

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE EFSA EMERGING RISKS EXCHANGE NETWORK (EREN) – 2nd update¹

Background

Networking with Member States (MSs), stakeholders, EU and international agencies is seen as a key step in developing the effectiveness of the emerging risks identification process².

Identifying emerging issues³ and risks⁴ to food and feed safety in a systematic way is a relatively new and developing area, not only within EFSA, but also within MSs as demonstrated by a survey carried out in 2008 by the Scientific Cooperation (ESCO) Working Group on Emerging Risks⁵. This survey also highlighted the interest of MSs in exchanging information on emerging risks and to be part of a European network on emerging risks involving the EFSA and, potentially, the Commission and other EU-agencies and international organisations.

The Emerging Risk Exchange Network (EREN) was established in 2010 facilitating the exchange of information and expertise and the coordination of activities among MSs. Furthermore, it built support and commitment of MSs to the emerging risks identification activities of EFSA.

Following a recommendation from the Advisory Forum (AF) of EFSA, EREN Terms of Reference (TORs) shall be reviewed at least every three years.

Following its establishment in 2010, the EREN TORs have been updated for the first time at the AF meeting in Oslo (18 -19 June 2014).

Objectives

The role of the network is to provide a platform for the scientific cooperation between risk assessors of the EU Member States and EFSA in collaboration with the European Commission (EC), and to enhance risk assessment practices in the area of emerging risk identification methodologies.

Specifically, the Network aims to:

1. Present information, data and knowledge concerning identified emerging issues/risks;

¹ TOR 2nd update approved at EFSA Advisory Forum in Parma ,5 – 6 December 2017

² Piloting a process for emerging risks identification: lessons learnt and next steps;
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/310e.htm>

³ An issue that could be a food or feed safety risk that has very recently been identified and merits further investigation and for which the information collected is still too limited to be able to assess whether it meets the requirements of an emerging risk

⁴ A risk resulting from a newly identified hazard, an unexpected new or increased exposure or susceptibility to a known hazard

⁵ <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/j.efsa.2009.224ar/full>

2. Provide advice on and share experiences on emerging risk identification methodologies used at national level to identify emerging issues and risks;
3. Give access to these data and justify the reported emerging issues/risks based on scientific evidence or theoretical derivation of a possible health risk. The data shall be presented and assessed using a standard briefing note template developed by EFSA;
4. Share potential emerging issues/risks identified through their respective scanning system in every meeting as a way to prioritise those issues for which briefing notes can be developed;
5. Provide additional data on issues/risks discussed previously by EREN;
6. Provide recommendations for further research needs and possible joint projects among MSs;
7. Commit to liaise at national level by circulating background documents before and after each EREN meeting with relevant stakeholders in order to collect and share information covering the whole food chain, from primary production to retail and to gather additional evidence on the emerging issues identified;
8. Collaborate with the EFSA national focal points to facilitate exchange of information on emerging issues and to keep the link with the EFSA AF;
9. Avoid duplication of work to ensure complementary activities between Member States, between EFSA and the Member States and other existing EU systems involved in emerging risk identification process;

Members of the scientific network

The Network shall be composed of national representatives. The Network shall consist of national experts on emerging risks identification, analysis and processing nominated by MSs and observers from the Commission (e.g. DG RTD, DG SANTE, DG JRC), relevant EU-agencies (e.g. European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), European Medicines Agency (EMA), European Environment Agency (EEA)), EU candidate countries and, where possible, international authorities and organisations (e.g. World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Organisation For Animal Health (OIE)) and third countries.

The members of the network are required to also act as a communication point for relevant organisations and stakeholders within the Member State, ensuring the timely exchange of scientific information between these national organisations and EFSA.

Members of the Network shall be appointed in accordance with Articles 2 and 3 of the [Decision of the Management Board of EFSA on the establishment and operations of networks](#)⁶.

The Network shall be chaired by EFSA.

⁶ Decision concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission, EFSA 2010.

Working language

English will be working language of the network.

Working methods

The Scientific Network shall hold a physical meeting at least once a year. EREN usually meets twice per year (1,5 day meeting).

In addition, the Network will use other means of collaboration such as web-based electronic interfaces for sharing information and data, such as the EFSA's Data Management System (DMS) and e-mails for specific questions or issues and convene *ad hoc* meetings as necessary.

To this end an emerging risk repository has been created for EREN in the EFSA DMS where all the information can be stored and consulted by the network members. In the future, an online platform should be created with controlled access to the information considered as sensitive.

The EFSA Scientific Committee and Emerging Risks unit is responsible for providing (1) the secretarial support (including drafting the Network's comments on documents submitted to the Network, the meetings secretariat notes summarizing emerging risks identification activities of network members and their results as well as recommendations for further research needs) and (2) scientific support (including preparing and reviewing the background documents for each meeting).

The work of EREN is fully integrated into EFSA's emerging risks identification process. The group is consulted to add information and further elaborate the briefing notes that describe potential emerging issues, as well as raising new emerging issues that are then entered into the emerging risks identification process.

In order to strengthen further the overall emerging risks identification process at EFSA, presentations of the activities of EREN could be made to EFSA's Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risks (StaDG-ER), to the Scientific Committee's Standing Working Group on emerging risks and vice versa and to the AF upon interest. Further, issues gathered via EREN will be presented to the relevant scientific panels across EFSA to raise awareness.

Following up on a recommendation from the AF meeting on 8-9 December 2016, it is important to build a communication/dissemination strategy to channel the information and reach all institution stakeholders. EREN will support EFSA in developing this communication strategy on emerging issues.

Member States representatives in this network shall commit to timely liaise as appropriate at national level before and after each network meeting in order to make sure that all the necessary information is shared without prejudice to Article 10 of the Decision of the Management Board concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the field within the Authority's mission.

Timeline

3 years

Expected deliverables

- Minutes of the meeting(s).
- Feedback of members on issues presented by EFSA and by EREN formalised through briefing notes.
- Secretariat notes of EREN on emerging issues/risks reported by the EREN, on the data exchanged and on the latest national and EFSA developments in the area of emerging risk identification and research on methodology development.

Publication plan

Publication of the meeting minutes on the EFSA's website.

The contribution of EREN to EFSA's emerging risks identification process is summarised and included in an annual technical report on EFSA's emerging risks related activity report that brings together all of EFSA's emerging risks activities.