

Minutes

38th MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS

DUBLIN (IRELAND), 21-22 FEBRUARY 2013

Chair: GASSIN Anne-Laure, Communications Director

Members of the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communications:

Belgium	BUSSCHOTS Lieve	Portugal	FERNANDES Paulo Cesar
Bulgaria	PCHELINSKA Mariela	Slovakia	MENDEL Juraj
Cyprus	CHRISTODOULIDOU Maro	Slovenia	VRDELJA Mitja
Czech Republic	BENEŠ Petr	Spain	GARCIA Juan-Julián
Estonia	TAMMEMAGI Pille	Sweden	GUSTAFSSON Karin
France	THOMANN Carole		
Germany	FIACK Suzan		
Hungary	SIPOS Anna		
Ireland	RYDER Jane		
Norway	BJERKÅS Astrid		
Poland	WIŚNIEWSKA Iwona		

Observers:

European Commission	SCANNELL Michael
Croatia	MIKRUT Sara
Switzerland	HELFER Sabina

European Food Safety Authority Staff:

GASSIN Anne-Laure	SMILLIE Laura
PALOMBI Ian	MANGHI Nicoletta
HARRINGTON Rory	VAN DE VYVER Stijn

Apologies:

Austria	PUBLIG Elisabeth	Lithuania	SAVICKAITĖ Jurgita
Denmark	KORNHOLT Heidi	Luxembourg	KOCH Jerome
Finland	SEPPALA Varpu	Romania	MONEA Alina-Ioana
Greece	KARDASI Dimitra	The Netherlands	KRIKKEN Chris
Italy	TARANTO Anna-Mirella	United Kingdom	HUMPHREYS Stephen



21 FEBRUARY 2013 - 09H00 – 16H00

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Anne-Laure Gassin opened the meeting, greeted all participants, thanked the Food Safety Authority of Ireland for the hospitality and welcomed the substitute Member from the Czech Republic Petr Beneš, as well as the return of former member from Norway Astrid Bjerkås.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(Doc AF Comm WG 21 02 13 – 1)

- 2.1. Anne-Laure Gassin went through the agenda and asked whether any of the members wished to make comments. Germany asked to move the session on social media to an earlier time, due to travel arrangements.
- 2.2. Anne-Laure Gassin reminded members about the re-validation of the ADoIs (valid for 1 year) – and thanked Members for updating their DoIs, as well as for checking and updating their contact details on the list circulated during the meeting.
- 2.3. She also reminded members that presentations at the meeting would no longer be provided in printed format. This move was supported by the members and in line with a similar decision by the EFSA's Advisory Forum members aimed at reducing printed copies.

3. FSAI WELCOME

- 3.1. Anne-Laure Gassin then introduced Professor Alan Reilly Chief Executive of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), who was given the floor.
- 3.2. Professor Reilly warmly welcomed the members and gave an overview of the horse meat issue that had kept the FSAI busy in recent times. He explained the functioning of the FSAI, how it is independent from the Irish Government, but also from the industry, and works in close cooperation with EFSA. He mentioned that actors dealing with risk communications in the field of food safety often have a difficult job and are prone to criticism; he therefore stressed the importance of transparency coupled with the importance of social media in disseminating messages to the public at large. The horse meat issue had shown how social media can make communications more rapid and effective, as well as the importance of carefully selecting the messages to convey.
- 3.3. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Professor Reilly for his welcome and reiterated the importance of close cooperation and putting forward coherent messages.



4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING IN PARMA 10-11 OCTOBER 2012 AND MATTERS ARISING

(Doc AF Comm WG 21 02 13 – 2)

- 4.1. Anne-Laure Gassin informed the members that the minutes of the last meeting held in Parma in October had been adopted as proposed since no additional comments were received.
- 4.2. Anne-Laure Gassin outlined that the matters arising from the last meeting that was held in Parma, would be discussed with the group in the course of the 2 days.
- 4.3. She also reminded members about the remaining work to be undertaken at national level on the Risk Communication Guidelines, thanking those members who had already proofread the translated version provided by EFSA in their respective language(s).

5. UPDATE ON EFSA'S ACTIVITIES (I)

Anne-Laure Gassin updated the members on a number of EFSA activities. She explained the transparency initiative which included open panel meetings and asked members for their opinions on making data publicly available, in particular with regards to reactions to this initiative and best practices with respect to access to information, as well as the implications for communications.

