Practical aspects of building IT links between EFSA and Member States national agencies

1. INTRODUCTION

The EFSA Advisory Forum is composed of national bodies of the Member States. In order to collaborate actively, share information, cross-reference scientific advice or any other type of document, means and tools will need to be assessed through studies solutions designed and implemented. Some of the possible actions could be implemented before the end of 2003 while others need a well structured approach. It should be pointed out that the EU has funding for such Inter Administration work and EFSA would like the Advisory Forum to consider whether it would like to make use of this to benefit the Members States and EFSA.

2. SHORT TERM ACTIONS

(1) Links between websites of the member organisations of the Forum: EFSA would like to reference the Forum members from its website, by a short text describing the entity and a link to the website. If agreed, a standard template for the data needed will be distributed during this summer 2003.

(2) Collaborative tool for Forum. document sharing: In order to support the Advisory Forum actions, EFSA proposes to develop and use a collaborative tool to share and elaborate documents between the Advisory Forum meetings. Depending on the degree of confidentiality of the documents shared, this tool can be deployed using Internet technology or through Europeanwide administrative networks (TESTA-II). If accepted, this tool can be deployed before the end of 2003.

(3) Start to construct the technical collaboration between the various technical layers of the Advisory Forum organizations and EFSA. This will help to define and prepare the projects for future structured data exchange between Forum members and EFSA. We should start with the setup of two groups:

(a) Communication experts: This group will meet and communicate regularly to exchange experience in term of Communication. This group has been discussed at previous meetings and under different agenda items at this meeting. The terms of reference for such a group
will need to consider the use of information technology for routine and crisis communication activities.

(b) IT experts: This Ad Hoc group could discuss the feasibility of common projects and take on-board the requirements and technical limitations of common project. EFSA can lead the search for funding for such projects.

3. MEDIUM-LONG TERM ACTIONS

In order that all the Forum members and EFSA can profit from the huge amount of scientific and technical information available in each of the participating organisation, it is proposed to launch a project which on implementation will allow the members to build a common repository in which scientific and technical information is organised, potentially in a multilingual way, and accessible to each Forum member and EFSA.

To achieve these goals, it is necessary to perform a study to agree on a common classification method and language, then build the repository, identify appropriate tools to input into the system and tools to retrieve the information in a subject oriented way.

We propose to use the IT expert group mentioned above to define in precise terms the project in two phases:

(1) Basic Common metadata for web content: This structure will cover how to define the future repository items and identify the various parameters supporting the content of the documents.

(2) Web services for content exchange: This collection of tools will allow the participant to upload and/or request content by using the format defined in the ‘Basic Common metadata’ project.

Search for funding will be managed by EFSA under the form of request toward the IDA (Interchange of Data between Administration) project.

4. CONCLUSION

*The Advisory Forum is invited to give their reactions and comments on this matter*