

COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTS NETWORK

Minutes of the 17th meeting



20-21 May 2025

09:00-18:00 / 09:00-13:00

Minutes agreed on 9 June

Location: EFSA - Parma (Board Room) and Webconference

Attendees:

- o Network Participants:

Country	Member State Organisation
Austria	Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES)
Belgium	Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (AFSCA)
Bulgaria	Ministry of Agriculture
Croatia	Croatian Agency For Agriculture and Food
Cyprus	Ministry of Health
Czech Republic	Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic Ewing s.r.o.
Denmark	National Food Institute
Estonia	Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture National Centre for Laboratory Research and Risk Assessment (LABRIS)
Finland	Finnish Food Authority
France	French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES)
Germany	German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR)
Greece	Hellenic Food Authority
Hungary	National Food Chain Safety Office (NEBIH) University of Veterinary Medicine
Ireland	Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI)
Italy	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie (IZS)
Latvia	Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment "BIOR"
Lithuania	State Food and Veterinary Service
Luxembourg	Luxembourg Veterinary and Food Administration (ALVA)
Netherlands	The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA)
Norway	Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety (VKM)
Portugal	Economic and Food Safety Authority (ASAE)
Romania	National Sanitary, Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (ANSVSA)



Slovak Republic	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic
Slovenia	National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ)
Spain	Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition (AESAN)
Sweden	Swedish Food Agency

- Observers:
Ministry of Health (Italy); National Food Authority AKU (Albania); Food Safety Agency (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Agency of Food and Veterinary of Kosovo (Kosovo*); Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary, and Phytosanitary Affairs (Montenegro); Food and Veterinary Agency (North Macedonia); Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management- Veterinary Directorate (Serbia); Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, General Directorate of Food and Control, Department of Risk Assessment (Turkey).
- EFSA:
COM Unit: Georgios Alaveras, Francesca Avanzini, Edward Bray, Ricardo Miguel Carvalho Rodrigues, Irma Ceka, Elisa Corsini, Yan Covolan, Matilde Garcia Gomez, Nadine Gelmar, Barbara Ghizzoni, Arthur Healy, Arianna Lardiello, Anatolie Luca, Giovanni Mancarella, Nicoletta Manghi, Francesca Matteucci, Matteo Mercati, Sharon Monti, Andrea Nironi, Filippo Positano, James Ramsay, Gianluca Rossi, Laura Sanchez, Anthony Ian Mark Smith, Joana Isabel Sousa Lourenço, Viktorija Stonyte, Giorgia Zamariola, Piero Zilio.

1. Welcome

James Ramsay (EFSA) welcomed the participants, and the agenda was adopted with no changes. The Chair then welcomed Bernhard Url to the meeting, emphasizing the importance of trust and in-person interactions for effective communication.

2. Welcome by EFSA's Acting Executive Director

Bernhard Url (EFSA) announced his plan to step down as Acting Executive Director of EFSA at the end of August 2025. He mentioned that the process for finding a new executive director is underway, with a decision expected by the end of June. He highlighted the challenges in achieving coordinated risk communication across Europe, citing differences in cultures, languages, and approaches to food safety as significant barriers. Despite these challenges, he acknowledged the progress made and emphasized the goal of achieving a coherent and coordinated food safety communication system across Europe.



3. AF/FP update

Barbara Gallani (EFSA) provided updates from the last Advisory Forum meeting, including discussions on the One Health report, azole resistance, PFAS, and avian influenza, highlighting the need for intensified monitoring, communication and collaboration to address these growing threats.

4. Comm Lab on azoles

Sharon Monti (EFSA) presented the communication activities on azole resistance, highlighting the impact of azole fungicides on resistance in *Aspergillus* fungi. She presented the materials developed in collaboration with the other ENVI agencies. She also emphasized the importance of a One Health approach in addressing azole resistance, involving experts from human and veterinary medicine, agriculture, and environmental sciences.

Participants agreed that communication efforts around this topic need to be strengthened.

ACTION: EFSA to make its communication materials available to the CEN network to repurpose as they deem fit and that we would return to this topic at a future meeting. Participants to upload any possible input collected via the questionnaire shared prior to the meeting in the relevant SharePoint folder.

