



Draft Minutes

34th MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS

HELSINKI (FINLAND), 1-2 FEBRUARY 2012

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS:

Chair: GASSIN Anne-Laure, Communications Director

Members:

Austria	PUBLIG Elisabeth	Norway	HAGEN Marit Graff
Czech Republic	BALGA Josef	Poland	WISNIEWSKA Iwona
Denmark	KORNHOLT Heidi	Portugal	SEABRA Maria-Joao
Estonia	PRIISALU Piret	Slovak Republic	MENDEL Juraj
Finland	VIKMAN-ROSLIN Pia	Slovenia	VRDELJA Mitja
Finland	JAUHAINEN Katriina	Spain	GARCIA-GOMEZ Juan-Julian
France	THOMANN Carole	Sweden	LINDHAL Christina
Greece	KARDASI Dimitra	The Netherlands	KRIKKEN Kris
Ireland	CONWAY Edel	United Kingdom	HUMPHREYS Stephen
Lithuania	SAVICKAITE Jurgita		

Observers:

Croatia	MIKRUT Sara	Montenegro	MIRECKI Slavko
European Commission	TAYLOR Graeme	FYROM	JONOVSKA Katerina

European Food Safety Authority Staff:

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

Apologies:

Belgium	BUSSCHOTS Lieve	Hungary	Cseh Julia
Bulgaria	PCHELINSKA Mariela	Italy	TARANTO Mirella
Cyprus	CHRISTODOULIDOU Maro	Luxembourg	HAU Patrick
Germany	FIACK Suzan	Romania	MONEA Alina-Ioana
Turkey	OZCAN Nevra		



DAY 1: 1 FEBRUARY 2012 - 14H00 – 18H00

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Anne-Laure Gassin opened the meeting by welcoming all participants and thanking the Finnish Food Safety Authority (EVIRA) for hosting the meeting. Then she gave the floor to Professor Kirsti Savela, Head of Research Unit, Risk Assessment, Finnish Food Safety Authority (Evira). In her welcome speech she presented the work of Evira and informed the group of a recent appointment of a new Deputy General Director of the Authority. She also highlighted the importance of close cooperation across the EU in the area of food safety and congratulated EFSA on its 10 year anniversary. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Professor Savela for the supportive words and pointed out that Evira's contribution to the EU food safety has been significant. She also complimented the Finnish Authority on its informative video.
- 1.2. Anne-Laure Gassin then welcomed the new working group member from Norway. Apologies were received from Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Romania and Turkey.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(Doc AF Comm WG 1 2 12 – 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 LODZ 6-7 DECEMBER 2011 AND MATTERS ARISING

(Doc AF Comm WG 1 2 12 – 2)

- 3.1. Anne-Laure Gassin asked the members whether they had any comments on the minutes of the meeting held on 6-7 December in Lodz. Following the members' consent, the minutes were approved at the meeting and the group was informed that they will be published on the Extranet and the EFSA website.
- 3.2. Anne-Laure Gassin outlined the matters arising from the meeting in Lodz 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 recent adaption and publication of EFSA's Science Strategy, the launch of Twitter and EFSA's recent meeting with ANSES focused on Bisphenol A assessment and cooperation.

She also mentioned that EFSA has finalised its move to the new building. In this regards she informed the members that, considering the facilities at the new premises of EFSA and meeting costs, the future meetings would take place in Parma, with the exception of those venues that had already been agreed for 2012/13, for instance countries hosting an AFCWG meeting during their EU Presidency. Several members felt this proposal should be further discussed as in their opinion members benefit from visiting another Member State (Agency). Hosting AFCWG meetings in different country contributes to further raising the visibility of both EFSA and the hosting agency.

