



TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE EFSA EMERGING RISKS EXCHANGE NETWORK (EREN)

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the EREN are to:

Collectively identify, characterise, analyse, classify whether a newly identified emerging issue is an emerging risk in the scope of EFSA by:

- presenting information, data and knowledge concerning newly identified emerging issues/risks, drivers or increased exposure identified through participants' scanning systems or expert knowledge;
- providing advice and share experiences on emerging risk identification methodologies, systems and tools used at different organizations;
- supporting characterisation and collective conclusions, offering recommendations on future perspectives or follow up actions on issues/risks and drivers previously identified by the EREN.

Enable collaboration and ensure complementary activities without duplication of work among members and observers by:

- liaising on a confidential basis at national level by circulating meeting background documents (e.g briefing notes, surveys) before and after each EREN meeting with relevant national stakeholders in order to collect additional evidence on the emerging issues identified;
- collaborating with the EFSA national focal points to facilitate exchange of information on emerging issues among MS and to keep the link with the EFSA Advisory Forum (AF).

MEMBERS

The Members of the EREN are organisations (and their representatives) appointed through the EFSA AF Members, in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the Decision of the Management Board of EFSA¹ on the establishment and operations of networks. The list of organisations participating in the EREN is available on the web².

The EREN shall be composed of experts with experience on emerging risks identification, analysis, processing and follow ups within EFSA's remit (also including emerging chemicals, circular economy, new food/feed sources and production techniques, food frauds and food safety, food supplements):

1) National experts (participant/alternate participant) of EU/EEA Member States organisations

According to art. 6.1 and 6.3 of the Decision of the management board, each AF member shall identify organisation(s) in his/her country capable of contributing to the tasks of EREN. The Member State representative at the AF, in cooperation with the member organisation, shall establish the names of the network participant and of an alternate. In well justified cases

¹ [Decision of the Management Board concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission](#)

² [List of members and observers of EREN](#)



endorsed by EFSA, additional participants and alternates may be appointed for different organisations designated for the EREN by the Member States.

OBSERVERS

1) EC/EU representatives (from the European Commission, including its Scientific Committees and relevant EU-sister agencies)

Representatives of the European Commission (EC), DG SANTE by default and other relevant DGs if necessary (e.g. DG RTD, DG JRC, DG ENVI) are entitled to participate at the EREN as observers. Representatives of other EU agencies (e.g. European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), European Environment Agency (EEA) or others) also participate in the work of the EREN as appropriate.

The information about the representatives shall be transferred to the KNOW Unit.

2) International organizations, third countries and IPA countries

Other organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission may express interest in becoming observers to the network. If their proposal is well-substantiated and agreed upon by EFSA and EREN, they may be registered as observers. These organisations can be located within or outside the EU and must have specific expertise relevant to the network.

Those include:

- international authorities and organisations;
- third countries' national organisations involved in emerging risks identification;
- countries included in the EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)³.

All relevant information about participants and observers received by EFSA is made available to the Knowledge, Innovation & Partnership (KNOW) Unit which is coordinating EREN activities.

WORKING METHODS

The EREN shall meet at least twice a year, typically in a hybrid mode that includes both online and in-person attendance (usually for a 1.5 day meeting). Additionally, a thematic workshop may be added to complement these meetings. Ad-hoc meetings may also be convened as necessary.

The network members are personally invited to join the meetings: the meetings are confidential, and the invitation cannot be forwarded without the agreement of the EREN coordinator.

All network participants, their alternate participants, and observers are required to adhere to the confidentiality requirements as stipulated in Article 12 of the Decision of the Management Board of EFSA.

In addition, EFSA may invite ad-hoc experts, including Subject Matter Unit (SMU) experts from EFSA and experts from the EU and outside with specific expertise, to participate in a network meeting when appropriate or necessary. They may be invited to contribute or observe either a specific limited session or the entire meeting.