- 5.1. Anne-Laure Gassin then spoke about a meeting organised by EFSA that took place in Brussels on 30 January 2013 in order to pursue dialogue with the signatories of the “5 demands” submitted to the Authority in November 2012 in the context of EFSA's external evaluation and the Authority's 10-year anniversary. She explained that although stakeholders cannot task EFSA directly, they can raise issues on which EFSA can then self-task. Regarding broadening the involvement of stakeholders, she also highlighted that EFSA was currently exploring the possibility of consulting with stakeholders on mandates for its scientific work, particularly in areas of great public interest (e.g. acrylamide.).
- 5.2. Anne-Laure Gassin then gave an update on the EU Agencies road map and the on-going work with sister agencies, in particular concerning work of the Inter-institutional Working Group on the future of the EU agencies.
- 5.3. Anne-Laure Gassin provided feedback from EFSA's latest Management Board meeting which took place in Parma on 13 Dec 2012. She outlined the approval of the process for the appointment of new members to the ANS and CEF Panels and EFSA's potential contribution to the Horizon 2020 programme. In particular, she mentioned EFSA's Multiannual planning and how this relates to the EU Research Agenda/Horizon 2020.
- 5.4. Regarding EFSA's recent communications activities, Anne-Laure Gassin mentioned: the media attention on long-term feeding trials, for which FAQs and media lines had been prepared; the recent work on neonicotinoids and bees; the public consultation on aspartame, the launch of the transparency initiative as well as the on-going work on Endocrine Active Substances.



6. KEY POINTS ARISING FROM THE 46TH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM (PAPHOS, CYPRUS, 5 - 6 DECEMBER 2012)

- 6.1. Saadia Noorani of EFSA's Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit (AFSCO) joined the meeting by phone from Parma to summarise the outcome of EFSA's 46th Advisory Forum meeting.
- 6.2. This included an update on the Multi-Annual Plan 2014-2016. Details were provided on forthcoming procurement framework contracts and on the future of grants. Feedback on EFSA's 10 year anniversary Scientific Institutional Conferences was provided as well as details of discussions from the Head of Agencies meeting on Transparency in Risk Management in relation to Risk Assessment.
- 6.3. Regarding scientific issues, Saadia Noorani gave an update on approaches to the harmonisation of risk assessment, the ongoing work on chemical mixtures, as well as feedback on the meeting with Member States on Bisphenol A.
- 6.4. Saadia Noorani finally informed the group that a 'self review' of EFSA's Networks had been agreed in order to examine how these can best meet the cooperation requirements and needs of EFSA and the Member States.

7. FOLLOW-UP ON SURVEYS

- 7.1. Laura Smillie gave an introduction to the independence survey recently conducted amongst members comparing it with the results from the initial 2010 edition. This initiative followed a request from the Advisory Forum for the AFCWG to reflect on a possible strategy to further communicate on the independence of risk assessment advice. She explained that this second survey aimed to identify trends and differences from the previous, as a means of strengthening understanding about the impact of independence on the work of EFSA and national authorities. She reminded members that scientific independence has become an issue not only for EFSA but also at national level, since the independence of scientific advice and experts is under increasing public scrutiny.

Then she gave an overview of the outcomes of the survey, which had a lower response rate compared to 2010. She informed members that the survey will be re-opened for those who had not yet responded, welcoming their belated input. According to the results, AFCWG member organisations are less positively perceived in terms of independence than 2 years ago. There was a significant increase in the number of organisations that have been challenged about their independence and that of their scientific outputs. Across all communication platforms, AFCWG members were found to be communicating less – with the exception of social & multi-media which however were not used in 2010; and independence was shown to have become part of most members' communications strategies.

Laura then invited members to give their views and comment on the results of the survey. Croatia, Sweden and Germany took the floor to give their perspective and experience on communicating



about independence, which was seen by all as a new emerging issue for communications at national level, following more cases of allegations of conflicts of interests for experts at national level.

- 7.2. Laura Smillie also gave an overview of the new project related to mapping stakeholders. She explained that the aim of the project is to better understand key target audiences at Member State level, in order to define how EFSA can support and prioritise its communications and outreach efforts. The project follows on from the 2012 External Evaluation of EFSA, which found that certain key groups/audiences at MS level were not well informed about the Authority's work.

The survey will gather Member States' perspective by obtaining joint submissions from both FP and AFCWG members. Laura Smillie then reminded the AFCWG that the stakeholder mapping and subsequent analysis is an essential part of strategic planning for communications, which needs to be regularly assessed and adapted.

