

Location : Parma, Italy and online

Chair: Victoria Villamar / Sérgio Potier-Rodeia / Cristina Alonso Andicoberry

Attendees:

Focal Point attendees		
Last name	First name	Member state
Meusburger	Lukas	Austria
Boyen	Jens	Belgium
Koeva	Ekaterina	Bulgaria
Polihronova	Lilyana	Bulgaria
Buzjak Služek	Vlatka	Croatia
Benes	Petr	Czech Republic
Stavroulakis	Georgios	Cyprus
Papachrysostomou	Christoforos	Cyprus
Beltoft	Vibe	Denmark
Lund Diemer	Sanna	Denmark
Priisalu	Piret	Estonia
Siekkinen	Kirsi-Maarit	Finland
Bahuon	Celine	France
Bultel	Coralie	France
Contreras	Samuel	France
Raeke	Julia	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
Marcone	Maria Felicita	Italy
Ciekure	Elina	Latvia
Vilkoicaitė	Agnė	Lithuania
Fougeras	Miriam	Luxembourg

MEETING MINUTES – 23-24 September 2026
62nd Focal Point Meeting



Camilleri	Melanie	Malta
van der Lugt	Timme	Netherlands
Kox	Linda	Netherlands
Solstad	Gisle	Norway
Yaa Boahene	Nana	Norway
Baraniak	Justyna	Poland
Furs	Johanna	Poland
Jurczynska	Liliana	Poland
Monteiro	Sarogini	Portugal
Nabais	Pedro	Portugal
Rădulescu	Simona	Romania
Popovici	Gina	Romania
Dringušová	Gabriela	Slovakia
Lépesová	Kristina	Slovakia
Llarena Martinez	Beatriz	Spain
Nyberg	Karin	Sweden
Widenfalk	Anneli	Sweden

Last name	First name	Observer country
Engeli	Barbara	Switzerland

EFSA participants	
Nik Kriz (EFSA Executive Director)	Victoria Villamar (Head of Unit ENREL)
Sergio Potier-Rodeia (Chair)	Cristina Alonso Andicoberry (Co-Chair)
Julia Miriam Finger (FP Team)	Ana Tasheva (FP Team)
Chloe Russo (FP Team)	Gorgias Garofalakis (KNOW)
Frank Verdonk (BIOHAW)	Inma Aznar (BIOHAW)
Sotiria Antoniou (BIOHAW)	Patricia Romero (FDP)
Laura Paltrinieri (FDP)	Dimitra Kardassi (PREV)
Pamela Campbell (FDP)	Donka Popova (ENREL)
Akos Jozwiak (AGoD)	Vittoria Flamini (IDATA)
Anca Stoicescu (IDATA)	Elisa Simeoni (ENREL)
Maria Ciaula (RAL)	Francesca Matteucci (COM)
Matthew Ramon (Head of Unit FDP)	Zoi Mousia (ENREL)
Konstantinos Paraskevopoulos (CSO)	Frank Boelaert (BIOHAW)
Georgios Alaveras (COM)	Stefano Smiroldo (FIN)

Other participants to the meeting



Mathew Wintercross (EFSA contractor)	Carlos Garcia (EFSA contractor)
Paco Camas (EFSA contractor)	Gro Haarklou Mathisen (external speaker)
Estelle Argen (external speaker)	Umida Masharipova (external speaker)

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

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The opening of the 62nd Focal Point meeting was delivered by EFSA's Executive Director **Nik Kriz**. He welcomed participants and thanked the Focal Points for their work and contribution to scientific cooperation across Europe. Referring to EFSA's new strategy, he highlighted innovation, cooperation and partnerships, as well as the need to avoid duplication and strengthen collective efforts in support of European food systems.

Following Nik's opening remarks, **Victoria Villamar**, Head of the ENREL Unit and Chair of the first day, welcomed participants to the 62nd Focal Point Meeting, held in Parma, Italy, and online on the afternoon of 23 September and throughout 24 September.

The **Chair** expressed enthusiasm for the two-day meeting, introduced the agenda and invited Focal Points to propose items under AOB. Although no items were raised immediately, two were subsequently added concerning the new release of BfR's knowledge comics and xORA.