5. COMMUNICATING ON CAMPYLOBACTER

- 5.1. Laura Smillie reiterated that following the Advisory Forum's request to address at the AFCWG meeting risk communications on good hygiene practices to reduce risks from *Campylobacter*, the aim of the debate was to review EFSA's and Member States' communication activities on campylobacter and discuss whether and how communications could be strengthened and possibly coordinated on the EU level.
- 5.2. Laura Smillie provided an overview of EFSA's scientific work and communications activities on *Campylobacter*. She reminded the group of Zoonoses section on EFSA's website that includes information on *Campylobacter* as well as factsheets on Zoonoses and pointed out that the Authority was preparing an "Understanding Science" video explaining *Campylobacter*. Members were invited to use the existing EFSA information material.
- 5.3. UK reported on the UK FSA food hygiene communications activities aimed at *Campylobacter* reduction. It has been pointed out that *Campylobacter* is responsible for majority of UK cases of foodborne disease. Subsequently, reducing campylobacter is a key part of FSA's strategy to 2015. Among the main actions the UK highlighted: extensive research programme to understand how to reduce *Campylobacter*; close cooperation with poultry producers and retailers, e.g. raising hygiene standards in processing plants, better packaging of whole chickens, and improving bio-security at farms. In addition, the UK pointed out the importance of communicating to consumers; the FSA uses media, their Chief Scientist's blog and advice on labelling chicken meat as well as chefs through food magazines to reach out to public. The two key messages for consumer communications include: "Don't wash your chicken – it only spreads contamination" and "Ensure that you cook chicken liver paté thoroughly".
- 5.4. Ireland reported that also the FSAI advises to consumers not to wash turkey/chicken prior to cooking. Spain's AESAN uses "don't wash the eggs" message and pointed out that these messages should always be accompanied by technical advice/explanation. France informed the group that communicating on campylobacter is among the 2012 priorities of ANSES, e.g. the Agency will address the issue at the next International Agricultural Exhibition,



namely the biological risk and hygiene advice to children; an information kit for children is being prepared.

- 5.5. An interesting debate was held regarding differences in consumer messages on campylobacter risk, with the UK FSA outlining the need in the UK to explain to consumers not to wash chicken due to risk of cross-contamination, but also reminding consumers that they should wash vegetables. It has been agreed that EFSA and Member States will share their key messages and related communications material in order to keep consumers well informed and achieve consistency of messages. EFSA will create a section on the Extranet where all key messages will be uploaded.

Action 1: EFSA and members to share their key messages and related communications material in order to keep consumers well informed and achieve consistency of messages

Action 2: EFSA to create a section on the Extranet where all key messages will be uploaded

6. JOINT ACTIVITIES - RISK COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES AND GLOSSARY OF FOOD SAFETY TERMINOLOGY

- 6.1. Laura Smillie informed the group that the Risk Communications Guidelines were almost finalised. The Preface drafted by an Advisory Group on Risk Communications member is nearly finished and the graphic layout and design will be available in March. Laura Smillie pointed out that this is a collaborative initiative that incorporates learning from across Europe. Subsequent debate focused on the dissemination and launch of the guidelines. It has been agreed that EFSA will prepare an implementation plan for the launch and the use/dissemination of the guidelines (including timeframe). Members were asked to provide ideas regarding the launch of this joint initiative, i.e. identify target audience, platforms for dissemination (events in 2012), and also explain how they intend to use the guidelines. Several Member States expressed interest to have the guidelines translated in their national language(s). EFSA agreed to look into possibility of translating the guidelines. It has been proposed that in order to ensure the use of correct and most relevant terms the members would take care of proofreading the guidelines.
- 6.2. Laura Smillie then re-introduced the joint initiative of creating a glossary of food safety-related terms. She pointed out that the aim was to foster understanding of risk assessment work through the simplification of complex scientific terms while remaining true to their meaning. This joint initiative would also contribute to enhancing consistent and coherent communications throughout the EU through the use of harmonised terminology and layman explanations to reduce potential confusion and mixed messages. She also briefly updated the group on current terminology work done in EFSA, some of which can be further developed by the AFCWG.



6.3. It has been agreed that this new initiative will be further discussed at the next AFCWG meeting. In the meantime, members were requested to provide EFSA with examples/terms they often define in the notes to editors, footnotes, etc. EFSA will consolidate/consider the list and prepare the status for the next meeting. Members were invited to support the work of the initial taskforce comprising members from Greece, Portugal and Germany.

