Kick-off meeting of the EFSA Technical Group on the Tools related to the application of the Transparency Regulation (TG TOOLS)

18th November 2022

Introduction

The kick-off meeting of the newly created EFSA technical group on tools (TG TOOLS) took place virtually on 18th November 2022, was attended by 13 members and was chaired by Bénédicte Vagenende (Head of Front Desk and Workforce Planning (FDP) Unit). Members of the TG TOOLS, DG SANTE and EFSA representatives participated in the meeting, with a full list of participants available on EFSA's website[1].

Welcome, apologies for absences and adoption of the agenda

Apologies for absence was reported for Karine Lheureux, head of EFSA Risk Assessment Logistic Unit. No additional points were raised by the participants; the agenda was adopted.

General introduction

EFSA provided an overview of the scope of the TG TOOLS and presented the strategy behind the target IT architecture supporting the development of EFSA for 2027 to the participants. The representatives highlighted the improvement of the IT tools on a regular basis with open communication on each of the releases on the EFSA website[2].

DG SANTE gave an insight on the process in place to collect user feedback on the E-submission Food Chain Platform (EFSC) tool. This tool is excluded from the scope of this TG.

Part 1 – Connect.EFSA

EFSA representatives gave a presentation of the customer relationship management platform and of the scope of its different business applications. The presenters dove into the specifics of account registration, notification of studies and pre-submission advice, public consultations, and AskAQuestion. They re-iterated the importance of having an OpenEFSA account to benefit from the full scope of possibilities offered by the customer relationship management platform.

The TG TOOLS members provided detailed feedback on their experience with the platform. They underlined issues with data quality and field sizes, and suggested improvements in the co-notification process for better collaboration. They also expressed appreciation for EFSA's interest and willingness to have a dialogue on the possible improvements and for the frequency of update releases.

Part 2 – Open.EFSA

EFSA representatives provided a general introduction to Open.EFSA and public dossiers, explaining the most recent technical improvements, including the release of an increased number of filters in the search function. The results of an EFSA survey on visitor satisfaction were summarised during the presentation and it was underlined that most of the issues flagged would be the object of upcoming improvements.

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[1] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/stakeholders/engagement-platforms
[2] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-12/Digital-enhancements-overview-Applica-tions-toolkit.pdf

The TG TOOLS members provided feedback on their experience with the Open.EFSA platform. They underlined issues with the migration of historical data and the precision of the search function. All expressed appreciation for the increased number of filters in the search function. EFSA took note of the remarks and informed the participants that the work on migrated historical data was already underway but demanded a longer period of time to be completed.

Part 3 – Confidentiality request and submission builder

EFSA representatives gave a presentation on Portalino as an e-submission portal for confidentiality assessment, along with an overview of the guidance material provided to users of the tool.

The TG TOOLS members provided feedback on their experience with the tool. They appreciated the simplicity of the submission process. They requested the possibility to edit a confidentiality request without resubmitting the dossier and discussed timelines. EFSA informed the participants that a Request for Change was underway to open the possibility to edit the dossiers. The presenter also gave them additional information on extension of deadlines in exceptional cases.

The TG TOOLS members discussed the accesses to dossier submission and re-iterated that allowing several accounts from the same organisation to access the same dossier was deemed essential for business continuity. EFSA took this remark into account. EFSA also clarified that there was no limit to the number of accounts owned by one organisation on Portalino.

Next steps

The TG TOOLS members expressed appreciation for the responsiveness of EFSA and the continuous improvements to the system. No additional points were raised by the participants.

EFSA reminded the participants that the total number of members was not yet reached and therefore the possibility to include extra members to the technical group was still open.

EFSA reminded the participants that this meeting was the first in a series spanning until October 2024. The next meeting will take place in March 2023.