The Chair gave the floor to **Cristina Alonso Andicoberry**, who reviewed the action points from the previous plenary meeting and provided an update on their status.

2. HEALTH CHECK – UPDATE FROM THE TASK FORCE ON THE NEXT FP FRAMEWORK

2.1 TASK FORCE UPDATE

Chair Victoria Villamar gave the floor to **Gisle Solstad (FP Norway)**.

Gisle summarised the Task Force's recent work, including the involvement of scientific units and other actors, as well as the survey of Article 36 organisations. He also provided a reminder of the concept for the new framework and outlined the expected budget reallocation, with funding for tailor-made activities changing from €4 million to €1 million.

Member States raised questions and comments about the new framework's financial decisions and allocation of tasks. It was emphasised that data and communication activities will be taken out of the framework. Some countries supported that the tailor-made-activities played a key role in the framework to strengthen cooperation, while others supported exploring alternative funding options for these activities.

2.2 ART 36 SURVEY

Chair Victoria Villamar gave the floor to **Paco Camas** (EFSA contractor) and **Gorgias Garofalakis** (EFSA).



Paco presented the results of the survey of Article 36 organisations conducted in July and August. The findings showed that, while some highly engaged institutions are already integrated into EFSA's ecosystem, many organisations remain disconnected. He also summarised organisations' overall perceptions of communication and information exchange with EFSA. Gorgias presented the survey findings on seconded national experts at EFSA, highlighting opportunities to improve the benefits and visibility of secondment opportunities.

The survey produced two main recommendations: moving the framework towards more active facilitation and exploring procedural simplification and flexible mobility.

Countries welcomed the survey findings and expressed interest in further cooperation. The Lithuanian Focal Point also offered to share its guide to reading grant calls, which was well received as a resource for national competent organisations.

2.3 INTRODUCTION

The Chair gave the floor to **Julia Finger** and **Frank Verdonk** (EFSA).

Julia encouraged the Focal Points to share their opinions and help shaping the support to science tasks in the next framework. The support to science refers to three broad areas – Regulated products, Generic mandates and Pesticides. Frank highlighted that the framework aims to move from more ad hoc requests to systematic approach, allowing for early engagement in the year N-1.

2.4 AREAS

The Chair gave the floor to **Inma Aznar** and **Sotiria Antoniou** (EFSA).

Inma presented a potential Focal Point-supported initiative on animal health, building on three previous collaborations: the Sigma Country Cards and Data Flow project, and a data-sources project with the European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare. Given the value of these initiatives, Focal Points could help consolidate their results. EFSA therefore proposed developing an interface that combines information on data ownership, flows and source links. Information provided by Focal Points would appear directly, avoiding an additional survey and manual-processing step. EFSA suggested using 2027 as a pilot period to design the interface and clarify practical arrangements and roles with the Focal Points, in order to avoid duplication of work and receive feedback of tasks.

The Chair gave the floor to **Patricia Romero** (EFSA).

Patricia outlined potential support from Focal Points for applications submitted by Member State authorities to EFSA. The aim is to strengthen national coordination, improve access to tools, and enhance the quality and timeliness of applications entering risk assessment.

Patricia presented proposals for Member State support with non-pesticide applications across six food domains. The first focused on network management and could include mapping the current landscape, maintaining the network and ensuring continuity. The second proposal focused on awareness and knowledge-building, including disseminating EFSA guidance and tools, monitoring ESFC and conducting scope checks. Additional support-to-science activities could include ensuring that EFSA Health Check packages reach all relevant competent authorities, promoting EsFC monitoring and collecting feedback.



Several Focal Points asked whether they would be expected to contact applicants or monitor dossiers directly. Patricia clarified that they would neither support applicants directly nor access ESFC or monitor applications. Instead, they would liaise with the responsible competent authorities, ensure that relevant information reaches them and help establish a clear route to EFSA.

