COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTS NETWORK (CEN)

14th meeting

24-25 October 2023
09:00-18:00 / 09:00-12:30
Minutes agreed on 16 November 2023

Location: Webconference

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	Name
Austria	Marlies Martha
Bulgaria	Mariela Pchelinska
Cyprus	Charitini Frenaritou
Czech Republic	Vladimír Brychta
Denmark	Heidi Kornholt
Estonia	Maarja Pehme
Finland	Perttu Saralampi Jari Eloranta
France	Sophie Le quellec
Germany	Suzan Fiack Lucia Vogt
Greece	Afroditi-Sotiria Avgeri Zoe Mousia
Hungary	Eszter Bánlaki-Doma
Ireland	Emma Reinhardt Jane Ryder
Italy	Barbara Tiozzo Pezzoli
Lithuania	Aistė Prielgauskaitė
Luxembourg	Miriam Fougeras
Netherlands	Carla Geijskes
Norway	Ingrid Margaretha Høie Tanya Kristiansen
Portugal	Filipe Melo De Vasconcelos Ana Oliveira
Romania	Rares Mihai Habeanu
Slovak Republic	Katarína Fašiangová Gabriela Dringusova
Slovenia	Katja Turk
Spain	Victoria Ruiz María Aranzazu López Franco
Sweden	Karin Gustafsson

- Observers:
  Expert name (Switzerland): Sarah Camenisch
  Expert name (IPA country): Dalibor Vidacak (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Nikola Savovski (North Macedonia), Katerina Jonovska (North Macedonia), Milan Rogosic (Montenegro), Jelena Vracar Filipovic (Montenegro)

- European Commission/Other EU Agencies representatives:
  Eleni Gkana, Oskar Tomaszewski

- Hearing expert: Chris Reed

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence

James Ramsay (Chair) opened the online meeting and welcomed all participants.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted and no items proposed under Any Other Business.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 13th CEN meeting held on 23-24 May 2023, in Parma

Minutes had previously been agreed by written procedure.

4. Update from Advisory Forum and Focal Points

Barbara Gallani (EFSA) updated the Member States on the following:

- New Genetic Techniques – Advisory Forum requested CEN to explore developing a coordinated communication approach that considers the possible different approaches by different risk assessment bodies;
  ACTION: CEN to monitor developments in NGTs over the next 12 months & review the issue at each of the next two network meetings in 2024 with the aim of defining a communication approach.

- Risk benefit communications to risk managers and to the general public will be part of the guidance currently under development by EFSA's Scientific Committee; updates on this work to be provided to the CEN; need to consider involvement of CEN as and when required;

- International Cooperation: Member States in the Advisory Forum have asked for improved visibility of ongoing and future engagements by EFSA and by national authorities in this area to inform their planning and to foster cooperation;

- Food.eu: CEN members were updated that a prototype web platform for joint communication to citizens by EFSA and its MS partners on food safety has been completed in July 2023. DG SANTE had been informed and acknowledged it as a useful proof of concept and an excellent example of partnership working with the Member States. It may contribute to the Commission's deliberations in the future development of the General Plan for Risk Communication.

5. Social Science

I. Avian influenza
Findings of EFSA's flash poll on consumer awareness of avian influenza was shared and noted by participants.

II. Social research data hub exercise
Social research data hub was presented and deemed useful; the next iteration to be shared with CEN in 2024.

III. Fish survey
The project will see a survey on fish consumption in EU countries, Norway & Iceland carried out by the end of 2023. This will be complemented by an update on national advice on fish consumption in 2025 and further awareness research on this advice in 2025.

IV. IPA Eurobarometer
An information session for pre-accession countries (IPA) to take place in November 2023 with publication of country factsheets due in December.

ACTIONS: Fish survey: Share country factsheets when possible (EFSA)

6. Media round-up & Highlights

The presentation noted the high peak of media requests and EFSA's mentions in the media monitored in the media coverage compared to previous reporting period. An overview of the media survey carried out in spring 2023 was shared.

