

Minutes

33rd MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS

LODZ (POLAND), 6-7 DECEMBER 2011

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS:

Chair: GASSIN Anne-Laure, Communications Director

Members:

Czech Republic	BALGA Josef	Poland	HOLOWNIA Piotr
Estonia	PRIISALU Piret	Portugal	FERNANDES Paulo
Finland	VIKMAN-ROSLIN Pia	Slovak Republic	MENDEL Juraj
Germany	FIACK Suzan	Slovenia	VRDELJA Mitja
Ireland	CONWAY Edel	Spain	GARCIA-GOMEZ Juan-Julian
Lithuania	SAVICKAITE Jurgita	Sweden	GUSTAFSSON Karin
Poland	WISNIEWSKA Iwona	The Netherlands	KRIKKEN Kris
Poland	JAWORSKA Barbara	United Kingdom	COLLIS Terence

Observers:

Turkey	OZCAN Nevra	Croatia	MIKRUT Sara
European Commission	TAYLOR Graeme	FYROM	JONOVSKA Katerina

European Food Safety Authority Staff:

ADAMOVA Monika	AVANZINI Francesca	GASSIN Anne-Laure
NILSSON Torben	SMILLIE Laura	VICENZI Elena

Apologies:

Austria	PUBLIG Elisabeth	Hungary	Cseh Julia
Belgium	BUSSCHOTS Lieve	Italy	TARANTO Mirella
Bulgaria	PCHELINSKA Mariela	Luxembourg	HAU Patrick
Cyprus	CHRISTODOULIDOU Maro	Montenegro	MIRECKI Slavko
Denmark	KORNHOLT Heidi	Norway	BJERKAS Astrid
France	THOMANN Carole	Romania	MONEA Alina-Ioana
Greece	KARDASI Dimitra		



DAY 1: 6 DECEMBER 2011 - 14H00 – 18H00

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Anne-Laure Gassin opened the meeting by welcoming all participants and thanking the Polish Chief Sanitary Inspectorate and the local authorities for hosting the meeting. Then she gave the floor to Ms Urszula Sztuka-Polińska, Director of State Voivodship Sanitary Inspection in Łódź and Ms Hanna Zdanowska, Mayor of Łódź. In their welcome speeches they highlighted the importance of risk communication and close cooperation across the EU in the area of food safety, ensuring thus a high level of consumer protection. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked the speakers for the supportive words and pointed out that Poland is a valuable partner in the EU food safety network.
- 1.2. Anne-Laure Gassin then welcomed the new working group member from Lithuania and observer from the European Commission. Apologies were received from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania and Montenegro.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(Doc AF Comm WG 6 12 11 – 1)

- 2.1. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked the members who had already filled in their Declarations of Interests and reminded the remaining few that they should complete the electronic form as soon as possible. As no additional items were indicated by the members, the agenda was adopted as proposed.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING IN BUDAPEST 21-22 JUNE AND MATTERS ARISING

(Doc AF Comm WG 6 12 11 – 2)

- 3.1. Anne-Laure Gassin informed the members that the minutes of the meeting held on 13-14 October in Bucharest were approved by written procedure and published on the Extranet and EFSA's website.
- 3.2. She outlined the matters arising from the meeting in Bucharest that would be discussed with the group during the day.

4. UPDATE ON EFSA'S ACTIVITIES

- 4.1. Anne-Laure Gassin updated the members on a number of EFSA activities, including the EFSA Executive Director's hearing in the European Parliament; EFSA's visit to the Netherlands; the upcoming Management Board meeting in Warsaw (15 Dec), highlighting that EFSA's Independence Policy and Science Strategy would be proposed for adoption. She also mentioned EFSA's recent advice on the safety of bisphenol A (1 Dec), EFSA's 5th



GMO meeting with environmental and consumer NGOs (29 Nov) and EFSA's latest work on aspartame. She informed the group that the Authority has been given access to over 600 datasets for use in its full re-evaluation of the artificial sweetener aspartame, which is scheduled for completion in September 2012. After its completion in 2012, EFSA's risk assessment of aspartame will be the most comprehensive and up-to-date available. Then, Anne-Laure Gassin thanked the AFCWG members from Austria, Belgium, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK for helping EFSA organise a media visit to Parma (30 Nov).

