

Briefing note

Breakout session on Scientific Cooperation & Networking (Article 36) Advisory Forum Meeting, Valletta, 7-8 March 2017

Background

Scientific cooperation and networking are fundamental to the work of Member States (MS) and EFSA. A **list of competent organisations** (Art.36 List) was established to facilitate **European networking**. The organisations on this list have to comply with **criteria** set in legislation and be **designated by MS as competent organisations** of their countries.

Much effort has been put into establishing and maintaining the list. Its use has mainly been focussed on organisations' involvement in grant and procurement projects. Yet, as a means to further facilitate networking, the **usage of the list** should go well beyond this activity and include exchanging information, sharing data, joint projects and building capacity.

Aim of discussions

To get strategic input from the Advisory Forum (AF) regarding networking of competent organisations and the use of the Art.36 List in future.

Break-out session

- Meeting participants will be divided into 4 groups, each receiving a different question.
- The answers of each group will be shared and discussed in plenary at the end of the session, to provide all participants with the opportunity for input.

Questions

From your perspective as member of EFSA's Advisory Forum,

1. Currently, what are the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of **networking** between Art.36 organisations, at national and EU level?
2. How could the **Art.36 List be used in future**, at national and EU level?
3. What **benefits** do you expect **from networking** between Art.36 organisations, at EU level and at national level?
4. What should be in place for **optimising** the **use of the Art.36 List**, at national and EU level?

Supporting documents to facilitate preparation and discussion

- Background note on project to develop a new concept for implementing Art.36, with Annexes
1: Art. 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation
2: Roles and responsibilities as stipulated in Implementing Rules for Art.36
3: Project status and timeline
4: Terms of Reference of Focal Point Task Force on Art.36
- Rules of Procedure of the AF (Chapter III)

Group 1

Question

Currently, what are the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of **networking** between Art.36 organisations, at national and EU level?

What can the AF, FPs & EFSA do to overcome weaknesses?

The discussion during the break-out session could touch on the following items:

a. Currently, strengths of networking between Art.36 organisations are, e.g.:

- Having a list of organisations which meet the formal criteria (e.g. on competence & independence) can reduce reputational risk to organisations
- Joining forces to increase responsiveness, develop tools and methods, exchange data, etc.

b. Currently, weaknesses of networking between Art.36 organisations are, e.g.:

- EFSA Scientific Network Members are not all part of the Article 36 List, thus not eligible for grants & other networking activities limited to Article 36 organisations
- Few incentives for organisations to join the list
- The current tool does not support networking and communication effectively
- The current tool does not support the identification of partners effectively
- Varying understanding of 'competent organisations' and the mechanism for designating organisations at MS level

c. Activities, which could help overcome the weaknesses, could include, e.g.:

AF:

- Ensure the right organisations are on the list (i.e. organisations with needed competences, meeting criteria, to be designated as competent organisations)
- Ensure there is a good match between the organisations on the list and the requests put to the organisations
- Ensure clear roles and responsibilities have been defined in the mechanism for designating the competent organisations in the respective MS

FPs:

- Support interested organisations in verifying that they would comply with the criteria
- Support providing evidence to EFSA that organisations meet criteria

EFSA:

- Provide a digital collaboration space for organisations to exchange information
- Provide a platform to share documents/publications
- Provide a more effective search tool for identification of partners

Group 2

Question

The Art.36 list is well established, but interaction with and amongst organisations on the list are limited. Organisations can participate in a range of activities beyond EFSA grants. What additional ways could the list be used for?

How could the **Art.36 List be used in future**, at national and EU level?

To ensure that the list is useful for activities identified in this question, what information would be useful to have about the organisations on the list?

What can the AF, FPs & EFSA do to ensure that the list is useful for multiple purposes?

The discussion during the break-out session could touch on the following items:

a. In future, the list could be used more for, e.g.:

- Identifying partners (meeting certain requirements/criteria)
- Working together on projects (joining forces), e.g. in risk assessment
- Exchanging information and best practices
- Building capacity, training
- Exchanging/sharing data, using each other's databases or tools
- Work planning, priority setting

b. To ensure that the list can be used, it would be helpful to have, e.g.:

- Contact details of persons working in different fields within the organisations
- Links to organisations' publications related to particular fields of work
- Indication if organisations are reference laboratories, or other established networks

c. Activities, which would help ensure that the list can be used, could include, e.g.:

AF:

- Ensure the right organisations are on the list (i.e. organisations with needed competences, meeting criteria, to be designated as competent organisations)
- Ensure there is a good match between the organisations on the list and the requests put to the organisations

FPs:

- Support updating of the list, thereby ensuring its functionality
- Support the dissemination of information on networking activities
- Promote the use of the list at national level

EFSA:

- Provide a more effective search tool for identification of partners
- Provide a digital collaboration space for organisations to exchange information
- Provide a platform to share documents/publications

Group 3

Question

Art.36 sets out the aims of networking of organisations.

What **benefits** do you expect **from networking** between Art.36 organisations? You may want to consider this question first at national level, and then at EU level.

What can the AF, FPs & EFSA do to support networking?

The discussion during the break-out session could touch on the following items:

a. Networking can lead to, e.g.:

- Exchanging information, sharing of data
- Increasing knowledge and expertise in own organisation
- Increasing knowledge about national capacity/expertise in certain fields of work
- Increasing knowledge about other organisations' priorities and focus of work
- Harmonising (risk assessment) methods
- Increasing access to data, information & expertise
- Joining forces / joint projects / EU risk assessment agenda

b. Benefits derived from these may include, e.g.:

- Increased efficiency in identifying relevant partners to work with
- Increased responsiveness to new mandates/questions
- Increased acceptance of work/risk assessment done by others
- Reduced duplication of work

c. Activities, which could help support networking, could include, e.g.:

AF:

- Collect areas of work proposed by Art.36 organisation(s) for consideration by the AF as part of discussions on work planning and prioritisation
- Promote the inclusion of priority work areas, identified by the AF, in annual and multi-annual work planning

FPs:

- Support the dissemination of information on networking activities

EFSA:

- Provide a more effective search tool for identification of partners
- Provide a digital collaboration space for organisations to exchange information
- Provide a platform to share documents/publications

Group 4

Question

The Founding Regulation and Implementing Rules set, in general terms, the frame for European networking of organisations, and the requirements for establishing and using a list of these organisations.

What should be in place for **optimising** the **use of the Art.36 List**, at national and EU level?

What can the AF, FPs & EFSA do to help optimising the use of the list?

The discussion during the break-out session could touch on the following items:

a. The following items/actions could help optimise the use of the List in future, e.g.:

- Clearer understanding of “competent organisation” and more harmonised designation of organisations across MS
- More harmonised understanding of the criteria
- Better tool to identify (potential) partners
- Possibility to identify risk assessment expertise among MSs
- Increased centralised knowledge of MS about their competent organisations

b. Activities, which could help optimising the use of the list, could include, e.g.:

AF:

- Increase awareness at national level of the list and networking opportunities for organisations
- Collect areas of work proposed by Art.36 organisation for consideration by the AF as part of discussions on work planning and prioritisation
- Promote the inclusion of priority work areas, identified by the AF, in annual and multi-annual work planning

FPs:

- Increase knowledge of the expertise of competent organisations in their countries

EFSA:

- Regularly organise colloquium/scientific events only for Art.36 organisations in which they can, among other points, provide feedback to EFSA and MSs on projects, added values, benefits, challenges, etc.
- Foster partnership-building of persons assessing whether organisations meet criteria, by providing annual workshops to help ensuring a more harmonised approach in assessing organisations.