COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTS NETWORK
Minutes of the 20th meeting

21-22 October 2026
09:00-16:30 / 09:00-11:45
Minutes agreed on 23 November 2026

Location: Webconference

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	Member State Organisation
Belgium	Belgian Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain
Bulgaria	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
Croatia	Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food
Cyprus	Ministry of Health
Czech Republic	Ministry of Agriculture
Denmark	Technical University of Denmark
Estonia	Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture of the Republic of Estonia; National Centre for Laboratory Research and Risk Assessment
Finland	Finnish Food Authority
France	French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES)
Germany	German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment
Greece	Hellenic Food Authority
Hungary	National Food Chain Safety Office
Ireland	Food Safety Authority of Ireland
Italy	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie; Italian Ministry of Health
Latvia	Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment
Lithuania	State Food and Veterinary Service
Luxembourg	Luxembourg Veterinary and Food Administration
Malta	Food Safety and Security Authority
Netherlands	Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority
Norway	Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety and Environment
Poland	Chief Sanitary Inspectorate
Portugal	Economic and Food Safety Authority of Portugal
Romania	National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority
Slovakia	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic
Slovenia	Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection; National Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia
Spain	Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition
Sweden	Swedish Food Agency

- Observers:
  Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (Switzerland);
  Albanian National Food Authority (Albania);
  Food Safety Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina);
  Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Affairs (Montenegro);
  Food and Veterinary Agency (North Macedonia);
  Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (Serbia);
  Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Turkey)

- European Commission

- EFSA
  COM Unit: Francesca Avanzini; Edward Bray; Elisa Corsini; Chiara Durano; Andrea Laroni; Giovanni Mancarella; Francesca Matteucci; Sharon Monti; Francesca Pettirosso; Filippo Positano; James Ramsay; Ricardo Rodrigues; Joana Sousa Lourenco; Irene Zanetti; Giorgia Zamariola; Piero Zilio.

  ENREL Unit: Julia Finger; Cristina Alonso Andicoberry.

  FINANCE Unit: Lisa Brovall.

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The Chair, James Ramsay (EFSA), welcomed participants to the 20th meeting of the Communications Experts Network (CEN) and outlined the agenda for the two-day online meeting. The agenda was adopted without changes.

2. EFSA communications calendar

Francesca Avanzini (EFSA) presented an overview of planned communication outputs for the coming months, covering topics including contaminants, animal diseases, animal welfare, pesticides, antimicrobial resistance, and plant health. Participants were invited to express interest in hot topic calls, which EFSA organises when demand exists among at least five Member States. Discussion highlighted potential interest in topics including semicarbazide in food, welfare of horses and donkeys, indirect effects of pesticides on biodiversity and assessment of bitter and sweet fennel.

ACTION

- **Interested Member States to inform EFSA of topics for which a hot topic call would be useful.**

3. Coordinated Communication activities

3.1 Francesca Matteucci (EFSA) provided an update on the 2026/2027 MSCC cycle, which registered participation from a total of 25 countries. Participants received an overview of joint projects, national network activities, cross-border cooperation

initiatives and campaign participation. The presentation highlighted activities of regional groups, including the Nordic and Baltic groups, and provided an update on EFSA training sessions planned in the upcoming months. EFSA reported that assessment of workplans was almost completed and reminded participants of intermediate reporting planned for spring 2027.

3.2 Arantxa López-Franco (AESAN, Spain) presented a multi-country summer food safety campaign implemented through the MSCC framework and showcased data gathered from three participating countries: Spain, Portugal and Cyprus. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of food-related risks associated with food consumption at outdoor events. The presentation showcased how centrally developed communication materials have been adapted to national contexts of participating countries as well as engagement results across different social media platforms and countries.

4. Crisis communication update

Giovanni Mancarella and Irene Zanetti (EFSA) presented an update on EFSA's crisis communication activities, focusing on EFSA's ongoing work implementing its crisis communication roadmap.

Attention was given to the ongoing revision of the crisis communication guidelines, which aim to provide even clearer guidance for communicators during a crisis and collaboration with relevant institutions. The guidelines will expand their reach to address artificial intelligence, misinformation and disinformation. EFSA also announced an upcoming internal crisis communication refresher in 2027 for the communication unit members, with the involvement of ECDC officers for some part of it, as well as the training planned for CEN and MSCC representatives on the 4th December.

5. Media and social media round-up

Edward Bray, Filippo Positano and Ricardo Carvalho Rodrigues (EFSA) provided an update on EFSA's media and social media activities.

A review of EFSA media coverage trends was presented, which highlighted an increased media attention to topics such as PFAS, pesticides and ultra-processed foods. EFSA also presented its reviewed social media guidelines covering responsible use of generative AI, accessibility, engagement practices and staff participation to social media activities through the EFSA Voices programme.

6. Fighting disinformation: the AGORA platform

Juan García La Roche (external speaker, AGORA) presented the AGORA platform, an initiative designed to address health-related misinformation through a collective verification mechanism by accredited health professionals.

The presentation outlined how the platform enables registered experts to assess online viral content and generate collective evaluations. Participants discussed issues related to professional accreditation, transparency, trust, and possible expansion to other countries and scientific domains. General interest was expressed in following the initiative's development and possible implications to food safety communication.

7. Info session on new grant agreement for MSCC as of 2028

7.1 Francesca Matteucci and Andrea Laroni (EFSA) outlined the upcoming changes to the MSCC framework from 2028 onwards. MSCC funding is planned to move towards a dedicated financial framework administered through the CEN, based on a 4-year framework partnership agreement, and implemented annually through specific agreements. EFSA also presented a new draft info pack, detailing the financial changes and any other adjustments that will apply to MSCC's activities as of 2028.

