
Scientific Cooperation and Assistance Directorate

Decision concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission

Having regard to Regulation No 178/2002/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in relation to food safety, and in particular to Chapter III thereof (hereinafter referred to as 'the Regulation')¹,

Having regard to EFSA's Strategy on Cooperation and Networking with EU Member States, adopted by the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority in December 2006², and to the interim review of that strategy prepared by EFSA's services,

Whereas:

1. In order to achieve the objectives laid down in the Regulation, EFSA needs to create and manage several European networks.
2. In accordance with Article 22 (7) and 23 lit. g of the Regulation, the Authority shall promote the networking of scientific organisations of EU Member States operating in the fields within the Authority's mission³.
3. The present decision is without prejudice to consultations of National Competent Authorities that are foreseen as mandatory by the relevant sectoral legislation⁴.

The Management Board of the Authority has adopted the following Decision:

¹ *Official Journal* L 31, 1. 2. 2002, p. 1, as last amended.

² EFSA Management Board, Strategy for Cooperation and Networking between the EU Member States and EFSA, 19.12.2006 -6a.

³ Currently the following networks are managed by EFSA: Expert Group on Chemical Occurrence; Pesticide Steering Committee; Networking Group on Pesticide Monitoring (- MS contact points); Zoonoses Task Force; Expert Group on Food Consumption; Scientific Network for Risk Assessment of GMOs; Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Plant Health; Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare; Scientific Network for Microbiological Risk Assessment; and Scientific Network on BSE/TSE.

⁴ For example, Article 18(4) of Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2003 on genetically modified food and feed and Article 24(2) of Regulation No 2229/2004/EC of 3 December 2004 laying down further detailed rules for the implementation of the fourth stage of the programme of work referred to in Article 8(2) of Council Directive 91/414/EEC.

Article 1: Definition and role of networks

1. The aim of the networks is to support the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the Member States in carrying out its mission in accordance with the established standards of scientific excellence, transparency and responsiveness foreseen in Regulation No 178/2002/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in relation to food safety (hereinafter referred to as 'the Regulation'). These include *inter alia* facilitating the development of a scientific cooperation framework by the coordination of activities, the exchange of information, the development and implementation of joint projects and the exchange of expertise and best practices in the fields within the Authority's mission.
2. The activities laid down in Paragraph 1 of this Article are reported to the Executive Director of EFSA.
3. EFSA informs the Advisory Forum and the Scientific Committee of the activities of the network through regular reports.

Article 2: Creation and composition of networks

1. Networks are created by EFSA in consultation with the Advisory Forum and Scientific Committee to work on specific areas within EFSA's remit.
2. A network shall be set up on the basis of a specific remit and shall be dissolved as soon as the remit has been completed.
3. A network shall be composed of organisations of EU Member States with expertise in the fields covered by the network.
4. EFSA may invite organisations, including those from outside the EU, with specific expertise to participate to the network, where appropriate or necessary. These organisations may also be invited as observers. Representatives of the European Commission may participate in the work of the Networks.

Article 3: Appointment of members of the networks

1. EFSA shall ask the Advisory Forum, which is responsible for ensuring close cooperation between EFSA and the competent bodies in the Member States, to designate the members of the networks.
2. EFSA will provide all necessary information to the Advisory Forum in order to allow it to identify if organisations in European countries can contribute to the tasks of the network.
3. On this basis, the Advisory Forum may designate or not designate an organisation as member of a network and inform EFSA of the name of its representative and his/her alternate.
4. In the case where sectoral EU legislation specifies the competent organisations for a specific networking, these organisations are members of the network.

Article 4: Chair and Secretariat of the networks

1. Networks shall be chaired by EFSA.
2. EFSA shall provide the Secretariat of networks.

Article 5: Planning of meetings, invitations, agenda, documentation

1. The Secretariat will confirm a meeting not less than 10 working days before the date of the meeting of the Network.
2. Meetings may be called at short notice according to the urgency of the matter.
3. The draft agendas of the meetings shall be drawn up by the Secretariat. The draft agenda shall be circulated to representatives of the organisations designated as members. The agenda shall be adopted at the beginning of the meeting. Wherever possible, documents shall be available at least 10 days before the meeting.

Article 6: Documentation of the outcome of the discussions

1. Networks shall endorse their contributions at their meetings or by the procedure set out in paragraph 2 of this Article.
2. In the event that the nature, urgency or circumstances do not require or allow discussion at a meeting, a consultation may take place by written procedure.

Article 7: Technical Hearings

1. The Secretariat may organise technical hearings with individuals and stakeholder representatives.

Article 8: Minutes

1. The Secretariat shall prepare draft minutes of meetings.
2. The draft minutes shall be circulated for comments and agreed on either at the next meeting or in writing.
3. The minutes shall be placed on EFSA's website after adoption.

Article 9: Mission expenses of representatives of the organisational members of the networks or of their alternates

1. Unless already covered by reimbursements from the relevant organisation, travel and subsistence expenses incurred by representatives of the organisational members of the networks or their alternates in connection with meetings relating to networks shall be reimbursed by the Authority in accordance with the scales laid down in the Authority's expert compensation guide.

Article 10: Confidentiality

1. Representatives of the organisational members of the Networks, their alternates and observer shall:
 - not divulge to third parties information identified by the Authority as "restricted" or "confidential".
 - sign a written declaration that they will comply with the rules of confidentiality set out in this Article⁵.
 - be required, even after their duties have ceased, not to disclose information of the kind covered by the obligation of professional secrecy.
2. Individual views, whether expressed orally or in writing by representatives of the organisational members of the networks during meetings, shall be confidential.

⁵ Annex 4 of the Guidance Document on Declarations of Interest.

Article 11: Declaration of Interests

1. EFSA shall ask representatives of the organisational members of the networks and their alternates to make an Annual Declaration of Interests declaring any interest that might be considered prejudicial to their independence, in accordance with the Guidance Document on Declarations of Interest⁶.
2. EFSA shall ask to representatives of the organisational members of the Networks, their alternates, observers, staff of the European Commission or of other European Union agencies, of the European Parliament, of international bodies and third Countries, at the beginning of each meeting to declare any interests that might be considered prejudicial to their independence in relation to the items on the agenda. Any declared interests will be recorded in the minutes.

Article 12: Transitional measures

1. Networks functioning in EFSA before this Decision are considered to be valid, but shall be renewed in accordance with the above rules at the latest by 1 May 2010.

Article 13: Entry into force

1. The present Decision shall apply on the day following its adoption.

Adopted by written procedure on April, 7th 2010

Signed by

Prof. Diána Bánáti
Chair

⁶ Annex 3 of the Guidance Document on Declarations of Interest.