

Third meeting of the Technical Group on the tools related to the application of the Transparency Regulation (TG TOOLS)

## I. Introduction

The third meeting of the EFSA technical group on the tools related to the application of the transparency regulation (TG TOOLS) took place virtually on 23 October 2023, was attended by 14 members and was chaired by Karine Lheureux (Head of the Risk Assessment Logistics Unit of EFSA). Members of the TG TOOLS, DG SANTE and EFSA representatives participated in the meeting, with a list of participants available on the EFSA website. Karine Lheureux welcomed the new representatives.

## II. Welcome, apologies for absence, and adoption of the agenda

Apologies for absence was reported for Helena Kandarova (EU-NETVAL Test FACILITY). No additional points were raised by the participants; the agenda was adopted.

## III. General overview

EFSA provided a high-level overview of the improvements which were implemented throughout the three releases which took place since the last meeting in March. The importance of users' feedback was emphasized; participants were encouraged to share their views not only at the meetings but also in between them through the AskAQuestion tool. The Head of the Front-Desk and Workforce Planning Unit highlighted that the tools have reached a stable status, therefore future improvements will unfold at a steadier pace. Participants were reminded that the Technical Group on TOOLS is active until the end of 2024.

## IV. Connect.EFSA

EFSA presented the improvements on **Connect.EFSA**: easier navigation, more structured information, and a more user-friendly portal. Members were updated about upcoming improvements: in December 2023, a new registration form and a user guide; in April 2024, the revamp of the website with clearer navigation, harmonised wording and the centralization of Connect.EFSA services. Regarding **AskAQuestion**, an improvement of the form was mentioned as well as the future revamp of the help center.

EFSA presented the improvements on the **notification of studies**, such as the revision of the sharing mechanism with third parties; the improved visibility and accessibility of the "Components" section on the record page and the notification to functional mailboxes of Member States.

EFSA presented the latest developments in terms of **public and targeted consultations**, the increased number of characters and the easier access to the documents attached to consultations was brought up as a major enhancement which came along as a response to users' needs.

The Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety of Germany highlighted that in some cases the table of content was missing and that the attachments and some chapters submitted with the comments are not visible in the Member State accounts. EFSA replied that the missing chapters were re-entered correctly when the issue arose and that its technical services are already working to solve the issue of not visible attachments in the accounts.

Members in their feedback expressed their gratitude for the achievements EFSA reached. All tools have improved in their functionalities and the usability and improvements made were well acknowledged.



During the Q&A session, the representative of the Association of Veterinary Consultants (AVC) Pen & Tec Consulting S.L.U. expressed the need for higher number of users per organisation. EFSA reiterated the current rules and reassured the members that the possibility of increasing the number of users will be explored. Cellular agriculture Europe sought clarification regarding the revision of study definition and the impact on notified studies. EFSA responded that those notifications that are not anymore needed following the updated Q&A on [Practical Arrangements](#) (28 August 2023) can be kept in Connect.EFSA and there is no need to withdraw such notifications. During the suitability/completeness check, EFSA will not consider anymore the corresponding notified information for studies that are exempted from notification of study obligations. CropLife mentioned an observation regarding the status “draft” versus “withdrawn” which will be addressed in the next release and the observations on the accounts of former employees that are left visible even if they are deactivated. EFSA reassured the members that the accounts of former employees are deactivated as soon as EFSA is notified, however in terms of the visibility of these accounts, further investigation is necessary.

## V. Open.EFSA

A live demonstration of the new functionalities of the tool was performed. Members were guided through the expert section where the full list of members with past and present involvements is now available. The downloading of documents was simplified by allowing all files to be downloaded at once, as a zip file and without logging in, only by accepting the terms of the page. The search functionality was enhanced, and the display of the platform was adjusted to smartphone and tablet format. Members were informed that additional data request/receipt are not anymore published as individual PDF, but the areas of the data request are automatically displayed. Future improvements include the easier access to mandate documents and the full migration of old, finalised questions from the Register of Questions (RAW).

FEFANA presented some observations in the search functionality on OPEN.EFSA for feed additives, referring to the commercial name in the title of the question and the wish to be notified about the start and end date of the public consultations. Moreover, they shared their feedback on ESFC which the chair and the EC representative took note of besides pointing out that ESFC does not fall under the scope of the Technical Group.

## VI. Submission Builder (“Portalino”)

The presentation on the improvements of the Portalino portal followed the structure of the feedback received at the last meeting on TG TOOLS. The product manager presented the new features in terms of content and design. As a major enhancement, the ability to submit data without adding confidentiality request and to withdraw a submission via the tool was underlined. The EFSA product manager added that due to the various notifications, applicants have become more autonomous in using the tool.

## VII. AOB and end of meeting

Update was communicated about the pre-notification of publication automatic notifications via the E-Submission Food Chain platform (ESFC). The applicants will be notified twice: the first one upon adoption of the scientific output and the second one, at least 36 hours before publication. In case the applicant identifies issues during pre-notification, they can submit a comment via ESFC.

On the occasion of the final, general Q&A session, several questions were raised on the possibility of the integration of Connect.EFSA and ESFC. EFSA took note of the suggestion from the audience. The chair summarised briefly the achievements of the meeting and thanked the members for their participation and very useful feedback and she further encouraged them to share their experience regularly with EFSA through the advertised channels. The chair also reminded the members that the Technical Group will be active until the end of 2024.