Laura Smillie then went on to explain that an on-line survey would be circulated to all FP and AFCWG members. She also gave members an exhaustive overview of all stakeholders groups that were taken into consideration, in order to ensure that the questions were relevant and meaningful to all Member States. Members expressed interest in having a more specific session where EFSA would outline its independence policy and rules as well as resources affected to this area of our work and Laura Smillie suggested that the benchmarking report on EFSA's independence policy compared to that of other agencies could also be shared amongst members, as well as any other document relevant to this subject. Finally she also proposed to review technical aspects of the survey which made it difficult for members to fill in.

***Action:** Stakeholders mapping: EFSA to survey FPs and WG members on target audiences and outreach.*

***Action:** Independence: EFSA re-opened the survey allowing a maximum number of members to complete in light of discussions at 38th AFCWG meeting (particular focus on reasons for communicating less on independence-related issues, examples of issues encountered).*

8. EFSA RISK COMMUNICATIONS

- 8.1. Laura Smillie introduced discussions on EFSA's Communication Strategy 2010-2013. She explained that the major objectives were simplicity and transparency, aiming at increasing relevance and understanding of EFSA's communications for key target audiences and informed lay audiences, in co-operation with MS.

Independence, as she explained, also remained a major theme, with the specific objective of increasing proactive communications on the independence of EFSA's risk assessment advice. By comparison, with regards to visibility, the major objective was to enhance outreach and dialogue with stakeholders.

Laura Smillie also reminded members about the key findings from EFSA's External Evaluation in relation to risk communications. EFSA has succeeded in building awareness, trust and reputation for



the overall food safety system in the EU and for itself, contributing to the harmonisation and coherence in risk communication. However, shortcomings were still to be addressed, in particular with regards to improving the usefulness and clarity of messages and in facilitating public outreach, using the right communications mix.

The AFCWG was identified in the External Evaluation as having a key role in facilitating coherence in communications, especially when urgent scientific advice is needed.

- 8.2. Members were then asked to take stock of the External Evaluation findings and to review the group's Terms of Reference, its working processes with a particular focus on the links with the Advisory Forum and the Focal Points.

In particular the group was asked to suggest how EFSA could improve its cooperation in and coordination of communications on all areas within the Authority's remit, including the further development of best practices and guidelines, facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and training, exchanging information and experiences and evaluating communication activities and results in view of identifying lessons to be learned.

Discussions could also address ways of strengthening reciprocal pre-notification of press releases between EFSA and MSs particularly on sensitive issues. This would allow prompt distribution of information to the network, with all parties working together to prepare for and support communications activities at European and national level. Specific importance could also be given to strengthening cooperation through involving other members of communications teams at Member States, Commission and EFSA levels, all in close liaison with the working group; but also to set up dedicated groups focusing on specific communications areas with shared responsibilities and expertise.

Laura Smillie explained that better identification and understanding of communications tools would in turn allow better understanding of the European food safety system and the work of national and European authorities on key issues. Communications tools could be used to disseminate appropriate content and develop a shared approach to the evaluation of communications activities and lessons learned to strengthen best practice.

Lastly Laura Smillie, reminded members about the need and advantages of identifying specific issues where Member States, the European Commission and EFSA could have a mutual interest to network, share intelligence and prepare communications approaches.

- 8.3. Laura Smillie then showed EFSA's latest video "Science in society", as an example of alternative communication tools for promoting and explaining EFSA's role as well as the role of scientific risk assessment in the field of food safety.

- 8.4. On the basis of this introduction, the members were invited to discuss in break-out groups in order to address the following points:



- How can EFSA improve its risk communications? (Useful, clear information, Effectiveness of online communications & media outreach, Supporting coherence when urgent issues arise)
- How can the group improve its cooperation in risk communications?
- Do you think we need to change the AFCWG's Terms of Reference?

8.5. The following feedback was received from the three groups.

Feedback from group 1: Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland.

The group said that EFSA should focus on the big issues and be more rapid in its communication work. In the media landscape, they saw EFSA as giving a pan-EU perspective as opposed to national perspectives, a different voice in the media platform.

The press releases remain too scientific in terms of content and language, they should be simpler.

Regarding the Terms of Reference the group suggested that they did not need to be changed, but indicated a need for strengthening their implementation. This could for instance be done by setting goals on a yearly basis, which could be translated into an annual work plan for the AFCWG.