- 4.2. Anne-Laure Gassin concluded by updating the members on EFSA's Applications Helpdesk web area, created to provide applicants/users with quick access to useful and streamlined information about regulated products. In the future, the newly created unit will also be responsible within EFSA for centralising and processing the initial administrative steps of all applications. She stressed that in order to enhance the outreach and the visibility of the section Applications helpdesk, EFSA would appreciate if the members help to promote this initiative in their respective countries. The objective is to help EFSA reach out to applicants and other interested parties in the Member States. In order to help raise awareness and streamline information requests, EFSA proposes that the Applications helpdesk be easily accessible from the websites of the national food safety authorities. To this end, EFSA will provide in early 2012, the AFWGC members with a banner, a short introductory text on the mission of EFSA's Applications helpdesk (translated in 23 EU languages) and recommendations on how to link to EFSA's website.

***Action 1:** EFSA to provide members with a banner and a short introductory text on the mission of EFSA's Applications helpdesk to be published on the website of national food safety authorities + create link to EFSA website as appropriate*

5. "KEY TOPICS"

- 5.1. Anne-Laure Gassin extended her thanks and informed the group that Germany, Slovakia and the Netherlands had sent their key country issues (all available on the Extranet). She reminded the members to regularly upload information on the Extranet calendar created specifically for sharing information on EFSA's and Member States' upcoming scientific issues/events and related communication activities relevant to the group.
- 5.2. The Netherlands informed the members that the Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA) will publish an opinion (Jan 2012) on health risks from the release of lead and cadmium from tajines, i.e. ceramic pots, which are mainly used in the preparation of North African cuisine. Measurements show that some handmade tajines migrate more lead and cadmium than is legally allowed. The Netherlands will also keep the group informed about the additional research on Q fever carried out by Dutch authorities. In follow up to the Advisory Forum discussions on this issue, Spain reported on emerging presence of



cigautoxin in certain sea fish causing digestive problems that can become serious. The Spanish Food Safety and Nutrition Agency (AESAN) has already taken necessary measures and further assessment will be done in cooperation with the Community Reference Laboratory for Parasites.

6. HOW TO COMMUNICATE FOOD SAFETY TO CONSUMERS - Perspective of a spokesperson from the Voivodship State Sanitary Inspection in Łódź

6.1. Anne-Laure Gassin introduced Zbigniew Solarz, a spokesperson from the Voivodship State Sanitary Inspection in Łódź and a journalist, who shared with the group his working experience, in particular the opportunities and challenges when communicating with media on food safety related issues. He highlighted the importance of providing accurate and timely communications on food safety issues to all stakeholders including media and the public at large. He also mentioned the importance of sharing and exchanging information among relevant parties, especially when it comes to food safety and consumer protection. He concluded by providing information about the media activities of the Voivodship State Sanitary Inspection in Łódź on different topics, such as *E. coli* outbreak; diet and nutrition for children and misleading claims on food products.

6.2. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Zbigniew Solarz for his very interesting presentation and opened up the debate. Members were interested to know more about the media environment in Poland. Zbigniew Solarz pointed out that the spokespeople cooperate with both national and regional media. He stressed that Polish journalists are very interested in food/health related issues and they have a very good, productive cooperation, all working towards the same goal – informing the public.