7. Communication Lab: Avian Influenza

A new agenda item was piloted that involved the CEN (EFSA and MSs) deep diving into a key topic of mutual concern to share information and best communication practice. Participants discussed avian influenza, sharing information, challenges and possible approaches - firstly in break-out groups and then in plenary. A poll of the usefulness of this item was conducted among the members and found that more than 90% found it useful and wished to include the exercise as a regular agenda item.

ACTION: EFSA to share detailed feedback from the CEN survey and propose next steps

8. Communication Planning

Details of EFSA's communication planning from October 2023 to March 2024 were presented to the group. Members were invited to express interest in potential outputs for Hot Topic Calls. Upcoming communication activities to accompany assessments on smoke flavourings, the sweetener erythritol (E 968) and inorganic arsenic in food were nominated by members for a pre-publication teleconference (hot topic call).
ACTION: Member States to express interest in any of the proposed Hot Topic Call via the CEN Portal and EFSA to facilitate them.

9. Artificial Intelligence Workshop: How to train your robot

Hearing expert Chris Reed gave an introduction to artificial intelligence (AI): issues to be aware of, suggestions on its potential applications in communications and led a discussion on current knowledge and likely future developments.
ACTION: (i) Member States asked to consider further proposals for external speakers to address key and cutting-edge topics at future meetings.
(ii) EFSA to explore if/how bespoke AI tools it may develop for the Authority's use (i.e. within EFSA's 'firewall') could be made available for all Member States in future**.**

11. Campaign Update

EFSA and Member States gave an update of the three joint campaigns executed in 2023:

#EUChooseSafeFood – An online quiz introduced the campaign and was followed by Member States and EFSA presenting a spectrum of activities carried out as part of 2023's activities.
ACTION: EFSA asked to reconsider use of the word 'guarantee' in one of its taglines for the 2024 campaign.

#PlantHealth4Life - the campaign roll-out at an EU and Member State level (12 participants) was presented. Campaign results demonstrated the wide reach of the campaign (17 million social media views and 16 million 'out of home' views). Member States were asked to consider joining the 2024 campaign.
ACTION: Member States to express an interest in participating in the 2024 plant health campaign by **8/12/23**; also to propose ideas for additional dissemination activities/channels in next year's campaign.

African Swine Fever (#StopASF) - a recap on the objectives, audiences and materials was provided. Montenegro provided additional input on its activities. Evaluation of the campaign is ongoing.

12. Hazard vs Risk mini campaign

EFSA provided a round-up of the mini social media campaign carried out in partnership with Member States to help citizens understand the difference between hazard & risk. This is a good example of coordinated communications in action. Members were informed that the next social media posts to be published on 20/12/23 and were invited to contact EFSA if they would like additional animations in their language. There is the possibility of showcasing this work at the SRA Europe conference in Athens on 2-5 June 2024.

ACTION: (i) Member States to promote post in December and request additional translations for animations (ii) EFSA to follow up with relevant counterparts on the SRA conference.

13. Day 1 Round up

The Chair provided a round-up of a full and engaging first day and invited all CEN members to complete the survey on the usefulness of the Communication Lab agenda item.

14. Day 2 - Welcome back & Apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all participants to the second day of the meeting. There were no apologies for absence.

15. Key Country Issues

I. Communication on (food) challenges on social media

The BfR (Germany) presented several examples of where social media users had 'challenged' others to carry out an activity that may be hazardous, e.g., eating large quantities of spicy food. They outlined their response in providing advice via the appropriate channels and highlighted that the activities had received high media attention. BfR also shared it was working on artificial intelligence applications including a chatbox to answer consumer queries

II. Ireland 'Iceland' Incident

Food Safety Authority Ireland (FSAI) shared information and lessons learned on food imported into the country from a major frozen food retailer without the necessary documentation. Produce was withdrawn due to lack of traceability and coordinated efforts to inform consumers was undertaken. FSAI took a coordinated multi-agency approach, understanding its role within this. Consumers were kept informed via bespoke material on their website and through clear and timely responses to media enquiries.

