

55th FP Meeting

Location: Rogner Hotel, Tirana, Albania

Attendees: Chair: Victoria Villamar, Valbona Paluka

Countries	Attendance
Austria (AT)	Johann Steinwider (online) Lukas Meusburger (online)
Bulgaria (BG)	Ekaterina Koeva Lilyana Polihronova (online)
Croatia (HR)	Vlatka Buzjak Služek
Cyprus (CY)	Christoforos Papachrysostomou Georgios Stavroulakis (online)
Czech Republic (CZ)	Petr Beneš
Estonia (EE)	Piret Priisalu
Finland (FI)	Kirsi-Maarit Siekkinen
France (FR)	Céline Bahuon Coralie Bultel Samuel Contreras (online)
Germany (DE)	Julia Schöne Katrin Wlucka (online) Phoebe Young (online)
Greece (EL)	Danai Papanastasiou
Hungary (HU)	Renáta Prisztóka Tamara Tamas (online)
Iceland (IS)	Grímur Ólafsson
Ireland (IE)	Gráinne Redmond
Italy (IT)	Alessandra Perrella (online)
Latvia (LV)	Inese Siksna
Lithuania (LT)	Agnė Vilkoicaitė
Luxembourg (LU)	Elisa Barillozzi (online)
Malta (MT)	Giannella Pisani
Netherlands (NL)	Merel Van der Ploeg
Norway (NO)	Gisle Solstad



Poland (PL)	Justyna Baraniak Liliana Jurczyńska	
Portugal (PT)	Pedro Miguel Nabais (online)	
Romania (RO)	Simona Radulescu (online)	
Slovak Republic (SK)	Gabriela Dringušová (online)	
Slovenia (SE)	Sara Prošek (online)	
Spain (ES)	Beatriz Martinez Llarena Laura Cebadera (online)	
Sweden (SE)	Anneli Widenfalk Emma Patterson (online) Karin Nyberg (online)	
Observers and others	Attendance	
Albania (AL)	Valbona Paluka Amarilda Keli	
Bosnia & Herzegovina (BA)	Dalibor Vidacak	
Kosovo*¹	Yllka Dibrani (oline)	
Montenegro (ME)	Mirjana Lekic	
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Jasmin Hadji Vasilev	
Serbia (RS)	Nadezda Dukic (online)	
Switzerland (CH)	Barbara Engeli	
Türkiye (TR)	Serap Hanci	
EFSA Representatives		
Victoria Villamar (Chair)	Sérgio Potier-Rodeia (moderator, CM TL)	Matthew Ramon (moderator, SE TL)
Elina Ciekure (FP Team)	Martina Mannis (FP Team)	FINGER Julia Miriam (online, FP Team)
Sanja Ilieva (IPA Coordinator)	GAROFALAKIS Gorgias (online, KNOW)	Anna Campanini
+17 EFSA observers		

¹ Kosovo (*) - 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.



29 participants attended the meeting in Tirana (Albania), representing both Focal Point (FP) Network Members and Alternates, and observers.

19 participants joined online.

Apologies: Vibe Beltoft (FP member, Denmark) and Tom Storms (FP member, Belgium)

New nominations and changes in the roles since the last 54th FP Meeting held on 24-25 April 2024:

- **Austria:** Lukas Meusburger (FP Alternate)
- **Croatia:** Barbara Lendić (FP Alternate)
- **Finland:** Jukka Ranta (FP Alternate)
- **Germany:** Katrin Wlucka (FP Alternate)
- **Germany:** Julia Schöne (FP Alternate)
- **Netherlands:** Merel van der Ploeg (FP Alternate)
- **Sweden:** change of a role for Emma Patterson (from FP Alternate to FP Member) and new nomination – Karin Nyberg (FP Alternate)
- **Kosovo*²:** Yllka Dibrani (FP Observer)

I. Opening of the Meeting

The **Chair Victoria Villamar** welcomed participants and Albanian delegation –

- Anila Denaj – Albanian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Luljeta Cuko – Director of Food Safety
- Amarilda Keli – National Coordinator
- Valbona Paluka – Assistant Coordinator.

