
Action 1	MS	Item 4.2 - New network on Plant Health Pest surveillance	AF members to comment on the draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the newly proposed scientific network for plant health surveillance - by 23rd June. Following feedback, EFSA will integrate the AF comments in the ToR
Action 2	MS	Item 5.2 – State-of-play of MS Publication Taskforce: the new Editorial Advisory Board of EFSA Journal and next steps	Last call for any MS that want to nominate representatives for the call for interest for members of the Editorial Advisory Board of the EFSA Journal and the establishment of a network of contacts of contacts from national agencies.
Action 3	MS	Item 5.3 – Steering Committee on the European Excellence Label: report on the feasibility study and action plan	MSs to volunteer to join the EEL Steering Group, to express their interest - by September 2022