Participants also noted that Focal Point organisations may lack authority in animal health or regulated-product areas, have limited contact with industry, handle few applications, or operate outside established processes. EFSA acknowledged that arrangements must be tailored to national circumstances and invited alternative approaches, such as case-by-case support, targeted dissemination, events or capacity-building, rather than a uniform task. Further discussion on the involvement of Focal Points in the area is welcome.

The Chair gave the floor to **Dimitra Kardassi** and **Pamela Campbell** (EFSA).

The speakers proposed exploring Focal Point support for pesticide-related training, knowledge sharing and communication between EFSA and Member State authorities. This could help address differences in national experience, ranging from authorities with extensive application histories to those with limited experience, while enabling lessons to be shared when novel pesticide mechanisms of action arise. Focal Points could also help EFSA monitor the status of assessments at Member State level, as dossiers may remain there for extended periods and complicate planning. As in the non-pesticide area, a country-specific or case-by-case approach was proposed. As next steps, Pamela will present the feedback to the Pesticides Steering Network in mid-October. Further feedback remains welcome.

2.5 SUPPORT TO THE ADVISORY FORUM

Chair Sérgio Potier-Rodeia gave the floor to **Donka Popova** (EFSA).

Donka highlighted the Advisory Forum's role and its close links with the Focal Points' work, and how they complement each other. She presented examples of collaboration between the two networks including the EU-FORA fellowship programme, training and capacity-building activities, and the microbiome initiative.

These examples showed how discussions initiated in one network extend to the other, with each relying on the other's work. The presentation concluded by emphasising the need for further evolution in the collaboration and effective communication between the networks.

2.6 SUPPORT TO DISCUSSION GROUPS: EXAMPLES OF AGOD

The Chair Sérgio Potier-Rodeia gave the floor to **Akos Jozwiak** (Chair of AGoD).

Akos explained that the Advisory Group on Data provides a platform for addressing high-level strategic data issues, with cooperation and partnerships central to its success. He emphasised that Focal Points do not need in-depth technical expertise, but their role is to understand national institutions, experts and research activities, maintain networks, identify relevant contacts, share AGoD information, and connect national organisations with AGoD or data-related projects when needed.



Akos added that AGoD is exploring a European food-safety data space that would offer a single access point across distributed national platforms and databases, without necessarily creating a central repository. Further work is needed on governance, legal and technical matters, and stakeholder needs.

2.7 SUPPORT TO NETWORKS: OVERVIEW OF DATA-RELATED NETWORKS

The Chair gave the floor to **Anca Stoicescu** (EFSA).

Anca presented an overview of EFSA's scientific networks involved in data collection and reporting. The presentation highlighted the essential contribution of network members in ensuring high-quality, harmonised data across Europe through their expertise, active engagement and collaboration throughout the data collection cycle. Their work supports the development and improvement of reporting systems, guidance, data validation and scientific analyses, ultimately contributing to EU reports, scientific opinions and risk assessments. The importance of networks as a key link between national authorities, data providers and EFSA was emphasised and their continued commitment and support acknowledged.

3. NEW NETWORK NOMINATION MODULE

The Chair gave the floor to **Elisa Simeoni** and **Maria Ciaula** (EFSA).

Elisa presented the main features of the new Connect EFSA module for nominating members of EFSA's scientific networks, which replaces the previous online form. Maria introduced a new reporting feature allowing Focal Points to generate reports containing detailed information on participants and alternates, roles, and organisations within their respective countries. Focal Points expressed their positive opinions on the tool, highlighting its clarity and ease of use. Areas for improvement have been identified including access to historical records and notification confirming the submission of nominations. A request to extend the module to Focal Points nominations was noted for internal discussion.

4. FOCAL POINT OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK 2022-2027

4.1 PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES 2027

The Chair gave the floor to **Ana Tasheva** (EFSA).

Ana informed participants that the current financial management system, ABAC, is being replaced by SUMMA as part of a wider modernisation across EU institutions and agencies. To support a smooth transition and avoid delays, the planning exercise for 2027 principal activities should be submitted earlier than in previous years, with a deadline of 23 October.