Chair Victoria Villamar gave floor to **Anila Denaj (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Albania)** to open the meeting.

Anila Denaj welcomed all network participants and EFSA representatives to Tirana. During her speech minister emphasised Albanian government's commitment to implement food safety rules aligned with EU standards and marked that movement towards EU membership is a crucial duty of ministries and national authorities. The minister highlighted recent adoption of several national legislative acts in area of food safety, animal and plant health to be in alignment with EU regulations. **Anila Denaj** also emphasized the positive evaluation Albania recently received in an audit from DG Sante. Lastly, she thanked all the donors and EFSA for the support and the exchange of information and expertise, that, for example, allowed a quick and efficient reaction to limit the cases of ASF in the country.

- **Food safety structure in Albania**

Chair Victoria Villamar gave the floor to **Luljeta Cuko (Director of Food Safety, Albania)** for a debrief on the Food safety structure in Albania.

Luljeta Cuko highlighted the fact that Albania has adopted the National Agri-food Safety Strategy 2023-2027 and shared that the vision of the National Food Safety Policy is to contribute to the protection of consumer health, animal health and welfare and plant health. She presented the legal framework that covers the food chain in Albania and the process of

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harmonization of the Albanian legislation with EU legislation. **Luljeta Cuko** introduced the competent authorities and their responsibilities, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Food Authority and the National Authority for Veterinary and Plant Protection. She noted actions of Albanian engagement with EFSA and shared the future plans and strategies for RA harmonisation, capacity building and awareness raising. Presentation was concluded by examples of the projects that are being implemented with financial support of the European Union.

- **Flash report from Albania on national awareness event**

Valbona Paluka (assistant coordinator, Albania) presented the Albanian national awareness event (11/09/2024) which focused on EFSA's vital role in integration of IPA countries in the EU food safety system. A diverse group of participants was present, ranking from ministries to universities and delegations from the EU, FAO and WHO. EFSA representatives gave a presentation highlighting how EFSA supports IPA countries through providing technical assistance and capacity building initiatives along with the opportunities and platforms for collaboration and networking. The event was enriched with delivery of presentations by the representative of the WHO and office of the Delegation of the European Union in Tirana presenting the past supporting initiatives but also the plans for the future involving activities for strengthening the competences and the capacities of the food safety, veterinary, plant health and plant protection authorities.

- **Action points from the 54th FP meeting**

Chair Victoria Villamar gave the floor to **Elina Ciekure (EFSA)** for a short recap on the Action Points (APs) from 54th Focal Points (FP) meeting in 24-25 April, Parma. There were 4 APs stemming from the last meeting covering needs for additional overview of FP tailor-made activities deliverables, subcontracting process, workshop on NAMs organised by Norway, and improvements in retroplanner regarding TMA submission and prioritization process. Several action points will be addressed during the 55th plenary meeting, and all will be completed until the end of the year.

Minutes, presentations and recordings are published and available to FP via MS Teams or on EFSA webpage.

II. EFSA's IPA III Action 2023-2026 opportunities for cooperation

Chair Victoria Villamar gave the floor to **Matthew Ramon (EFSA)** to briefly set the scene for agenda item on "EFSA's IPA III Action 2023-2026 opportunities for cooperation" by shortly reminding on aim of the IPA III Action and on the main highlights from the 1st year of implementation.

2.2 Eurobarometer study in IPA countries

Chair Victoria Villamar gave the floor to **Jasmin Hadji Vasilev (North Macedonia)** and **Nadežda Dukić (Serbia)** for a presentation on the Eurobarometer study results in IPA countries. The presentation on the Eurobarometer study in IPA countries summarized the % of citizens trust in EU food safety institutions and national food safety institutions according to the surveys in 2019 and 2022. It highlighted the biggest concern of the citizens according to the survey results and marked the follow up activities of the respective countries to address the specific concern(s).



