

Bernhard Url

Deputising Executive Director, European Food Safety Authority  
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Welcome address: Speaking Points

*Check against delivery*

Distinguished guests, Members of EFSA's Management Board,  
ladies and gentlemen, colleagues

## **Introduction**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to EFSA to discuss this very important topic of transparency and we thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

It is a valuable opportunity for EFSA to listen to your views, as representatives of a wide range of stakeholder interests.

Today's event should not be seen in isolation of course as EFSA engages regularly with many of you at different levels of the organisation.

Indeed, many of you are members of our [Stakeholder] Consultative Platform which has supported our work for many years and we are grateful for your valued inputs.

The Platform is a very important forum for EFSA to engage with actors in the food chain, exchange data and, more recently, explore issues such as transparency.

Logistically, its membership must be limited and so we are very glad to have opportunities like this to engage with an even wider range of stakeholders.

For EFSA, today's event is very much a listening and learning exercise and we will take great care to capture and consider your inputs very carefully.

They will inform our new Policy on Openness and Transparency which we will finalise next year.

## **Transparency**

Our theme, transparency, it is not a simple or an easy one.

There is often a lack of common understanding of what it actually means and it raises different expectations among our various stakeholder groups.

One thing is certain, transparency is crucial to EFSA's work as we know that it is intimately linked with trust in the risk assessment process and hence the value of our work for citizens.

This was recognised at EFSA's creation and was quickly adopted as a core organisational value. Our early efforts were dedicated towards making public all activities related to the risk assessment process – such as mandates received, agendas, minutes, declarations of interest etc. EFSA's Scientific Committee has played a central role, providing oversight and guidance on best practices related to transparency in risk assessment. Likewise, EFSA has developed a strong record of public consultations and technical meetings with stakeholders on important issues.

But of course, the operating context has evolved and so has EFSA. With the experience gleaned over the past decade, it is now becoming clearer that we must adopt a more proactive approach.

That is why we have taken initiatives such as the decision to open up our scientific meetings to observers and, last January, by the first step in a major transparency initiative aimed at, among others, providing open access to the scientific data we use in our risk assessments.

Access to scientific data and information is critical to EFSA's risk assessments and is also central to the transparency debate. As a public organisation we are obliged to ensure that civil society has access to the data it needs to engage in the scientific process within the framework of the relevant legislation pertaining to, for example, data protection and commercial sensitivity.

Data from private enterprise – in particular those related to safety issues – can be of significant public health interest and it is incumbent on agencies such as EFSA to find effective strategies to balance all legitimate interests.

EFSA is a consumer of scientific data and it is widely accepted that the volume of scientific data will increase steeply in the coming years brought about by advances in technology.

Coupled with an increasing societal demand for access to data, this will present challenges – and indeed opportunities – for EFSA. Our new policy and data access rules will be central to how we address these important issues.

It is equally important that our risk assessment processes are fully understood and while we have made significant advances in opening up and communicating our scientific processes to the public, we must go further. To support us, the Platform has established a discussion group to address process transparency and information access and we look forward to receiving the outcomes of their deliberations.

To be effective, we must also have a full understanding of the information needs of our stakeholders and engage with them in an effective manner. This is another pillar of our transparency initiative.

Communication is never far away from the transparency debate and, following the Management Board recommendations of 2012, EFSA is redoubling its efforts to make its communications more meaningful and more accessible to all parties.

We want to make sure that all those interested in EFSA understand what we do, how we work, the outcome of our scientific deliberations and what it means for them.

We are very pleased that our Board Chair, Sue Davies, is able to join us today and to describe those recommendations in more detail.

### **Closing comments**

Clearly we have a lot of ground to cover today and we are pleased to have Tim Radford with us to moderate our discussions. We have organised a number of breakout sessions and we hope they are conducive to a lively debate later this afternoon. Finally we are happy to welcome the Chair of our Scientific Committee, Tony Hardy, to provide his concluding comments.

So thank you once again for supporting us in this important task and we look forward to an open, informed and stimulating discussion.

I would now like to give the floor to our Chair for the day, Julianne Kleiner, EFSA's Director of Science Strategy and Coordination, who will take us through the day's agenda. END