7.2 Lisa Brovall (EFSA) detailed the financial and contractual framework underpinning the future MSCC framework, including the fundamentals of EFSA grants, how these will apply to the MSCC in practice and subcontracting principles.

7.3 Julia Finger (EFSA) concluded the info session outlining the stage of review of the focal point operational framework, its implication on the work of MSCCs and CEN and plans for interaction between the focal points and MSCCs in the future.

Discussions focused on the financial and content novelties applicable to the MSCC as of 2028, their relevance at the national level and the necessary coordination arrangements between MSCCs, CEN and focal points.

ACTION

- **EFSA to distribute the info pack to CEN and MSCCs after the meeting**
- **Member States to:**
  - **inform EFSA if their CEN organisation is not in the Art. 36 List by 30 October – as deadline passed inform EFSA ASAP;**
  - **express their interest in participating in the 2028 MSCC framework by 15 December;**
  - **raise any questions on the info pack by 13 January 2027.**

8. Wrap-up of the day

The Chair wrapped up the main discussion points of the day, thanked participants for their active contributions and closed the first day of the meeting.

9. Welcome to the second day

The Chair welcomed participants to the second day of the meeting and outlined that an AOB on the antimicrobial resistance communication initiative coordinated by the European Commission will be discussed at the end of the day.

10. Social science update

Joana Sousa Lourenço and Francesca Pettirosso (EFSA) presented preliminary results of a pan-European flash poll on artificial intelligence in risk assessment and risk communication. The survey gathered almost 10.000 responses, measuring public knowledge, perception and trust in AI as well as its use in risk assessment and risk communication. Results showed moderate awareness of AI use, mixed trust levels and a preference for communications that explain how AI is used while emphasising expert review and institutional accountability.

EFSA also presented a newly developed AI-assisted qualitative analysis workflow designed to support the analysis of open-ended survey responses and qualitative data, noting it could support interested Member States in replicating this methodology.

11. GEO update

Piero Zilio (EFSA) presented EFSA's ongoing work on generative engine optimisation (GEO), aiming to optimise content to ensure authoritative scientific information can remain visible and accurately represented in AI-generated answers. Analysis of website traffic showed that AI bots access EFSA content often more frequently than traditional search engines. In this context, EFSA is developing a roadmap to address this emerging challenge and make content more accessible and understandable for AI while maintaining scientific accuracy.

Participants discussed opportunities and concerns related to AI-generated information, misinformation risks and options to improve visibility of trusted institutional content in an increasingly AI-shaped information environment.

12. Campaigns update

12.1 Irene Zanetti (EFSA) presented an update on the implementation of the "NoBirdFlu" campaign which aims to promote biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of avian influenza in farms. The campaign focuses primarily on small-scale farmers and backyard poultry keepers, while veterinarians are considered key multipliers.

Initial results from the first weeks of implementation show performance above benchmarks across communication channels and strong engagement with content by targeted audiences. EFSA informed participants that the current campaign serves as a transition towards a three-year campaign from 2027 onwards.

ACTION

- **Interested Member States to consider participation in the campaign as of 2027**

12.2 Irene Zanetti (EFSA) presented the preliminary results of the final year of the "PlantHealth4Life" campaign, indicating the campaign exceeded its targets across all domains: from media coverage to audience reach, influencer engagement and number of events. EFSA is preparing a final report to capture lessons learned and examples of low investment activities that could be reused at the national level to provide some continuity after the campaign's conclusion.

ACTION

- **EFSA to share the campaign report once finalised**

12.3 Elisa Corsini (EFSA) presented the preliminary results of the 2026 Safe2Eat campaign, whose main objective was to build confidence in the EU food safety system and improve recognition of reliable food safety information. Survey results showcased a positive outcome of 43% campaign recognition across the five survey markets (CZ, EL, IE, PT and ES). Recognition was driven mostly by news articles, social media and influencer activities while citizens increasingly saw the campaign as important, informative, interesting, and new.

12.4 Sharon Monti (EFSA) introduced the concept for the next Safe2Eat cycle (2027–2029). The new campaign will shift from a topic-based approach towards a more audience-centred approach, using everyday food choices, habits and preferences as entry points for food safety communication. The campaign will be built around audience segmentation and a creative concept based on friendly food-related "rivalries". The creative concept will serve as a hook to engage audiences before linking discussions to food safety and will also provide plenty of opportunities for localisation of communication.

The presentation concluded with an announcement of the EFSA campaigns award expected to be launched around summer 2027 with the award ceremony schedule for autumn 2027.

13. EFSA conference 2027

Giorgia Zamariola and Chiara Durano (EFSA) presented an update on the ongoing preparations for the 2027 EFSA scientific conference which will celebrate EFSA's 25th anniversary and the launch of the new EFSA Strategy 2034.

The conference will take place in Parma from 29 September to 1 October 2027 and will combine reflections on EFSA's achievements with discussions on future food safety challenges and strategic priorities.

14. Any other business and closure of the meeting

Participants briefly discussed an antimicrobial resistance communication initiative coordinated by the European Commission. Information available at the time was limited and participating countries were encouraged to coordinate directly with relevant counterparts for further details.

In closing, the Chair thanked participants, speakers and EFSA colleagues for their active engagement throughout the meeting. Participants were reminded that presentations and supporting materials would be made available on SharePoint and invited to complete the meeting satisfaction survey. The next online CEN meeting is planned for 13-14 May 2027, while the next physical meeting is provisionally foreseen in Athens on 20-21 October2027.