Action 3: EFSA to prepare an implementation plan for the launch and the use/dissemination of the guidelines (including timeframe)

Action 4: Members to provide ideas regarding the launch of this joint initiative, i.e. identify target audience, platforms for dissemination (events in 2012), etc.

Action 5: EFSA to look into possibility of having the guidelines translated in EU languages

Action 6: Glossary of Food Safety Terminology on the agenda of the next meeting

Action 7: Members to provide EFSA with examples/terms they often define in the notes to editor, footnotes, etc.

Action 8: EFSA to consolidate/consider the list and prepare the status for the next meeting

Action 9: The initial taskforce comprises members from Greece, Portugal, Germany; other members are invited to support the work of the taskforce

7. “KEY TOPICS”

7.1. Anne-Laure Gassin extended her thanks and informed the group that Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, France, Portugal and the UK 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.

7.2. Sweden informed the group that in March the National Food Administration will publish results of a report examining the presence of metals in baby food.

7.3. The Netherlands updated the members on the Schmallenberg virus (SBV) situation in the country. It was reported that the newly found virus has been found in sheep, cattle and goats and has to date infected animals in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. According to a preliminary risk assessment carried out by public health authorities in the Netherlands and a follow-up risk assessment by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), there is currently no evidence that the virus could cause illness in humans but it cannot be excluded at this stage. The topic has received extensive media attention; newspapers as well as internet and social media, covered the topic. The Dutch Food Safety Authority provides regular updates via its website and press releases.

- 7.4. Laura Smillie provided an overview of EFSA's scientific work and communications activities on the topic. She pointed out that the European Commission has requested EFSA to provide urgent scientific and technical assistance for possible risks resulting from the virus. Based on data collected from Member States, EFSA will provide an overall assessment of the impact of the virus infection on animal welfare together with a state-of-the-art review on what is known about the virus by June 2012. She highlighted that EFSA continues to liaise with ECDC in order to closely monitor possible public health impact and will address areas of concern for human health, should these arise.
- 7.5. The European Commission stressed that it will make a decision following EFSA's scientific advice based on best available science. France confirmed that the virus has been detected on farms and ANSES has started working on the issue. UK informed the group that the FSA is not dealing with the issue (DEFRA is directly involved) since at present there are not any public health concerns. EFSA pointed out that it has tweeted about its work on the virus and thanked the members for re-tweeting the information. Austria confirmed that the AGES posted information on the virus on its websites (referring to EFSA's scientific assessment).
- 7.6. It has been agreed that EFSA and members will keep each other informed on further developments in order to channel and coordinate work. EFSA will provide the group with its reactive media lines and further communications material on Schmallenberg virus.

Action 10: EFSA and members to keep each other informed on further developments in order to channel and coordinate work

Action 11: EFSA to share its reactive media lines and further communications material with the members

8. EFSA'S 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

- 8.1. Caroline Haga joined the meeting via conference call to provide a further update on planned activities for EFSA's 10 year anniversary. She pointed out that the anniversary was officially launched on 30 January with a press release announcing the anniversary year. EFSA has also published dedicated section on its website (to be regularly updated) providing concrete examples of the Authority's work in the past 10 years and information on upcoming events. All countries are welcome to link to this section from their websites and EFSA will provide logos/banners and any other information needed. EFSA also welcomes any ideas members may have for the web section and/or for joint success stories. Around 20 additional success stories will be published throughout the year. Each will be highlighted on the website homepage, in EFSA's newsletters and on Twitter.
- 8.2. In addition, Carolina Haga informed the group that EFSA's anniversary year can be followed on Twitter [@EFSA_EU](#). EFSA in collaboration with the European Commission, as well as with partners in Member States, will also be organising joint events in 2012



marking the 10th anniversary of the creation of both EFSA and the general EU Food law. Among the planned media activities she highlighted: dedicated media interviews with Executive Directors in Member States; media launch of AFCWG Risk Communication Guidelines; a dedicated 10th anniversary brochure (to be distributed to MS); articles in EFSA newsletters and dedicated editorials in EFSA Journal as well as a new corporate video summarising key achievements and focusing on future challenges. She also mentioned that in close collaboration with the AFCWG, EFSA will seek to publish joint opinionated editorials and key feature articles in national media.