7. KEY POINTS ARISING FROM THE ADVISORY FORUM MEETING (WIESBADEN, 30 NOV-1 DEC)

7.1. Torben Nilsson summarised the outcome of the 42nd Advisory Forum meeting in Wiesbaden, mentioning among other items the update on previous strategic discussions that included the medium term planning and data collection. Germany, Sweden, Austria and France reported on their national perspectives on data collection regarding food safety. Furthermore, the Advisory Forum received an update on EFSA's 10th anniversary preparations (in 2012); and EFSA's impact indicators. Members also discussed the 2012 topics for strategic discussion that includes the risk perception and risk communication session. The contribution of the AFCWG was mentioned, i.e. analysis of the Eurobarometer 2010 survey findings that provide interesting data from both EU and national perspectives to be presented at the March meeting. Lastly, EFSA updated the Advisory Forum members on its assessment of bisphenol A; emerging risks exchange network; hazard databases and cooperation in the BIOHAZ area. A proposal to further strengthen communications on improving kitchen hygiene at home to reduce risks from



Campylobacter, i.e. help to change people's behaviour, was referred to the AFCWG for further consideration.

- 7.2. Anne-Laure Gassin pointed out the importance of distinguishing and clearly explaining to public and media the difference between hazard and risk. Members agreed that more work needs to be done on this subject. The UK was interested in EFSA's work in the emerging risks area. Laura Smillie explained that the process of addressing the emerging issues will change in the near future, e.g. a new Working Group of the Scientific Committee will be created, communications strategy on emerging risk will be drafted and an Annual report will be produced every year.
- 7.3. Anne-Laure Gassin asked the members about their communication activities on campylobacter and any suggestions as to whether and how communications could be strengthened and possibly coordinated on the EU level. The UK pointed out that *Campylobacter* is most often associated with fresh poultry meat and related products, therefore perhaps more pressure should be put on industry to reduce risk at source. Croatia informed the group that the Croatian food safety agency was planning to launch a TV campaign and a TV advertisement in order to increase the awareness of campylobacter among the Croatian public. Sweden mentioned that Swedish industry asked the National Food Administration to assess how much would certain measures reduce the risk of campylobacter. Germany confirmed that campylobacter is an ongoing issue and asked whether the target audience should be consumers or all stakeholders.
- 7.4. Anne-Laure Gassin reiterated that the Advisory Forum raised a question whether there was an opportunity to increase public awareness, i.e. targeting consumers. She pointed out that in 2011 EFSA issued a scientific opinion on campylobacter in broiler meat. It has been agreed that communicating on campylobacter will be an agenda item at the next AFCWG meeting with the aim to review communications with consumers and stakeholder and learning as to impact on consumer awareness, understanding and behaviour (where such data exist). Members from Germany and the UK volunteered to help EFSA to prepare the debate.

***Action 2:** Communicating on Campylobacter – an agenda item at the next meeting to review communications and its impact on consumers' behaviour and learnings*

***Action 3:** Members from Germany and the UK to help EFSA to prepare the debate*

8. JOINT ACTIVITIES - RISK COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

- 8.1. Anne-Laure Gassin introduced this session, explaining that this initiative was almost finalised. Member States took the opportunity to express their support for the guidelines and thanked EFSA for creating a platform that enabled the collaborative development of this document that incorporates learnings from across Europe.



8.2. Laura Smillie informed the members that the feedback from the Advisory Forum members was generally very positive and the Advisory Group on Risk Communications (AGRC) provided some valuable input. As agreed at the last meeting EFSA considered the comments received from both Advisory Forum and AGRC and also drafted a new case study on Zoonoses. She informed the group that in order to keep the guidelines up-to-date, EFSA will set up a specific mailbox dedicated to the guidelines.

8.3. Laura Smillie then explained and discussed with the members all suggested changes in the guidelines. She indicated that some changes would be made with respect to formatting, in particular concerning the annex. It has been agreed that members will provide further feedback in writing (by 16 December). Anne-Laure Gassin pointed out that the guidelines are a “living” document, therefore the current case studies need to be kept up-to-date and more case studies are welcome. The UK suggested writing in a near future a case study on oysters (norovirus). Germany highlighted the importance of distinguishing between hazard and risk, i.e. “exposure to risk or hazard or substance” should be clearly defined. It has been proposed to share the BfR’s publication *Evaluation of Communication on the differences between “Risk” and “Hazard”* with the rest of the group.

