

Location : Podgorica, Montenegro and online

Chair: Sérgio Potier-Rodeia / Cristina Alonso Andicoberry

Attendees:

Last name	First name	Member state
Meusburger	Lukas	Austria
Boyen	Jens	Belgium
Grigorov	Stefan	Bulgaria
Polihronova	Lilyana	Bulgaria
Buzjak Služek	Vlatka	Croatia
Lendic	Barbara	Croatia
Benes	Petr	Czech Republic
Stavroulakis	Georgios	Cyprus
Beltoft	Vibe	Denmark
Lund Diemer	Sanna	Denmark
Priisalu	Piret	Estonia
Siekkinen	Kirsi-Maarit	Finland
Bahuon	Celine	France
Bultel	Coralie	France
Contreras	Samuel	France
Friese	Sharleen	Germany
Schoene	Julia	Germany
Papanastasiou	Danai	Greece
Tzoumanika	Foteini	Greece
Prisztóka	Renáta	Hungary
Tamás	Tamara	Hungary
Olafsson	Grimur	Iceland
Redmond	Gráinne	Ireland
Perrella	Alessandra	Italy
D'Archivo	Massimo	Italy
Marcone	Maria Felicita	Italy
Giacomini	Denise	Italy
La Rocca	Cinzia	Italy
Ciekure	Elina	Latvia



Fougeras	Miriam	Luxembourg
Vilkoicaitė	Agnė	Lithuania
Pisani	Giannella	Malta
van der Lugt	Timme	Netherlands
Solstad	Gisle	Norway
Yaa Boahene	Nana	Norway
Baraniak	Justyna	Poland
Jurczynska	Liliana	Poland
Monteiro	Sarogini	Portugal
Nabais	Pedro	Portugal
Rădulescu	Simona	Romania
Popovici	Gina	Romania
Dringušová	Gabriela	Slovakia
Lépesová	Kristina	Slovakia
Janzekovic	Matej	Slovenia
Llarena Martinez	Beatriz	Spain
Paterson	Emma	Sweden
Nyberg	Karin	Sweden
Widenfalk	Anneli	Sweden

Last name	First name	Observer country
Paluka	Valbona	Albania
Vidacak	Dalibor	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Dibrani	Yllka	Kosovo ¹
Joheski	Martin	North Macedonia
Lekic	Mirjana	Montenegro
Dukic	Nadezda	Serbia
Engeli	Barbara	Switzerland
Hanci	Serap	Türkiye

EFSA Representatives	
Sergio Potier-Rodeia (Chair)	Cristina Alonso Andicoberry (Co-Chair)
Victoria Villamar (Head of Unit, Speaker)	Julia Miriam Finger (FP Team, speaker)

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.



Ana Tasheva (FP Team, speaker)	Chloe Russo (FP Team, speaker)
Sanja Ilieva (ENREL Unit, speaker)	Kerstin Gross-Helmert (ENREL Unit, speaker)
Gloria Lopez Galvez (FIP Unit, speaker)	Laura Sanmartin Cabo (FIP Unit, speaker)
Gorgias Garofalakis (KNOW Unit, facilitator)	Monica Ingeaua (KNOW Unit, facilitator)
Vittoria Flamini (IDATA, facilitator)	Carlos Garcia (EFSA contractor, note-taker)
Mathew Wintercross (EFSA contractor, note-taker)	

57 participants attended the meeting, representing Focal Point (FP) network members and alternates from MS, Iceland and Norway, as well as observers from Switzerland and IPA countries.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

Chair Sérgio Potier Rodeia opened the 61st Focal Point meeting and welcomed participants attending in Podgorica, Montenegro, and online. Held in the context of the IPA EXPO event, the meeting took place on the afternoon of 27 and the morning of 28 May.

The **Chair** expressed enthusiasm for the two days ahead and introduced the agenda topics. The Focal Points were invited to raise any new items to be discussed under AOB, and Finland initiated one item regarding BIKE training. During the second day of the meeting, two additional items were raised under AOB regarding the differences between Knowledge Junction and FRAE, and the departure of the Maltese Focal Point member.

2. HEALTH CHECK – UPDATE FROM AND INPUT TO THE WORK OF THE MS TASK FORCE ON THE NEXT FP FRAMEWORK

The Chair gave the floor to **Gisle Soltad (FP Norway) and Julia Finger (EFSA)**.

Gisle presented the work and methodology of the Task Force working on the future Focal Point Operational Framework, starting in 2028. He outlined the strategic drivers for the framework, in particular MS needs, speed, innovation and partnerships.

Julia presented the three pillars - support, connect and incubate – outlining the proposed structure of the future framework. She further explained how each pillar is being developed and how, together, they are intended to address a range of needs and activities, from support and science to partnerships and incubation.

A novel feature has been introduced under support to science, particularly for generic mandates, regulated products and pesticides. It aims to systematise EFSA’s requests for information and anticipate needs more proactively, giving Focal Points more time to prepare for and respond to these requests. The session also proposed a definition for the tailor-made activities, addressing their future scope. Following the presentation, the chair opened the floor for questions and comments.