4.2 TAILOR-MADE ACTIVITIES PRIORITISATION 2026

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



The presentation confirmed the completion of the assessment and prioritisation of TMA proposals received in 2026. EFSA received a record number of 27 proposals, with a total requested budget of € 6,194,425.45 (excluding MSCC), against budget availability of €4 million. The proposals involved 28 EU and non-EU countries.

All proposals were assessed by the relevant EFSA SMUs, while Member State advice was gathered through consultations with AGoD and the AF Trio (CY, DK, PL). Sixteen proposals received a positive assessment.

As a next step, the prioritisation results will be formally communicated by email to AF and FP representatives. Each proponent will subsequently receive individual feedback, including scores and comments.

The presentation concluded with thanks for the support and cooperation provided over the years, marking the final TMA cycle under the current framework.

4.3 TAILOR-MADE ACTIVITIES FINISHING IN 2026 – FEEDBACK FROM MS

The agenda item presented three presentations that cover TMAs which have recently concluded or are near conclusion.

Chair gave the floor to **Gro Haarklou Mathisen** (Project leader, Norway)

Gro presented the TMA CHANGE project, “Building confidence and advancing integration of NAM data in risk assessment and risk management decision-making – A platform for dialogue and consensus.” Running from 2024 to 2026, the project aimed to promote the effective use of new approach methodologies (NAMs) in regulatory toxicology while safeguarding human health and the environment and avoiding unintended consequences. She summarised the project’s results, and identifying the drivers for NAMs update. The speaker also announced that funding has been secured for CHANGE 2, a two-year follow-up project focused on implementing the proposed interventions.

Chair gave the floor to **Estelle Argen** (Project leader, Sweden).

Estelle reported on the Sweden-led project: “Use of inter- and intrasectoral WGS comparisons for mapping sources and spread of Salmonella Enteritidis”. The project, which ran from January 2025 to October 2026, compared epidemiological, geographical, temporal and sequencing data across sectors and countries to investigate Salmonella Enteritidis sources and spread. Next to the projects’ results, Estelle shared challenges and lessons learned, highlighting aspects such as building the project team, distribution of work tasks, technical issues, data transfer agreements and others.

Chair gave the floor to **Pedro Nabais** (FP Portugal).

Pedro presented the results of the TMA Data Capture @ Point of Sampling (4.6a). The work began in 2018 with an EFSA-funded partnering grant and continued as a tailor-made activity. Its objective is to improve data quality and interoperability with the SSD2 and FoodEx2 classification systems, reducing annual manual effort and reporting errors.

The developed application is a web-based pilot, which is still being tested and validated, and not a finished public app available through an app store. It can be accessed online with project



credentials, and the project aims for eventual free use by interested competent authorities, subject to decisions on hosting, costs and other matters after the project ends in October.

In response to a question about smaller languages, Pedro confirmed that the pilot currently supports Dutch, French, English, Danish and Portuguese, with reports available in the inspector's selected language. It can be designed for additional languages.

4.4 MSCC-CURRENT CYCLE AND WAY FORWARD

The Chair gave the floor to **Francesca Matteucci** (EFSA).

Francesca updated the Focal Points on the MSCC programme, which involves 25 countries, outlining its cross-border network groups, activities, events and ongoing campaigns. She also clarified the two reporting streams: one covering deliverables and KPIs, and the other covering the financial reporting of activities. Finally, she announced that future MSCC activities will no longer be funded through the Focal Point framework but through the CEN organisation.

4.5 FEEDBACK FROM LATEST REQUESTS TO FOCAL POINTS

The agenda provided insights into the latest requests addressed to the Focal Points. The speakers reported on the FP contributions and reflected on their respective initiatives.

Chair gave the floor to **Zoi Mousia** and **Konstantinos Paraskevopoulos** (EFSA).