The group also recommended dedicating more time to key country issues, as well as to sharing experiences and good practices. Other institutions could also be invited to join the AFCWG meetings (such as the European Centre for Disease Control, the European Medicines Agency, the World Health Organisation), so that they could share their perspectives. EFSA would then have a prominent important role in coordinating the type of information that could or should be shared.

Feedback from group 2: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Norway, Slovakia, Spain.

The language in press releases and other communications should be easier and with shorter sentences. The work of EFSA could be put more into context, explaining why certain work was carried out and how it will be used. Member States need more support on how to communicate on EFSA's opinions.

The group said the Terms of Reference did not need to be changed, but the objective of facilitating communications should be more prominent. A need to better clarify the role of EFSA within the AFCWG was also expressed. The group expressed the view that EFSA receives through many different channels relevant information from Member States, but does not necessarily share this back with the Member States in a way that is useful.

The group also said that more could be done on social media. Such activities were seen as a potentially positive evolution for EFSA as they oblige the Authority to be more concise. EFSA could use Twitter more frequently.

Feedback from group 3: Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Sweden.



As the external evaluation highlighted, simplicity in communications remained the key issue – according to this group. EFSA should bear in mind that talking to the media means talking to the general public, since the media follow public opinion closely; as a consequence, its language should be adapted accordingly. Also, if the objective is to engage with media, EFSA’s communications should be more meaningful and useful to the general public, as a function to obtain media interest.

A major language issue was highlighted by this group too: press releases and other communications are found to be not usable if not translated.

The group also highlighted reputation and awareness problems for EFSA at national level, where for instance often the general public tends to assume that EFSA is the European Commission.

On sensitive and urgent issues, more information should be received and more promptly – the group added; EFSA could perhaps look into better coordination of information distribution. It could for instance collect and define key messages on given issues and distribute among the group.

***Action:** Members to provide input on the AFCWG Terms of Reference in the context of the revision of EFSA’s risk communications strategy. Comments will feed into EFSA’s risk communications strategy.*

***Action:** How to better explain risk assessment, processes, quality of research and scientific advice. Members to send examples of best practices.*

9. COOPERATION ON FOODRISC PROJECT

In the afternoon members were introduced to the FoodRisC project and participated in testing communications tools that are currently being developed in the context of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD).project.



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10. ON-LINE COMMS/SOCIAL MEDIA

- 10.1. As part of the Task Force on Twitter (EFSA/UK/Ireland), Stijn Van de Vyver from EFSA's Communications Directorate gave a presentation on the criteria for engaging on Twitter.

He started with a recap of EFSA's activities on Twitter since January 2012, when the EFSA Twitter account became active. He then focused in particular on the need for following other users and re-tweeting their tweets, as a key aspect of engaging on Twitter; the main purpose of this social media is interaction.

Interactions on Twitter can also come under the form of chats, questions and polls and customer services. Stijn Van de Vyver gave some practical examples of engagement and stressed that following does not necessarily mean endorsement.

- 10.2. The floor was open to questions and Ireland asked why EFSA's account does not follow any users on Twitter and added that this may suggest that the agency is too focused on itself. Anne-Laure said that the criteria for selecting users to follow were being defined and asked Ireland whether they had any advice on following. Ireland said that they select users to follow on Twitter on the basis of their discretion and they can decide to stop following any user at any moment if they feel the user is not appropriate.

Germany added that they also follow their discretion and asked whether any one had specific criteria for following. Croatia suggested looking also at more objective criteria, such as selecting users to follow among followers. Bulgaria recommended to follow at least sister agencies and authorities at national level, since following other users on twitter creates trust; Bulgaria also added that when a user does not follow anyone on Twitter, other users who may want to communicate with that user are left with no alternative but to send them a public message visible to everyone. Anne-Laure Gassin asked whether members had any specific advice for re-tweeting. Ireland said that they do not re-tweet very much and have a more cautious approach on re-tweeting, they do it mostly with sister agencies.

Norway added that they had put in place guidelines for of their use of social media, which also covered specific criteria for following and engaging on Twitter for instance; Norway added that social media and the development of guidelines was an important aspect of their stakeholder engagement approach.

- 10.3. France then gave an overview of their social media activities, with a specific focus on their newly launched Twitter account (@Anses_fr). The national agency ANSES decided to look into social media as a way of mapping its main stakeholders, analysing their positions and interests, and in general to reach audiences and become more visible in the virtual communities.