2.3 Main takeaway from national activities in Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Chair Valbona Paluka gave the floor to **Serap Hanci (Türkiye)** and to **Dalibor Vidacak (Bosnia and Herzegovina)** to inform about main takeaways from recent national activities. **Serap Hanci** debriefed that on 7th June 2024, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye organised the World Food Safety Day to raise awareness about the opportunities available for the national food safety structure through the collaboration between EFSA and pre-accession countries in the area of food safety risk assessment. EFSA was represented by the Chief Scientist Carlos das Neves, who delivered a presentation on “EFSA’s role in the EU food safety system & cooperation with Türkiye”. The event registered around 800 participants, including EU Delegation, FAO, representatives from collaborating ministries, universities, NGO’s, and members of Scientific Commissions.

Dalibor Vidacak debriefed on the set of activities throughout the June 2024 organized by the Food Safety Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to celebrate the World Food Safety Day. The events included training on the use of ImproRisk model for the officials from Bosnia and Herzegovina organised by the State General Laboratory of Cyprus and conference to raise the awareness of the food safety in the context of EFSA and national competent authorities. EFSA was represented by Kerstin Gross-Helmert and Victor Lopez Saavedra who delivered presentations on cooperation opportunities for IPA beneficiaries with EFSA and on EFSA and One Health approach of EFSA. The event was regarded as “first and biggest inter-sectorial event in Bosnia and Herzegovina” with a total number of 90-100 participants representing Ministries, agencies, laboratories, the event was attended by representatives from EU Delegation, Embassies (USA and Czech Republic) and offices of WHO/FAO/UNDP/USAID and representatives from NGOs.

2.4 Tailor-made activities from IPA point of view

Chair Valbona Paluka thanked for the overview and gave the floor to **Mirjana Lekic (Montenegro)** to deliver a presentation on the tailor-made activities (TMA) from IPA point of view. The presentation focused on how IPA countries can participate in TMA (i.e. through subcontracting, observing TMA or using materials, tools created through the TMA). **Mirjana Lekic** highlighted examples of TMA with IPA participation and the interest in new proposals (e.g., BIKE training course and Plant Health webinar; ImproRisk Training; BfR Almanac; One Health Botulism). Moreover, the presentation focused on the benefits for IPA countries participation in tailor-made activities, like – increased opportunities for networking, but also opportunity to have a first-hand experience and knowledge in building up the risk assessment capacities following the examples of the EU Member States.

2.5 IPA III Action – what is in the pipeline until September 2025

Chair Valbona Paluka gave the floor to **Sanja Ilieva** to provide an overview of the capacity building events organised by the IPA Action in 2025. The presentation covered the trainings, meetings and other activities designed to advance the capacities of IPA experts to participate in the work of EFSA and build their capacities. Data reporting initiatives were presented (regarding themes such as animal health or chemical monitoring), as well as training programmes opportunities, ranging from the IPA Autumn school to the different workshops. The need-based ad-hoc trainings opportunities have also been highlighted.



III. Engagement with art. 36 organizations and beyond including international engagement

Chair Victoria Villamar opened the second day and gave the floor to **Matthew Ramon (EFSA)** to moderate the morning session.

3.1 Introduction from EFSA and presentation on EFSA engagement

Matthew Ramon during the presentation on engagement at EFSA emphasized the increasing complexity of policies, innovation, society and science in general. The presentation focused on how EFSA engages with various external parties, by gathering intelligence from ecosystem actors, building and maintaining relations and engaging with partners, stakeholders and communities on a topic basis. Tools for risk assessment were also presented, ranging from calls for data to focus groups.

During the plenary discussion FP highlighted the reasons for engaging, focusing on the necessity to gather and exchange knowledge, the importance of preventing duplication and of getting feedback. The need to tackle the complexity of science and innovation was also focused on, alongside the ability to create partnerships and contacts, which is linked to the need for a holistic cooperation approach.

Some of the mentioned challenges were the difficulty in setting joint objectives and identifying common aims and partners, the complex building of a trust relation, the alignment on ethics and time and resources limitations.

3.2 Management of the Art. 36 network

Matthew Ramon gave the floor to **Phoebe Young (Germany)** to inform about German experience on the management of the art. 36 network, from the structured national process on the nomination of new organizations, to the updates of the art. 36 database and the national yearly report of activities. The presentation also focused on the description of the type of meetings and on the routine interactions of the German art. 36 network.