Zoi outlined the microbiome initiative, focusing on the establishment of the Microbiome Expert Knowledge Community and the previous engagement steps involving the Member States. Following an expression-of-interest call disseminated by Focal Points in July, EFSA received 28 applications from 14 Member States. Based on expertise, capacity and geographical balance, 19 experts from 11 Member States were selected. The microbiome community aims to promote knowledge exchange, identify gaps in regulatory science, coordinate activities and connect scientific expertise with regulatory needs. Its work aims to avoid duplication and help countries address complementary gaps in a coordinated manner. Next steps include applicants to receive outcome letters and further information on the next actions. In response to a follow-up question, EFSA agreed to share the outcome of the microbiome community expression-of-interest call and the list of applicants.

Zoi further emphasised that early involvement, initiated at the 59th Focal Point Meeting, contributed to broad participation, informed actions, strong responses to the calls and considerable interest in the upcoming Colloquium on 23–24 November.

Chair gave the floor to **Frank Boelaert** and **Georgios Alaveras** (EFSA).

In June, EFSA asked the Focal Points to help identify experts for an expert knowledge elicitation on the underreporting of human zoonotic diseases. Frank and Georgios presented the objectives and conceptual framework of the EFSA burden of zoonoses project, the EKE approach and preliminary results. They also thanked the Focal Points for their support with expert recruitment. The project covers nine food-borne zoonoses and integrates the human disease burden, animal-health losses, and tangible and intangible costs into an overall burden estimator.

Focal Points raised concerns about the short deadline and noted that some experts had already been contacted through other channels. EFSA explained that due to the specialised expertise



required, experts from the same country had sometimes been approached through parallel networks. EFSA acknowledged the concern and agreed, if possible, to inform Focal Points when relevant experts have already been contacted through other networks.

5. INFORMATION ON THE RECIPIENTS OF EFSA'S G&P FUNDING – FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY SYSTEM

The Chair gave the floor to **Stefano Smiroldo** (EFSA).

Stefano introduced the European Commission's Financial Transparency System, which replaces EFSA's annual Excel/PDF publications and enables users to search and download information on contracts, grants and recipients of EU funding. The Financial Transparency System (FTS) is a centralised, publicly accessible European Commission website that shows who receives EU funding and the amounts awarded. Users can view beneficiary details, project titles, funding and contract types, start and end dates, countries, responsible departments and budget references. The system excludes contracts and grants below EUR 15,000, staff expenditure, property reimbursements, and certain administrative expenditure, among other categories. Under Article 38 of the EU Financial Regulation, EFSA must publish its information through the system. Stefano gave a brief preview of the system.

6. FEEDBACK FROM EU-FORA 2026-2027

Due to time constraints and the recent report on EU-FORA developments, this item was not discussed during the meeting. Written feedback will be provided on the call for the 2027-2028 EU-FORA cycle.

7. TOPICS RAISED BY THE MS

6.1 GLOBAL RISK ASSESSMENT CONNECTED THROUGH ILMERAC: MULTILATERALISM AS A LEVER FOR SAFER FOOD AND FEED

The Chair gave the floor to **Umida Masharipova** (ILMERAC).

Umida Masharipova presented ILMERAC's (International Liaison Group on Methods for Risk Assessment of Chemicals in Food and Feed) global structure, bringing together 33 national and international institutions. The session presented their scientific priorities, working groups and engagement activities, inviting focal points and their institutions to join the network, participate in open events and explore topic-driven collaboration.

7.1 NATIONAL EVENT- 18TH SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE OF THE BULGARIAN FOCAL POINT

The Chair gave the floor to **Lilyana Polihronova** (FP Bulgaria).

Lilyana presented the preparations and outcomes of the Bulgarian Focal Point's 18th scientific conference. Held in Bulgaria, the event attracted more than 150 participants from scientific



organisations, universities and governmental bodies. She outlined several improvements to the event format, promotion and materials, and shared lessons learned and ideas for next year.

7.2 NEW APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE FIELD OF FOOD AND FEED SAFETY

The Chair gave the floor to **Vlatka Buzjak Služek** (FP Croatia).

Vlatka presented Croatia's planned interactive application for managing its legally established national food-and-feed safety network, which currently covers 39 institutions. The newly developed web application is designed to strengthen engagement, improve coordination, and facilitate more efficient communication and information sharing within the National network of institutions.