Social media represented for ANSES a basis for sharing and discussing and to explore possibilities and constraints raised and they decided to seek professional advice from an external agency expert in the field of social media.

France also gave an overview of the other social media on which they were starting to work: Flickr, Vimeo and Storify, as well as other web platforms and social media such as Wikipedia and blogs.

***Action:** A dedicated task force (EFSA, France, Ireland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, UK) will look into developing simple common guidelines for Twitter.*

***Action:** Those Members who already have guidelines/info can upload them on to the extranet through the Secretariat.*

***Action:** EFSA will publish on the extranet Twitter accounts in order to inform members about these. EFSA will also share on the extranet documents related to the evaluation of social media use, such as twitter chats.*

11. KEY COUNTRY ISSUES IN MEMBER STATES

11.1. Ireland gave a presentation on the horse meat issue. The situation was discovered randomly as part of a routine task (DNA analysis) that the FSAI carries out in relation to checking food quality and safety. Some samples of beef burgers were found to contain traces of horse DNA, and the FSAI rapidly understood that this was a broader phenomenon possibly due to growing pressure on suppliers to keep prices down (horse meat being cheaper than beef). Knowing the complexity of the food chain, the FSAI then decided to extend tests to other processed food products containing meat, which were also found to contain traces of horse DNA. Ireland explained that horse meat per se does not necessarily represent a food safety issue, however consumers should not be misled about the content of foods they buy and national culture does not see horse as an edible animal, therefore making the issue a problem in terms of consumer trust.

Ireland went on giving a broad overview of how the Irish, but also British and other European media dealt with the topic, which rapidly escalated and became one of the most mentioned issues in daily newspapers, television, websites and social media. The FSAI acted rapidly with the media in order to be able to control the message right from the very beginning of the crisis.

Ireland highlighted however that in spite of the media frenzy, the general public quickly understood that this was a fraud issue. The FSAI also showed a comparison between the number of calls received by their information telephone line during the dioxin in pork crisis and the number of calls received during the horse meat scandal; figures showed clearly that the media were more interested than the general public in the problem of horse meat, in spite of the fact that journalists were claiming to report on the story for the sake of “public interest”.



Spain then took the floor for questions, saying that they never thought it was a food safety issue and asked whether the word “contamination” of beef with horse meat was really appropriate, since it may create confusion.

Sweden took the floor to thank Ireland for having promptly shared information with the group.

- 11.2. Germany took the floor for their presentation on acrylamide. It was explained that in Germany the highest content of acrylamide is found in potato products, such as crisps and fries, as well as cereal products, such as crackers and biscuits. Since acrylamide forms as well during roasting, coffee is also a relevant source of acrylamide.

Germany added that based on the present knowledge it can be established that there is no “threshold value” below which a risk for the consumer can be excluded and that at present the ALARA principle (As Low As Reasonably Achievable) applies to acrylamide intake, which means that levels should be kept as low as possible. Acrylamide levels in the foods in question depend to a great extent on the level of browning achieved through heating: the darker the product, the more acrylamide it contains. Considerably lower quantities of acrylamide are produced at temperatures below 180 degrees Celsius than at higher temperatures.

The national agency BfR developed a computer programme that calculates the average intake of acrylamide on the basis of everyday products eaten by consumers and advises on how to reduce this intake by either consuming alternative products or reducing cooking time. This calculator proved a success at a recent conference held in Germany.

- 11.3. The floor was then given to Spain presenting a recent communication campaign launched by the Minister of Health to give recommendations on shopping, storing and cooking food safely. The objective of the campaign was to inform the general public on how they can maximise food safety and avoid food-borne diseases, as well as on how to reduce wasting food by checking storing methods and respecting best-before and sell-by dates.

The campaign consisted of three videos clearly explaining how to plan smart shopping for food, storing it (refrigerated and non-refrigerated), as well as basic hygiene in the kitchen. The videos were promoted via major social media channels over a set period of time. The campaign was successful in terms of the numbers of views and dissemination among target audiences.

Laura Smillie then asked members whether any others had ever done similar projects or initiatives. France gave the example of a similar project run every year at the national Agriculture Exhibition in Paris; the project also aims at teaching children, as well as adult visitors how to best store food in a refrigerator.