The second part of the day consisted of interactive breakout groups, during which five groups reviewed two topics on: 1) organisation of data activities and 2) cooperation with Art.36 organisations. The day concluded with a brief summary of the main takeaways of the group discussions and the note-takers provided the collected comments to EFSA for further review and input for the Task Force.

3. CURRENT AND FUTURE IPA ACTION

3.1 FEEDBACK FROM THE MEETING WITH THE NATIONAL COORDINATORS

Chair Sérgio Potier-Rodeia gave the floor to **Victoria Villamar (EFSA)**.

Victoria provided an oral update on the meeting with the national coordinators held during the National Awareness event. She confirmed that IPA Action IV will begin in August 2026 and will initially involve the current seven beneficiary countries. In addition to the current observer members, two more countries – Ukraine and Moldova, will formally start the process of joining, bringing the total number of IPA members to nine.

Victoria addressed two main aspects of the work of the IPA countries. The first concerns the defined roles of national and assistant coordinators. A clearer understanding of their functions and responsibilities is essential to the programme's success. The second is strengthening the engagement and participation of national actors so they can contribute more actively with their knowledge and expertise while also developing within the network.

3.2 ACHIEVEMENTS OF CURRENT IPA ACTION AND THE FUTURE OF IPA ACTION

The Chair gave the floor to **Sanja Ilieva and Kerstin Gross-Helmert (EFSA)**.

Sanja opened the session with an overview of IPA Action III and its aim to further align IPA food safety systems with European food safety fora. She highlighted key achievements, including participation in networks, capacity-building initiatives and increased scientific publications.

Kerstin further addressed the upcoming IPA Action 2026-2029 and the preparatory measures that are taking place to support the integration of the beneficiaries into the work of EFSA, the Member States and EU institutions.

3.3 EUROBAROMETER STUDY IN IPA: RESULTS AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

The Chair gave the floor to **Yilka Dibrani (FP XK) and Martin Josheski (FP MK)**.

The presentation outlined the results of the Eurobarometer study in the seven IPA countries, which captured measures on public opinion, awareness and perceptions on food safety. The findings highlighted the existing different realities among the countries and identified key messages and follow-up actions to address challenges and strengthen consumer perceptions in the region.



3.4 ENHANCED RISK ASSESSMENT CAPACITIES: ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

The Chair gave the floor to **Nadezda Dukic (FP RS) & Valbona Paluka (FP AL)**.

The Focal Points from Serbia and Albania emphasised the importance of strengthening risk assessment capacity in IPA countries, including data collection, EU reporting, crisis preparedness, and cooperation with EFSA and EU member states. The presentation outlined national risk assessment structures and touched upon achievements in this area. It noted that reliance on EFSA risk assessments and closer cooperation have helped improve awareness, stakeholder engagement, preparedness, and trust-based communication.

Chair Sergio Potier Rodeia handed over the chairing role to **Cristina Alonso Andicoberry**.

4. TAILOR-MADE ACTIVITIES 2026

The Chair gave the floor to **Chloe Russo (EFSA)**.

Chloe provided an overview of the submitted TMAs during the submission window (1st March - 15th April), which received a record number of 27 proposals. It was again reiterated that activities are limited to 14 months, as this timeframe is linked to the expiry of the Framework Partnership Agreements. All proposals must therefore be finalised by 15 April 2028. Currently, the assessment process and advice are ongoing, with prioritisation expected to be completed by the end of September. She also included a broader overview of activities and budget since the start of the current FP Framework.

Additionally, in response to a question, it was clarified that there will be no 2027 submission exercise, as no Operational Framework has yet been established for 2028 onwards.

5. EU GUIDANCE LIBRARY AND 2026 MAINTENANCE EXERCISE

The Chair gave the floor to **Laura Sanmartin Cabo and Gloria Lopez-Galvez (EFSA)**.

Laura thanked the Focal Points for their contributions to the development of the EU Library and announced that it was published on the EFSA website in April 2026 with a total of 59 documents. She gave a brief live demonstration of the Library and its main features. Following that, she presented the activities planned for the Library's maintenance, proposed to take place once a year; this includes adding new entries and/or updating the existing information. The maintenance will be carried out via an EU Survey which will be open from 1 to 30 June.

Gloria continued to present the second part of the item 5 referring to Regulation 2025/2457, which aims to foster cooperation with Member States in the area of chemical risks assessments. The need to collaborate in the development of Guidance Documents (GDs) emerges from such provision and therefore it is needed to know the GDs that are being prepared or planned to by MSs. To enable this communication from FP to EFSA, three channels were suggested. From the counterpart side, EFSA provides this information to AF via the [Work-Programme 2025-2027](#).



During the meeting, questions were raised about the definition of the guidance documents. It was clarified that this information is available on EFSA's website: [EFSA guidance documents | EFSA](#) - and in case of uncertainties, Focal Points can contact EFSA to confirm whether documents are suitable for inclusion in the library. Regarding the GD in preparation, FPs expressed the wish to consult AF members on that. Some suggestions for fine tuning the information displayed in the Library were given by some FPs.