Action 4: Members to provide their feedback on the final draft guidelines

Action 5: Germany to share with the group BfR’s publication Evaluation of Communication on the differences between “Risk” and “Hazard”

9. EFSA’S 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

9.1. Caroline Haga joined the meeting via conference call to update the group on EFSA 10 year anniversary preparations. She pointed out that 2012 is 10th anniversary of both the General Food Law and the establishment of EFSA. It provides an opportunity to further raise awareness and understanding of EFSA and the EU food safety system among all target audiences as well as to promote co-operation with Member States, take stock of what has been achieved over the last 10 years and identify key challenges and opportunities lying ahead. She outlined key messages EFSA was going to use throughout its communications and highlighted communications activities including a web section, media activities, publications, social media and a new corporate video. She also presented the events planned for the year, including a scientific conference in November which will be the main event for the year. She reiterated that EFSA will prepare success stories and case studies. Members were informed that a dedicated section will be created on EFSA’s website that will become a central point for all materials and information on planned activities. All countries are welcome to link to this section from their websites and EFSA will provide logos/banners and any other information needed. EFSA welcomes any ideas members may have for the web section and/or for joint success stories.



9.2. In order to help members propose joint activities, EFSA has created a questionnaire to be completed by members and submitted to EFSA at their earliest convenience. EFSA will also create a template to collect Member States' proposals for European success stories in the field of food safety. Members were welcome to comment on EFSA's list of success stories that will be sent to them shortly. It has been agreed that the small taskforce consisting of Bulgaria, Spain and Germany will coordinate joint activities in 2012.

Action 6: Members to fill in a questionnaire designed to help them to propose joint activities during EFSA's 10 year anniversary in 2012

Action 7: Small task force created to coordinate joint activities in 2012 – Bulgaria, Spain and Germany

Action 8: EFSA to send a template to collect MS proposals for European success stories in the field of food safety

Action 9: EFSA to provide the members with a list of proposed success stories

Action 10: Members to provide a feedback on EFSA's success stories + propose common/joint success stories

10. COMMUNICATIONS: INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND FORWARD PLANNING

10.1. Yenny Gamming joined the meeting via conference call to provide an update on web activities, namely on science videos; EFSA's overall social media approach and staff guidelines as well as its Twitter launch. She pointed out that *Understanding Science* is EFSA's scientific white board video series. In these video clips, EFSA staff explain scientific concepts to our target audiences with the focus being on science, rather than on EFSA's role. She informed the group that EFSA was currently working on science videos on zoonoses and GMOs; the second batch focused on more zoonoses topics and "chemicals in food" is scheduled for March 2012 and will be followed by more topics. The videos are in line with EFSA's thematic approach (support communication in key areas) and contribute to key strategic priorities (simplicity and transparency, visibility and outreach).

10.2. Yenny Gamming then presented EFSA's overall approach to social media. She pointed out that EFSA was planning to take a phased approach, consider those initiatives which present a real opportunity while combining low risk with low cost. She mentioned some aspects of EFSA's new social media staff engagement guidelines, e.g. when interacting on social media in a personal capacity, do not represent yourself as speaking for EFSA; only communications officers may speak on behalf of EFSA; when doing so, they must identify themselves.

10.3. Germany informed the members that BfR's website features a new dialogue forum launched on 1 December 2011. Consumers can ask questions online and subsequently vote for the ones they would like to be answered by using a voting function. The President of the BfR will then answer the three most urgent questions in a video message. In future, the



dialogue forum will be a regular feature of the BfR website. The first forum focuses on risks arising from germs in food. Germany also mentioned the BfR has a dedicated section on YouTube. Laura Smillie was interested in feedback mechanisms used by members to respond to queries from the public, pointing out that EFSA has a dedicated mailbox called askEFSA and Q&A on different topics. Anne-Laure Gassin concluded the discussion by encouraging the members to continue sharing their experiences with social media and their social media policies.