- 11.4. Finally Croatia gave an overview of an emerging situation at national level related to traces of aflatoxins in milk. When samples were discovered they were sent for analysis to assess the extent of the problem, meanwhile, milk products were taken off the shelves. The Ministry also started investigating where the contaminated raw milk was coming from and banned deliveries from



concerned producers. National authorities later reassured the public explaining that the analysis did not discover alarming concentrations of aflatoxins and that the national authorities were carrying out analyses not only on milk, but also on cattle feed.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS: SCIENCE VS. OTHER LEGITIMATE FACTORS

12.1. Michael Scannell, Director of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission gave an overview on how risk assessment feeds into risk management at EU level. He explained that the FVO, while part of the European Commission (DG SANCO), carries out its audit work in an independent manner as exemplified by the publication of its audit reports and its location in Ireland. Its role is to ensure that Member States all have appropriate methods in place for checking the safety of food.

12.2. Speaking of food legislation in the EU, Michael Scannell explained that this is based upon the separation of risk management from risk assessment and risk communications; with such separation being the element that ensures the efficiency of the EU food safety system. Risk assessment in the food safety sector in the EU is needed to ensure smooth trade and is science-based in order to ensure objectivity and credibility. The system was conceived this way in order to restore consumers' confidence following the food crises of the late 1990s.

EFSA's presence helps to restore credibility in the regulatory system, whereas without the separation between risk management and risk assessment, the process would be more complicated. The separation of the two processes implies that risk assessors can define their advice without having to worry about displeasing stakeholders. However, science evolves and can never be totally accurate forever; and the system needs to accept this as a matter of fact.

If in theory the system works well, in practice there is a multitude of other factors other than science that need to be taken into account. As a result, risk managers can find themselves with science as a basis for their decisions, but also with a great number of political issues to be dealt with. This can often be problematic in Europe, since political issues vary greatly from country to country: some factors (other than science) can be legitimate in one place, but not at all in another.

As a consequence, stakeholders may start accusing the risk assessment process, like for instance with alleged cases of conflicts of interest, and this shifts the political pressure on the risk assessor. And at the same time, risk managers may struggle in some instances to explain the basis of their decision making; safety is not the only factor and environmental issues, sustainability, animal welfare, worker protection are also issues taken into account.

The EU food safety system is very advanced, as for instance in some cases it goes well beyond simply proving that a substance, such as a pesticide, is considered safe, it also ensures that it is used at the lowest possible levels. With respect to the precautionary principle, M. Scannell explained that it is used at times as a political instrument by those who invoke it without understanding that it can only be applied in case of real scientific uncertainties, that real efforts must be made by risk assessors to address these knowledge gaps and that risk management action must be proportionate



and non-discriminatory. He underlined that the random use of this principle would certainly block the whole system.

The floor was then given to member for question and discussion.

13. COMMUNICATIONS: INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND FORWARD PLANNING

13.1. Rory Harrington gave an overview of EFSA's upcoming scientific issues on which the Authority intends to proactively communicate, as well as providing an overview of recent key initiatives.

13.2. He updated members on EFSA's activities in relation to the assessment of GM maize NK603, as well as the Séralini study. These included the publication of the data for the assessment of the GM maize, as well as the final review of the French study.

Regarding the Scientific Conference: "Challenging boundaries in risk assessment – sharing experiences" organised by EFSA to mark its 10th anniversary, hundreds of leading food safety experts took part in the two-day high-level scientific conference. Break out sessions focused on: identifying and characterising hazards, ERA, dietary exposure, risk characterisation and efficacy assessment.

New flagship corporate publications were launched at the November 10th Anniversary conferences. The video is a 3-minute snapshot of EFSA's work using three key areas of work as examples (zoonoses, pesticides, health claims). The brochure provides a thematic overview of the broad range of EFSA's work along the entire food chain. The video is available in the 4 EFSA working languages, the brochure in 28 languages.

EFSA then issued an evaluation of risks posed to bees by three neonicotinoids - thiametoxam, clothianidin and imidacloprid. The assessments identified risks to bees from all three substances.

Re-evaluation of aspartame (E 951): for EFSA's first full risk assessment of this sweetener, a public consultation was launched on the ANS Panel's draft opinion on 8/01/2013 (until 15/02). EFSA will hold a technical hearing on the draft opinion prior to final adoption.

13.3. Regarding upcoming communication activities, Rory Harrington mentioned the publication in March of EFSA's 4th Annual report on Pesticide Residues in the EU during 2010.