MS CONTRIBUTION TO THE RA INITIATIVES HUB

The Chair gave the floor to **Gloria Lopez-Galvez (EFSA)**.

Gloria presented the importance of including relevant risk assessments and research projects from Member States in the Risk Assessment Initiatives Hub, highlighting recent cases where important national risk assessments (e.g., acetaldehyde and glycerol) were not found in the Hub but were relevant for EFSA opinions. Although contributions are voluntary, they can significantly improve its usefulness. She also noted that this issue is linked to the amendment of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 given by Regulation 2025/2457, in particular on Article 30 on diverging scientific opinions, which requires EFSA and Member States to cooperate to avoid conflicting scientific views. In this context, more comprehensive sharing through the hub becomes even more essential.

During the discussion, it was highlighted that EFSA may also submit targeted requests for information to further improve the hub's completeness and relevance.

6. NATIONAL EVENT-CAPACITY BUILDING REGARDING CLAIMS MADE ON FOOD

The Chair gave the floor to **Elina Ciekure (Focal Point Latvia)**.

Elina presented the outcomes of a training workshop held on 5 March in Riga and online: Training workshop on Health and nutrition claims: regulatory framework, evaluation of claims, and their scientific basis.

The event brought together 160 participants. It was organised by BIOR experts and the State Food and Veterinary Service, with support from EFSA FP, EFSA CEN, and MSCC. The training addressed both theoretical and practical aspects, with a strong focus on scientific requirements behind health claims applications. Participants reported a high level of satisfaction, even from experienced participants who learned new information. The event demonstrated the value of targeted, interactive capacity-building events and encouraged strengthening cooperation in the area of claims.

7. EUROPEAN EXCELLENCE LABEL/XORA LAUNCH EVENT

The Chair gave the floor to **Timme van der Lugt (Focal Point Netherlands)**.



This session focussed on the xORA platform (previously EEL), developed in collaboration with Austria, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Croatia, Hungary, and Italy, to address the shortage of risk assessors in Europe. The platform aggregates and reviews existing courses for risk assessors, making them easily accessible to learners, course providers, and reviewers.

This year, xORA website was updated and an online launch event is planned for learners, featuring talks from EFSA and group members on risk assessor skills and career paths, with interactive elements. The event will take place on 1st July and Focal points were asked to disseminate this information within their networks.

8. AOB

8.1 KNOWLEDGE JUNCTION AND FRAE

There was a need to clarify the difference between Knowledge Junction and the Food Risk Assessment Europe platform (FRAE). The chair addressed their respective purposes.

Overall, using both platforms supports wider dissemination and easier access to scientific work from Member States and pre-accession countries. However, there are small distinctions between the purposes and the creation of the platforms.

FRAE is a section under the EFSA Journal for Member States' scientific publications, including opinions and other publications. It is a relatively new platform, and pre-accession countries are also encouraged to use it for greater visibility.

Knowledge Junction is a repository of evidence such as methodologies, risk assessments, scientific publications and other relevant outputs, including materials that may not qualify as formal publications. The chair also encouraged the use of links for easier access and cross-organization visibility.

8.2 BIKE TRAINING

The Finnish Focal Point announced the upcoming BIKE course focused on exposure assessment, supported by tailor-made funding. The course is a practical capacity-building initiative that provides hands-on training in exposure modelling and data analysis for risk assessors across Member States. It is intended for risk assessors and experts in quantitative risk assessment, statistics, or related scientific fields. Participation is free of charge and includes an on-site workshop in Helsinki, with travel and accommodation costs covered up to €500 per country. Running from September to November, the course allows each country to nominate one participant. Nominations should be sent directly to the Finnish Focal Point and deadline to provide names is 13 July. Detailed information about the course has been shared via email and Teams.

8.3 DEPARTURE OF MALTA'S FOCAL POINT MEMBER

The meeting concluded with the announcement by the Maltese Focal Point – Gianella Pissani, who is moving to a new professional chapter of her life. She thanked colleagues for collaboration



and fruitful exchanges, highlighting the growth and importance of the Focal Point Network and EFSA's support, especially in capacity building and data initiatives.



ANNEX I. SUMMARY OF THE ACTION POINTS

Action reference	Who	Action
<u>Action 1</u>	EFSA	EFSA to create a concise summary of the contributions collected during the breakout session discussions on the future Focal Point framework.
<u>Action 2</u>	EFSA	EFSA to inform the Advisory Forum, through a written procedure, about the EU Guidance Library and the implications of the Regulation (EU) 2025/2457 concerning cooperation with MS, vis-a-vis collaboration in the development of Guidance documents.
<u>Action 3</u>	FP	Focal Points to review their internal criteria and processes for selecting and sharing relevant documents in the RA Initiative Hub, with a view to improving the completeness and visibility of national contributions.
<u>Action 4</u>	FP	Focal Points to nominate a participant for the BIKE training course and send the nomination directly to the Finnish Focal Point by 13 July 2026.