III. African Swine Fever

HAPIH (Croatia) presented a case study on communication around African Swine Fever (ASF) that was detected in the country for the first time in summer 2023. Croatia has been an active participant in the joint EFSA/ MS campaign StopASF, which may have helped the country remain ASF-free for a prolonged period. Reflections on lessons learned included opportunities to improve receptivity of relevant ministries to coordinate communication more fully and ensuring that messages are pitched at the right level to ensure stakeholders/citizens remain vigilant.

IV. Translating risk perception into risk communication practice

The Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie (IZSVe) (on behalf of Italian Ministry of Health) contributed to a project to raise awareness of risk assessment and risk communication in university degree courses by producing a textbook in partnership with the University of Milan and relevant veterinary and public health institutes. A bespoke chapter on hazard and risk perception, by Italian CEN members, included an introduction to the subject and how to practise this discipline. The authors have used the content to hold subsequent training sessions with Article 36 institutions. The feasibility of translating the book into English was discussed, with agreement that it would be welcome.

V. PARC project questionnaire

EFET (Greece) introduced an EU project called PARC (European Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals), in which they are a partner. The project aims to strengthen risk assessment in this area. They requested that CEN members help in validating a questionnaire for one task on risk communication.

ACTIONS: Italy agreed to keep the CEN updated on progress to translate the textbook into English; PARC - CEN members are invited to contact Greek CEN member Zoe Mousia (zmousia@efet.gr) to contribute to the question validation

15. Coordinated Communication

15.1 Teams access refresher–demonstration & trouble shooting

Following several instances of CEN members encountering difficulties in accessing the EFSA Teams channel, EFSA Service Desk gave a tutorial on how to do this. Slides were presented and will be shared with CEN members.

ACTION: EFSA will seek to develop a video demonstration based on the slides.

15.2 Tailor-made activities

EFSA and Member States presented the wide-ranging and large volume of work ongoing in 2023 to develop the building blocks for EU coordinated communication.

I. CEN/FP partnership guide

Croatia, whose Focal Point (FP) team has led on the activity, presented the draft best practice guidance. It aims to help FPs & CEN members work together effectively and efficiently to facilitate coordinated communications. It was agreed to extend the deadline to comment on the draft report until 9/11/23.

II. EU Framework for Coordinated Communication

EFSA provided an overview on the five activities being developed to define an EU model for coordinated communication. Initial focus was given to the report to define a draft EU Framework for Coordinated Communications (Activity 5.5) that sets out the rationale, key actors, methodology and resources. It incorporates the Member State Communication Coordinator (MSCC) role and several MSCCs recruited as part of the 2023 pilot programme presented themselves and their tasks to the meeting.

III. Update on MS Joint products

The pilot projects for joint product development by Member States were presented. Czechia, Hungary and Norway presented the infographic on *Grill Smart* in Czech, English, Hungarian and Norwegian. The infographic jointly developed by Czechia, France, Italy & Roman was also presented.

IV. Risk comms Summer School Feedback

The Netherlands (NVWA) presented feedback on the inaugural Risk Communication Summer School held in Utrecht on 25-29 September. The five-day event was very well-received by the Member State participants and discussions are ongoing to gather and implement lessons learned to further optimise the programme. The NVWA application to conduct further Summer Schools in 2024 will be evaluated under the prescribed Focal Point Operational Framework procedure.

ACTIONS: (i) Member States and EFSA colleagues to provide feedback on the draft Best Practice Working Guidance between CEN & FPs by 9/11/23 (ii) Draft report EU Framework for Coordinated Communication to be distributed for consultation in November 2023; Member States and EFSA to provide feedback by mid-December deadline.

16. Day 2 Round-up

The Chair summarised the fruitful 1.5-day meeting, thanking presenters and all who had engaged in the important discussions.

17. The meeting closed at 12.47pm.