Also regarding pesticides, EFSA will launch in April 2013 an opinion on the establishment of common assessment groups of pesticide active substances for cumulative risk assessment. This will cover the result of five years' work that will establish a database of pesticides to be included in common assessment groups. Furthermore, in May EFSA will publish Guidance on the risk assessment of pesticides and bees as well as organising its 18th Scientific Colloquium on "holistic approaches to the risk assessment of multiple stressors in bees".



Between February and April 2013, EFSA will issue opinions on colourings Patent Blue V (E131) and Allura Red AC (E129) as food and feed additives.

In March 2013 EFSA's Scientific Committee will also issue an opinion on endocrine active substances. In terms of communication activities the news will be announced with a press release, as well as a press and stakeholder briefings in Brussels.

Regarding zoonoses, EFSA will launch its annual Report on Zoonoses and Foodborne Outbreaks for 2011 in April. This will be followed later by the third EU report on antimicrobial resistance in zoonotic bacteria affecting humans, animals and food.

In relation to biological hazards, EFSA will publish in spring an opinion on the risks related to the mechanically separated meat derived from poultry and swine.

On GM animals, the final guidance on the ERA of GM animals will be published in May 2013. It will describe the type of data needed to perform the environmental risk assessment of GM animals - including mammals, birds, fish and insects.

Finally Rory Harrington informed members that in April 2013, EFSA will launch a call for expression of interest from scientific experts for the renewal of its ANS and CEF Panels. The current mandates of these two Panels end in July 2014.

14. COOPERATION ON COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

14.1. Laura Smillie gave an update on joint projects. She firstly spoke about the risk communications guidelines and explained that in light of the need to keep the document alive the AFCWG could commit to updating it on an annual basis with two case studies every year. She asked members for ideas and feedback on possible topics.

She then went on giving an overview of those languages that had been proofread so far, listing the countries that had sent the final revised document back to the Secretariat, and asked the following remaining members if they could give an update on the status of their own versions to proofread as soon as possible:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Cyprus
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Hungary
- Italy
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Norway
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovakia
- The Netherlands

14.2. Then Laura Smillie moved to the next topic of cooperation in communications activities: the lexicon initiative and gave some background as to the origin and the need for this project. As she explained, in 2006 an internal EFSA Task Force on Proofreading was set up in order to ensure consistency in



terminology in all EFSA documents across all its working languages. The objective was also to improve the quality of translations by providing relevant information and guidance to external translators working for EFSA in the Translation Centre (CdT) in Luxembourg. As a result of the work of this task force, an EFSA list of commonly used terms was established; it contains around 900 terms and 185 acronyms.

She then explained the role of the AFCWG on this joint lexicon initiative which will aim at fostering the comprehension of risk assessment through the simplification of complex scientific terms while remaining accurate; explaining references and measures to add greater meaning to the work of risk assessors; enhancing consistent and coherent communications throughout the EU through the use of harmonised terminology to reduce confusion and ambiguous messages.

***Action:** Risk communication guidelines - Members to confirm expected delivery date for proofreading of remaining languages and to update EFSA on use, dissemination and impact of guidelines following launch. Members: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, The Netherlands*

***Action:** Risk communication guidelines - Members and EFSA to update on an annual basis. Establishment of dedicated Working Group (led by EFSA and Norway): EFSA to circulate email for other volunteers.*

***Action:** Lexicon project: Further development of project. Regular updates from Members.*

15. TRAINING AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2013

Laura Smillie gave an overview of training and learning opportunities for 2013, following the positive feedback from group members regarding the social media training session organised in October 2012. The July 2013 meeting may include a training session on either social media or on media in general, with a focus on urgent responses, as well as a “training for trainers” session.

The October meeting which will include a joint session with Focal Points will see discussions about the Stakeholder Mapping project and for instance a presentation from a stakeholder engagement specialist will be investigated.

The December session could possibly include a joint session with AF members.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1. Laura Smillie informed members about the upcoming renewal of EFSA’s Advisory Group on Risk Communications (AGRC) which provides advice to the Executive Director on risk communications issues and practices including the evaluation of risk communications initiatives; the development of



best practices and communications strategies to address emerging risks; as well as on the impact of risk communications on consumer perception.

END OF MEETING

Anne-Laure Gassin reminded members that the next meeting will take place in Vilnius, Lithuania during the first week of July 2013, and invited members to propose agenda topics for the forthcoming meetings.

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 15:15 hours.