Matthew Ramon thanked **Phoebe Young** and gave the floor to **Céline Bahuon (France)** to inform about French experience on the management of the art. 36 network.

The presentation highlighted the annual meetings with the French art. 36 organizations, including a note of appreciation for EFSA participation as an opportunity for the organizations to have direct exchanges with EFSA. It also focused on possible solutions to overcome the hurdles of the identification of bottlenecks in engagement calls, of training needs and of partnership opportunities.

3.3 Breakout groups on Engagement with Art. 36 and beyond including international engagement

The breakout groups discussed on questions related to challenges and approaches applied by different countries on international engagement, engagement with international organisations focusing and on engagement with national competent authorities.

Identified challenges included organisations remit to engage outside EU and the lack of a structured approach for the engagement. The examples of implemented and proposed solutions included the focus on an engagement based on – available engagement and scientific opportunities, the language or the vicinity of the countries.



For the engagement with national competent authorities, the challenges identified were mostly about the lack of financial and human resources from FP and organisation sides, the difficulty to obtain responses and feedback from approached organisations and the gap between the amount of effort spent regarding the engagement received. The discussed solutions included direct and personalized contacts with relevant experts and organizations, regular physical meetings, and different approaches for information and opportunities dissemination.

IV. Focal Point activities

Chair Victoria Villamar opened the afternoon session and gave the floor to the **moderator Sérgio Potier Rodeia**.

4.1 FP support to EFSA partnerships

Sérgio Potier Rodeia gave the floor to **Gorgias Garofalakis (EFSA)** for the presentation on how FP can support EFSA partnerships and what tools are available by EFSA on raising visibility of EFSA calls. The presentation provided an overview of the EFSA calls currently open and reiterated the main means EFSA uses to promote calls and help the FPs in their work on call dissemination. Among other **Gorgias** made special reference to webinars as a means for EFSA to present scientific calls to an audience of interested parties, giving the chance to the audience to pose questions and receive answers. A new element piloted in the recent Novel Food call, featured a dedicated “partner discovery session” intended to encourage networking, in which participants with interest in the call could present themselves to their peers. The intervention finished with a question to the plenary discussion on what can be improved to have a more impactful promotion of EFSA’s partnership calls at national level, with particular interest on the FPs’ reflection on the utility and impact of the EFSA webinars. FPs are encouraged to provide feedback at any time either directly or via the EFSA FP Team.

4.2 Tailor-made activities proposals’ assessment – results, main findings and next steps

Sérgio Potier Rodeia gave the floor to **Elina Ciekure (EFSA)** and **Martina Mannis (EFSA)** for the presentation on the tailor-made activities’ proposals’ assessment. The presentation focused on the success factors and lessons learned from the 2024 EFSA assessment and AF Trio advice processes and on the status update of the EFSA’s prioritization exercise. Moreover, it informed about the current status of the prioritization process not yet finished due to a scrutinised assessment to fit the available budget. The final list of the prioritized proposals for the grant will be shared not later than the upcoming Advisory Forum meeting (2-3 October 2024). Lastly, the presentation highlighted the next steps and the retroplanner for 2025, with an indication of the timeframe for the next TMA proposals’ submission window.

4.3 Status update on ongoing TM activities

4.3.1 Organisation of a workshop on Risk Assessment and Ranking of Risks in European Food Safety Systems

Sérgio Potier Rodeia gave the floor to **Danai Papanastasiou (Greece)** and **Foteini Tzoumanika (Greece)** for the presentation on the upcoming workshop organised under the TMA – Knowledge transfer and networking across the RA community. The event aims to



facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience among scientists in MSs and gather information on the scientific approaches and implemented methodologies to rank and prioritize risks. It also aims to stimulate interactions and collaborations regarding the improvement of the current approaches for the monitoring of risks in the food chain. Greek colleagues invited FP and EFSA to support the identification of speakers and participants to the workshop.