5. Coordinated Communication activities | Key country issues and updates from the MSCC Community

5.1 CZ presented the results of a survey mapping the current situation in food safety communication in the Czech Republic, including data from the public, experts, and communication specialists.

5.2 DE provided an update on their coordinated communication efforts, including the OurSafeFood website and newsletter. She also highlighted improvements in the coordination and sharing of information on food safety issues with other federal state institutions in Germany.

5.3 ES presented a campaign to raise awareness about the risks of consuming fish species with high mercury content, targeting vulnerable populations such as pregnant women and children. She highlighted the collaboration with regional authorities and the positive media response.

5.4 FR presented ANSES' assessment of cannabidiol (CBD), highlighting the classification of CBD as a presumed reproductive toxicant and the public consultation by ECHA.



5.5 IE shared progress in defining target audiences, constructing stakeholder networks, and participating in campaigns, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and existing resources.

ACTION: Participants to share with Lucia Vogt possible topics for inclusion in the OurSafeFood portal and newsletter.

6. Update on EFSA's campaigns

6.1. The Chair gave a brief update on the life cycle of EFSA's campaigns. He mentioned that the Plant Health For Life (PH4L) campaign will be gradually phased out during 2026 to be replaced by a possible campaign on avian influenza in 2027. He said that the Safe2Eat (S2E) campaign would still have a citizen focus but it would take a slightly different form.

6.2 Sharon Monti (EFSA) provided updates on the S2E campaign, including the recent launch, key messages and upcoming activities, including plans for World Food Safety Day 2025. She also highlighted the importance of increasing awareness and trust in the EU food safety system. Tony Smith and Giorgia Zamariola (EFSA) introduced a new concept focusing on eating habits and using data from the EFSA food consumption database to evolve this campaign in 2027 and ensure its continued relevance. They pointed out that although food habits differ across Europe, there is one food system that ensures the safety of what we eat. Participants stressed the need to adapt the messages of the campaigns to different national contexts and rely on solid and updated consumption data.

6.3 Laura Sánchez (EFSA) discussed the PL4L campaign, its objectives, key messages, and upcoming activities, emphasizing the importance of engagement and advocacy for plant health protection.

6.4 Francesca Avanzini (EFSA) presented the new mandate from the European Commission for risk communication support on avian influenza, focusing on biosecurity in poultry. She explained that the first deliverable was a communication toolkit to be made available by 15 September 2025. Tony Smith (EFSA) presented the other two deliverables of the mandate focussing on audience research, planned for December 2025 and March 2026.

ACTION: Interested participants to follow the ASAE live stream event on World Food Safety Day on 7 June at 11:45 AM CET.

ACTION: Participants to upload possible communication materials developed in the area of biosecurity in poultry to the dedicated SharePoint space by 15 June 2025.



7. Crisis Communication

7.1. Giovanni Mancarella and Anatolie Luca (EFSA) provided an update on the EFSA's crisis communication roadmap, including capacity building, workshops for spokesperson, and simulation exercises, emphasizing the importance of continued preparedness and collaboration. They also presented the revamp of the risk communication guidelines as a potential joint project for 2026. They clarified that the main update would cover case studies, for which EFSA would provide a template to volunteering Member States.

7.2. DE shared the BfR experience with the Foot and Mouth (FMD) outbreak in Germany emphasising that, as a risk assessment body, they were not at the forefront of managing the situation. She outlined the steps she took on the day the first case was detected, which resulted in timely communication being published on the BfR website.

7.3 HU shared her experience of conducting a risk assessment on how the University of Veterinary Medicine handled the FMD outbreak in Hungary. She thoroughly highlighted the proactive approach they took, collaboration with authorities, and communication efforts to address the situation.

ACTION: CEN members invited to express interest in taking part in updating the risk communication guidelines before the next CEN meeting on 22–23 October 2025.

ACTION: MSCC and CEN members invited to attend the Crisis Communication training taking place in September 2025.