- 10.4. Then, Laura Smillie provided an overview of recent and upcoming scientific issues for which future communications are foreseen. These included: Annual report on pesticide residues (the report covers 2009, the first year of fully harmonised legislation on Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) across the European Union. It shows that 97.4% of samples analysed were below legal MRLs); Public Consultation on draft Guidance on Food Additive submissions (launched mid November); re-evaluation of aspartame including publication of data; and EFSA's response to Anses reports on Bisphenol A.
- 10.5. Furthermore, she reported on a number of EFSA guidance documents, such as EFSA's guidelines for 90-day feeding trials with whole food and feed; adoption of additional guidance for applicants on claims related to antioxidants, oxidative damage and cardiovascular health; guidance for assessment of environmental risk from plant pests; EFSA guidance on risk assessment for animal welfare; and guidance on the risk assessment of GM animals including animal health and welfare aspects.
- 10.6. Other topics for which communication is planned included: scientific opinion on the risk to conifer species from the pine wood nematode (PWN); Norovirus in oysters; evaluation of enzymes; report of ESCO working group on isoflavones; assessment of the post-market environmental monitoring (PMEM) report for the Amflora potato; scientific opinions on use of animal-based measures to assess the welfare of dairy cows and pigs and EFSA's Scientific Committee work on harmonisation of terms used in risk assessment. Laura Smillie also informed the group that EFSA will update the compendium on botanicals reported to contain toxic, addictive, psychotropic or other substances of concern; and pointed out that the opinion on threshold of toxicological concern (TTC) approach will explore options for the use of the TTC approach in chemical risk assessment.
- 10.7. Update on EFSA's recent and upcoming publications and events was provided in writing.

Action 11: *Members welcome to share their experiences with social media and their social media policies*



DAY 2 – 7TH DECEMBER 2011 – 09H00 - 12H00

11. RISK PERCEPTION AND RISK COMMUNICATIONS

- 11.1. Anne-Laure Gassin introduced the speakers of the morning session dedicated to share information and discuss issues related to risk perception and risk communications – Katrin Hohl, the Research Officer at the Methodology Institute of the London School of Economics in London; Adrian Moss, the Managing Director of the Focus Business Communications and Rui Gaspar, the post-doctoral researcher at the Centro de Investigação e Intervenção Social in Lisbon.
- 11.2. She reiterated that the Advisory Forum has identified risk perception and risk communications among the future topics for strategic discussion (on the agenda of the Advisory Forum’s spring meeting). It has also been agreed that the Advisory Forum discussion on this topic will be prepared with AFCWG members; making use of the Eurobarometer 2010 survey findings that provided data from both EU and national perspectives. Torben Nilsson confirmed that the Advisory Forum finds the Eurobarometer findings interesting but would like to know what led to those perceptions and how to communicate on them. To this end, EFSA invited Katrin Hohl to present the results of the analysis carried out by a LSE research team of Eurobarometer 2010 survey findings.
- 11.3. Katrin Hohl presented the topline findings on two key aspects: 1) food risks in the public mind, and 2) trust in the food chain, food safety regulators and informers. She pointed out that there are three types of risk: concern about contamination and adulteration, concern about a healthy diet, and diet-related acute and chronic illnesses. This is universal across Europe. Concern about food-related risks has largely been stable between 2005 and 2010, with noteworthy exceptions (e.g. BSE, allergies). She also mentioned that trust in public authorities has remained largely unchanged since 2005. In about a third of the countries, a greater percentage of respondents trust authorities to act quickly when citizen’s health is in danger, and also have greater trust in public authorities doing a good job of keeping the public informed. Scientists, Food Safety Authorities and European Institutions are generally highly trusted to give accurate information about serious food risk. Attitudes towards food and concern about food-related risk are more linked to individual perception and largely unrelated to socio-demographic categories. The perception that food has become safer than it was 10 years ago, engagement with food, the extent to which food is perceived as a stressor and low generalised risk sensitivity are conducive to greater trust in public authorities.
- 11.4. Members found the survey results very interesting and useful. They commented on the national findings, provided some explanations and compared results between Member States.