- 8.3. Laura Smillie briefed the members of the outcome of the conference call organised with the taskforce last week comprising members from Bulgaria, Spain and a BfR representative. The taskforce shared ideas regarding possible joint media relations activities. Laura Smillie pointed out that EFSA was happy to support Member States in their media relations promoting EFSA's 10 year anniversary. She also informed the group that Bulgaria has published a press release linking the EFSA 10 year anniversary to the 50th anniversary of CAP. The European Commission complimented EFSA on its planned 10 year anniversary activities and stressed that the Commission would be happy to participate in a number of these activities, e.g. co-author an article, among others.
- 8.4. Anne-Laure Gassin reiterated that the anniversary 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.
- 8.5. Torben Nilsson reported on events planned in Member States during the anniversary year. He highlighted that there are four types of events: EFSA meetings, national events, media related activities and joint events. To date, seven Member States proposed to organise a joint event to mark 10 year anniversary of EFSA: Italy, Cyprus, Finland, Denmark, and Ireland. In addition, the BfR and AGES will celebrate their own 10th year anniversaries that could provide an opportunity to refer also to the EFSA anniversary. Torben Nilsson concluded by thanking members for suggested initiatives and pointed out that EFSA would be delighted to receive further proposals from the Member States on joint events. Spain informed the group that in 2012 all AESAN presentations refer/promote the EFSA 10 year anniversary.
- 8.6. Members were informed that a presentation on the past 10 years of EFSA will be given at the next Focal Point meeting; the presentation will also be shared with the AFCWG.

Action 12: Members to inform EFSA about the development and publication of their success stories

Action 13: EFSA's presentation on the past 10 years of EFSA to be presented at the next Focal Point meeting to be shared with the group



9. COMMUNICATIONS: INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND FORWARD PLANNING

9.1. Yenny Gamming provided an update on EFSA's online and offline activities (publications and events). In particular she mentioned two scientific events: Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) World Congress (2-24 May); and International Society for Veterinary Epidemiology and Economics (ISVEE) Symposium (20-14 August) in which EFSA will participate. She also informed the group that EFSA was finalising a poster on "History of EFSA" (members welcome to use) and highlighted that on 7 February EFSA will launch "Email alerts" – updates on the latest information on EFSA's work based on the subscribers' choices.

DAY 2 – 2ND FEBRUARY 2012 – 09H00 - 12H15

10. RISK PERCEPTION AND RISK COMMUNICATIONS: INDEPENDENCE OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

- 10.1. Anne-Laure Gassin introduced the topic by reiterating that independence of scientific advice is a strategic topic of discussion at the next Advisory Forum meeting. The aim of the AFCWG session was to prepare the Advisory Forum discussion on this topic. She also pointed out that the initial plan to discuss at the March Advisory Forum meeting the risk perception and risk communications (including the LSE analysis of Eurobarometer 2010 survey findings and the results of the DG Research FoodRisC project: Communicating on risk & benefits) was postponed till June Advisory Forum meeting.
- 10.2. Anne-Laure Gassin provided the group with rationale behind the growing criticism of scientific independence. She also outlined the main objectives of communicating on EFSA's independence, highlighted the 2-pronged strategic approach (promoting independence of EFSA's scientific work as well as EFSA's work on key public health issues), as well as target audience and draft key initiatives for 2012. Then she opened up the floor for a debate. France, Sweden and the UK mentioned that independence of their scientific advice has also been criticised by different groups; the topic also generated an increased negative coverage in media.
- 10.3. During the subsequent debate the participants (split into two groups) discussed the specific concerns on the national and the EU level. They tried to identify the influencers of the debate and common approaches to strengthen confidence in independence of science. They concluded that the Member States have a broad range of experience, i.e. some countries are concerned by the issue (UK, France, Sweden), some are not (Denmark, Portugal). The importance of explaining scientific processes followed and basic principles used, including evaluation of new scientific studies (clear assessment criteria and fast evaluation), was highlighted, as well as difficulties posed by global economic crisis and the growing focus



on public/private partnerships, with implications for funding sources for scientific research. They also mentioned challenges posed by media and information posted on the internet and on social media, implying that “latest science is best”. Among the key influencers they identified: senior scientists, NGOs, media, food producers, health professional associations, role for organisations such as the European Commission to bring the debate to a higher level, and EFSA (one member pointed out they would refer to EFSA). The members agreed that there is a need for separate communications towards NGOs and consumers and perhaps an advanced stakeholders’ involvement in Agencies’ work. Denmark pointed out that their Executive Director has a regular online column written in consumer friendly way. France informed the group that they have a new legislation on DoIs – all discussions must be recorded and public access to all documents must be provided.