The working language for the network activities is English. The network meeting is chaired by EFSA.

The work of the EREN is fully integrated into EFSA's emerging risks identification process. The network is consulted to gather evidence and elaborate Briefing Notes (BNs) that describe

³ [European Commission's overview on Instruments for Pre-accession Assistance \(IPA\)](#)



potential emerging issues, in a One Health approach where relevant. These data are collectively assessed by the EREN members through surveys on draft BNs and topic discussions. The results of the survey are shared with the EREN members to nurture discussions at the network meetings.

The EREN uses web-based electronic interfaces for sharing information and data:

- email exchanges for sharing information about activities and meetings;
- EFSA collaborative space (MS Teams) for sharing meeting documents (agenda, secretarial notes, presentations) or specific issues;
- EFSA online platform Emerging Risks Analysis Platform (ERAP) for centralising BNs and running surveys and follow-up about BNs;
- some surveys (mainly in organisational matters) may be organised via EU survey tool.

The KNOW Unit is responsible for providing:

- network coordination and community management, according to EFSA guidance and rules;
- technical support for the network, including the access to the working space and guidance on available information;
- scientific support (including preparing and reviewing the background documents for each meeting, consulting relevant colleagues in EFSA, organizing surveys to characterise the emerging issues, analyse results and disseminate them);
- drafting Web-minutes of the meetings and publishing them on the EFSA website after endorsement by the network;
- assembling internal Secretarial notes of the meetings.

The overarching responsibilities of the network participants are listed under the Article 7 of the Decision of the Management Board concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission.

The EREN members are expected to contribute by:

- providing briefing notes on emerging issues they identify;
- providing updates on new evidence on past emerging issues;
- providing further description of the topic and presentations during the meetings;
- advising on methods and tools relevant to identify emerging risks;
- taking part of the pre-notification and assessment surveys on draft BN;
- sharing views, evidence and references if available during the discussions;
- supporting joint conclusions, suggesting recommendations on follow up actions;
- disseminating Emerging Risk Newsletters.

The EREN observers are expected to contribute:

- providing briefing notes on emerging issues they identify;
- providing updates on new evidence on past emerging issues;
- informing on methods and tools relevant to identify emerging risks
- taking part of the pre-notification survey on draft BN;
- sharing views, evidence and references if available during the discussions;
- disseminating Emerging Risk Newsletters.

Members of the EREN shall commit to liaise as appropriate at national level before and after each network meeting in order to make sure all the necessary information is obtained and shared with relevant scientific organizations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission.



EREN's activities can be presented to EFSA's Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risks (StaDG-ER), the Scientific Committee, and vice versa, as well as at the AF on regular base. Additionally, issues collected by the EREN will be disseminated to relevant scientific panels at EFSA to raise awareness and collect more evidence. EFSA may grant access to StaDG-ER and observers of the EREN to the BNs that are not marked confidential by the authors, and to the assessment surveys, provided that additional views and information are needed. Some interdisciplinary meetings or workshops can be organised between the EREN and StaDG-ER and also involve other relevant expert from EFSA or beyond.

DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

Deliverables:

- Briefing notes on emerging issues;
- Web-minutes of the meetings;
- Annual report on environmental scanning activities (encompassing emerging risk and horizon scanning)
- Environmental scanning newsletter

Outcomes:

- Enhanced anticipation for EFSA of future risk assessment needs, in line with EFSA 2027 Strategy: Ensuring preparedness for future risk analysis needs (EFSA Strategic Objective 2.1)⁴.
- Contribution to identification of future research needs via EFSA Programmes and at wider EU level.
- Enhanced anticipation for national and European risk managers of future food/feed safety challenges.

TIMELINE

The terms of reference for the EREN network can be updated whenever deemed necessary and are valid until a decision of discontinuing the Network is taken.

Last updated: January 2025

⁴[EFSA Strategy 2027 – Science, safe food, sustainability](#)