7.3 JOINT CONFERENCE "DATA AND USE OF AI FOR SURVEILLANCE AND RA IN FOOD SAFETY AND IN ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH"

The Chair gave the floor to **Coralie Bultel** (FP France).

Coralie presented the objectives and programme for the joint conference on "Data and the use of AI for surveillance and risk assessment in food safety and animal and plant health". Taking place on 29–30 October, it will bring together public agencies, academia and research organisations to discuss applications, current advances, limitations and future opportunities for AI, and other topics. Coralie thanked the Focal Points for their support and invited them to further promote the event. Link to the conference is available here: [Joint Conference](#)

7.4 REQUESTS TO FOCAL POINTS – QUESTIONS

The Chair gave the floor to **Miriam Fougeras** (FP Luxembourg).

Miriam raised several questions whose answers were considered relevant to all Focal Points.

The first question concerned Teams' notifications for requests for information exchange. EFSA acknowledged that Focal Points had stopped receiving the related email notifications and agreed to investigate the technical cause.

The second question concerned the strategy that EFSA employs to disseminate public consultations and tenders. EFSA explained that all public consultations are published on Connect EFSA and OpenEFSA platforms, where users can subscribe for updates.

In addition to the general publication and subscription mechanism, EFSA may occasionally promote specific public consultations through targeted emails to selected stakeholder groups or partners, as well as through its social media channels. This is driven by business needs and may depend on factors such as the topic of consultation, its relevance to particular communities, networks or areas of expertise, and the expected level of public interest. This helps ensure that consultations likely to benefit from broader or specialised input receive appropriate visibility among the most relevant audiences. The same approach applies to tenders. All procurement



opportunities are published through the appropriate channels, but EFSA may use targeted communications to highlight specialised, technical or niche opportunities to relevant audiences.

As a result, receiving a targeted email should be considered an additional promotional activity rather than an indication that other published consultations or tenders are less relevant.

The third question concerned how EFSA disseminates training opportunities and selects participants. It was unclear whether Focal Point nominations are considered when registrations are also promoted to a wider audience through CRM. Raquel Garcia Matas (EFSA) explained that advanced courses require specific expertise, so Focal Points are asked to identify suitable national experts. If registrations remain low, EFSA may widen dissemination. Final selection may consider motivation, relevant qualifications and knowledge, while also seeking a balance across countries and nationalities.

A follow-up question addressed the effort required from Member States to nominate several candidates when a request specifies one representative. Raquel clarified that Focal Points may nominate or encourage more than one suitable candidate where appropriate. If places remain available, additional candidates from the same country may be selected.

8. AOB

BfR COMICS RELEASE

The German Focal Point presented the newly expanded BfR knowledge-comic series, making information more accessible, and entertaining for consumers. The series is now available in German, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, Arabic and Chinese and can be viewed and shared here: [BfR Knowledge comics](#).

XORA DIALOGUE

The Dutch Focal Point thanked participants for helping disseminate information about the first xORA Dialogue, which attracted more than 60 participants worldwide. A report will be shared on Teams, and the next XORA Dialogue will take place on 8 December.



ANNEX I. SUMMARY OF THE ACTION POINTS

Action reference	Who	Action
<u>Action 1</u>	EFSA/AGoD	AGoD/EFSA to explore access to AGoD agendas/info on meetings
<u>Action 2</u>	EFSA/FP	EFSA and FP to explore information sharing methods for networks (sharing of minutes, yearly updates of Network representation, other)
<u>Action 3</u>	EFSA	EFSA to explore the use of the new module on network nominations for FP nomination
<u>Action 4</u>	EFSA	EFSA to share individual feedback on TMA
<u>Action 5</u>	FP	FP Lithuania to share best practices on supporting art 36 organisation, in particular their guide to reading Grants call
<u>Action 6</u>	EFSA	EFSA to check with SD why some participants in some Teams channels do not get notifications + no emails when requests for exchange of information are submitted
<u>Action 6</u>	EFSA	EFSA to share with the Focal Points the outcome of the microbiome community expression-of-interest call and the list of applicants.

By the time of publication of these minutes, Action Point 6 has already been completed.