8. Media & social media round up

Edward Bray (EFSA) presented the media highlights since the last CEN meeting. He emphasized key topics such as avian influenza, African swine fever and antimicrobial resistance. He also discussed the impact of media coverage in different countries. Filippo Positano (EFSA) discussed the use of Instagram and YouTube Shorts to target younger audiences by leveraging trends and cultural references to engage users. He also announced the launch of a WhatsApp channel to share information with a wider audience, including people in countries with limited access to social media.

9. Social science update

9.1 Giorgia Zamariola (EFSA) presented an update on the COMET project, which focuses on communication and engagement methods for food safety. She outlined the project's four focus areas (i.e. false information, transparency initiatives, consumer trade-offs and the link between risk perception and behaviour), highlighting ongoing and future activities in the areas of stakeholder engagement and consumer behaviour testing.



9.2 Tony Smith (EFSA) provided an update on the fish and seafood consumption awareness survey, explaining the background to it and how national advice impacts consumption habits. Georgios Alaveras (EFSA) presented fish consumption patterns, highlighting differences in consumption between the general population and pregnant women, and the sources of information for those who changed their consumption habits.

9.3 Joana Lourenço (EFSA) presented the results of the flash poll on African swine fever (ASF), discussing the level of awareness, information sources, perceptions of who plays a role in spreading ASF, and the impact of risk communication messages on support for measures to reduce the spread. She noted that providing a risk communication message significantly increased support for restricting access to green areas in affected zones.

9.4 Joana Lourenço (EFSA) provided a brief update on the 2025 Eurobarometer survey, which will be published in September. She highlighted the key topics covered in the survey, i.e. food safety perceptions, awareness, and risk perceptions. She also mentioned that a teaser on the findings will be released on the occasion of World Food Safety Day.

ACTION: EFSA to share top line messages from the Eurobarometer results with Member States ahead of World Food Safety Day on 7 June.

ACTION: EFSA to organise an info-session on the Eurobarometer results with Member States ahead of publication in September 2025.

10. EFSA's communication calendar

The Chair presented the communications calendar, outlining key upcoming publications and events, including World Food Safety Day, opinions on styrene, fluoride, avian influenza, and various other topics. He mentioned the importance of these publications and their potential impact on public health and safety, emphasizing the need for coordination and collaboration in communication activities. The importance of good planning in terms of publication around the summer period, given the variation in leave schedules across EU, was acknowledged.

ACTION: Participants to confirm interest in attending the Hot topic Call on styrene by 23 May.

ACTION: EFSA to make available the communication calendar on the CEN SharePoint in a .pdf format.



11. Updates on the MSCC Community

11.1 Francesca Matteucci (EFSA) provided an update on the Member State Communication Coordinators (MSCC) activities, highlighting the different configurations chosen, key activities, and reflections on what went well and what did not in the first cycle. She also provided a recap of the objectives for the new cycle, flagging upcoming MSCC meeting in June and October as well as training opportunities.

11.2 Yan Covolan (EFSA) and NO introduced the new SharePoint forum, explaining how it will facilitate collaboration and the sharing of resources within the MSCC. They also mentioned that DE was involved in developing this tool.

11.3 Yan Covolan (EFSA) presented the revamped SharePoint space, showcasing the new homepage and available resources. He then provided a brief overview of the Learning Catalogue, offering insights into the satisfaction and attendance rates of previous sessions and encouraging participants to enrol in the upcoming session on crisis communication.

ACTION: EFSA to provide a tutorial on the use of the SharePoint Forum.

ACTION: MSCCs to share relevant communication materials in the Forum and upload them to the relevant folder.

12.AOB

12.1 Tony Smith (EFSA) announced a risk communication training programme for IPA countries, scheduled for late October in Parma. The training will cover a mix of theory and practice, including audience analysis, risk perceptions, and visual communication

12.2 HR announced that Croatia will host the World Congress of Agricultural Journalists next year, highlighting the opportunity for EFSA to promote its work and messages to a global audience.

13. Closure of the meeting

The Chair wrapped-up the discussions and announced that the item on AI would be postponed until the October meeting. He thanked the participants present and online for their active engagement throughout the meeting, thanked the EFSA staff. The meeting closed as scheduled.