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- 11.5. Katrin Hohl pointed out that data cannot speak for themselves, therefore the input and interpretation of national findings by the respective members is fundamental. She invited members to provide their comments on national findings. It has been agreed that EFSA will compile the feedback form the group and send it to Katrin Hohl. The full report will be shared with the group in the first quarter of 2012.
- 11.6. Rui Gaspar then updated the group on the work carried out to date by the FoodRisC consortium. He reported on the overall objectives and expected results of the FoodRisC project (Food Risk Communication – perceptions and communication of food risk/benefits across Europe). He highlighted that the project aims to map out the networks and information sources contributing to food risk and benefit communication in Europe. In particular, the project explores the role social media play in providing information sources related to food risks and benefits. It also helps to develop common approaches and tools for optimal food risk/benefit communication that involve stakeholders at an early stage; provide balance between generalisability and specificity; are adaptable to changing environments and new social media tools; and lastly are practical and usable in the long term. In addition, the project identifies the parameters of current food risk/benefit communication models in Europe.
- 11.7. Adrian Moss then focused on another aspect of the FoodRisC project that aims to identify, research and map who in Europe is using new media to communicate food risk online. The main findings of the research demonstrate that there are similar patterns across countries/incidents; the peak and decline happen in +/-3 weeks; twitter is the fastest in peak and decline (within days); online news “bursts” in comparison with traditional/print media; blogs are shifted and have slower decline; and lastly forums are similar to blogs. He also pointed out that not everyone has access to the internet, therefore social media should be used in combination with other communications tools. He explained that different social media are used for different purposes, e.g. crowd sourcing. Adrian Moss concluded by outlining the best practice action suggesting that we participate and monitor; use twitter to drive traffic to official websites/name experts; comment on forums (embedded URLs); and correct errors/misunderstanding fast.
- 11.8. Members thanked Adrian Moss for a very interesting presentation. The subsequent debate focused mainly on the use of twitter, re-tweeting, rapid/real time posting of information; importance of passing on the information, as well as importance of language appeal, tailoring of messages, making the accounts easy to subscribe to, and keeping in mind that media tweet about the story not the source (e.g. often without a link to the source website).
- 11.9. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked the speakers and the members for their valuable contributions. It has been agreed that Risk Perception and Risk Communications will be on the agenda of the next AFCWG meeting (1-2 Feb 2012) to prepare the Advisory Forum session on strategic topics (7-8 March 2012).



***Action 12:** Eurobarometer survey results: The full report will be shared with the group when available*

***Action 13:** Risk Perception and Risk Communications: Agenda item at the next meeting to prepare the Advisory Forum session on strategic topics*

***Action 14:** Members to provide EFSA with their national Eurobarometer findings analysis*

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1. Anne-Laure Gassin informed the group that in view of the joint meeting of AFCWG/Focal Points (Oct 2012), EFSA will shortly send an online survey to both AFCWG and Focal Points to better assess the needs of both groups prior to the joint meeting and help prepare the agenda of the joint meeting.
- 12.2. She reminded the members that the next meeting will take place in Helsinki (Finland) on 1-2 February. Members were invited to propose agenda topics for the upcoming meetings.
- 12.3. The Chair thanked the members for their presence as well as the EFSA staff and the interpreters for their work. As no other points were raised, Anne-Laure Gassin closed the meeting at 12h00.