- 10.4. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked the group for the very interesting and fruitful discussions. She proposed that EFSA will write up the outcome of the discussion groups and matters arising for the group.

Action 15: EFSA to draft a note on the discussion outcome and matters arising for the group

11. COMMUNICATIONS: INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND FORWARD PLANNING

- 11.1. Laura Smillie provided an overview of recent and upcoming scientific issues for which future communications are foreseen. These included: Norovirus (NoV) in oysters: methods, limits and control options; risk to conifer species from the pine wood nematode (PWN); dietary reference values for protein; threshold of toxicological concern (TTC) approach; update of compendium on botanicals; removal of *Listeria monocytogenes* surface contamination of raw fish; re-evaluation of beta-carotenes (E160a, E160e); mineral oils in food; public health impact of setting new targets for *Salmonella* in turkeys; and evaluation of enzymes.
- 11.2. Furthermore, she reported on a number of EFSA guidance documents, such as the guidance for the risk assessment of food and feed derived from GM animals and related animal health and welfare aspects; the guidance on default assumptions used in EFSA’s risk assessments in absence of actual measurable data and the guidelines on the risk assessment of animal welfare and two opinions on the use of animal-based measures to evaluate the welfare of dairy cows and pigs, which come soon after the adoption of the EU’s new Animal Welfare Strategy 2012-2015.
- 11.3. Other topics for which communication is planned included: publication of EFSA’s science strategy, launch of EFSA’s 10 year anniversary-related activities; and assessment of the post-market environmental monitoring (PMEM) report for the Amflora potato.



12. SOCIAL MEDIA

- 12.1. Yenny Gamming reported on EFSA's latest activities in social media and multimedia. She pointed out that EFSA was currently implementing the social media recommendations across different platforms and provided an update on EFSA's presence on Twitter (encouraged the group to follow EFSA), LinkedIn, foursquare and informed the members about a recent google initiative called Google+. She also brought to attention a new Eurobarometer survey on social media and journalism; EFSA will provide the group with a link to the survey.
- 12.2. Yenny Gamming then briefed the members on the *Understanding Science* - EFSA's scientific white board video series. She reiterated that 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 GMO video was presented to the members at the meeting. The second batch focused on more zoonoses topics and "chemicals in food" is scheduled for March 2012 and will be followed by more topics. When finalised, these videos will be available to all members and can be used also as a training tool (as in the case of EFSA's factsheets on Zoonoses).
- 12.3. Finland provided a feedback on Evira's social media work, mentioning in particular Evira's presence on Facebook (in Finnish) and on Twitter (in Finnish and English), and YouTube (planned for this spring). It was pointed out that Evira's social media staff engagement guidelines are very similar to those of EFSA and the European Comission. Austria reported that the AGES is using Facebook and Twitter and requested whether the group could discuss at the next meeting use of website/online communications in respective Member States in order to share different best practices and online strategies, including lessons learnt. It has been agreed that EFSA and Austria will prepare a session on online communications with the objective to brief members who is using what channel and why.
- 12.4. Anne-Laure Gassin concluded the discussion by encouraging the members to continue sharing their experiences with social media and their social media policies.

Action 16: Social media on the agenda of the next meeting

Action 17: EFSA and Austria to prepare a session on online communications with the objective to brief members who is using what channel and why

Action 18: EFSA to send to the group a link to the Eurobarometer survey on social media and journalism

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS



- 13.1. Anne-Laure Gassin reminded the members that the next meeting will take place in Copenhagen (Denmark) on 3-4 April. Members were invited to propose agenda topics for the upcoming meetings.
- 13.2. 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 12h15.