4.3.2 Status update on ongoing TM activities on PFAS and Food supplements

Sérgio Potier Rodeia gave the floor to **Coralie Bultel (France)** and **Samuel Contreras (France)** to present the status update on the two TMA lead by France – Initiative Group on PFAS and Identification of emerging risks associated with food supplements, other than vitamins and minerals. Presentation provided reminder on the background and aims of the activities and the composition of countries implementing them. Both activities are running as planned following set timeframes. Countries are invited to join the activities also as observers.

4.3.3 Feedback from the workshop organized under implementation on the TMA on NAMs

Sérgio Potier Rodeia gave the floor to **Gisle Solstad (Norway)** for the presentation on the workshop organised under the tailor-made activity on Building confidence and advancing integration of NAM data in risk assessment and risk management decision-making. The presentation aimed at giving the FP a first-hand summary of the work done so far in the project, in terms of the organizing of the workshop, and the planning of the next steps.

Gisle provided summary on the 1st workshop organised in Oslo 18 – 20 June 2024 with 50 participants representing organisations from EU and international partners, and also EFSA. The workshop setup included discussion in small group discussions and was the first phase of the CHANGE project's three phases – «explore – reflect – design». The 1st workshop will be supported by 3 follow-up online workshops take place in October to enable involvement of more persons within the regulatory toxicology system in the CHANGE project, and to discuss and ask follow-up questions from the June-workshop. Presentation was concluded with announcement of the 2nd workshop to be held in Oslo, 24 – 26 June 2025.

V. AOB

5.1 The priority allergen list in Annex II of the FIC Regulation

Sérgio Potier Rodeia gave the floor to **Grainne Redmond (Ireland)** for an item in relation to the priority allergen list in Annex II of the FIC Regulation. Irish FP brought to EFSA and FP attention question they have received from their national experts on the 14 priority allergens that must be included in the labelling. Recently FAO and WHO have revised allergens and based on their review they recommend that there are only 8 priority allergens. Questions were related to how the decisions were made and 14 priority allergens were identified in EU and do EFSA intend to review priority allergens.



5.2 Update on EFSA independence policy

Sérgio Potier Rodeia gave the floor to **Victoria Villamar (EFSA)** for the update on EFSA independence policy. **Victoria Villamar** briefly described the main conclusions and given recommendations stemming from the EFSA independence policy external evaluation carried out in Autumn 2023. Important message brought during the presentation was that the recently (20 June 2024) revised and approved independence policy is not in force yet. It will come into effect as of the adoption of the related implementing decision and procedure. The implementing rules are foreseen to be adopted by the Q1 of 2025. EFSA FP team will organize dedicated session to FP and AF.

5.3 Support from FP on the dissemination of the call for the EFSA Executive Director

Sérgio Potier Rodeia gave the floor to **Victoria Villamar (EFSA)** to invite FP to support dissemination of the information on the call for the EFSA Executive Director position. The repeated call was launched in the beginning of September by European Commission and is open for application from eligible candidates until the end of September.

Chair Victoria Villamar gave the floor to **Chair Valbona Paluka** for the closure remarks from the side of the hosting country.

Chair Victoria Villamar closed the meeting and invited FP to the next plenary meeting on 13-14 November 2024, online.

<u>Action 1</u>	IPA countries	to initiate mapping of interest for involvement in TMA and topics ideas for cooperation under TMA.
<u>Action 2</u>	FP	to promote more active engagement and to support timely provision of information to EFSA on the events on food safety, risk assessment and other items relevant to the EFSA remit.
<u>Action 3</u>	EFSA	to share community management and strategic engagement toolkits and to organise dedicated sessions on these topics.
<u>Action 4</u>	FP	to provide feedback on improvements to have a more impactful promotion of EFSA's partnership calls at national level.
<u>Action 5</u>	EFSA and FP	to address the question from Ireland regarding background information of the past prioritisation and possible revision of the priority allergens listed in the Annex II of the FIC Regulation.



<u>Action 6</u>	FP	to support dissemination of the information on EFSA ED position.
<u>Action 7</u>	EFSA	to organise dedicated session to FP and AF on EFSA Independence policy.