Network on BSE-TSE
Minutes of the 10th meeting

Held on 7-8 October 2015, Parma
(Agreed on 4 December 2015)

Participants

- **Network Representatives of Member States (including EFTA Countries):**

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Hermann Schildorfer</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Stefan Roels</td>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Ilian Boykovski</td>
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<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Branko Sostaric, Karmen Branovic</td>
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<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Penelope Papasavva-Stylianou</td>
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<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Pavel Vodrážka</td>
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<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Olga Piirik</td>
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<td>Finland</td>
<td>Hannele Tapiovaara</td>
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<td>France</td>
<td>Thomas Maignien</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>Anne Buschmann</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
<td>Eleni Chondrokouki</td>
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<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Zsusanna Szögyenyi</td>
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<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Jarlath O’Connor</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>Giuseppe Ru, Daniela Meloni</td>
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<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Stefan Roels</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Olaf Stenvers</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
<td>Miroslaw Polak</td>
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<td>Romania</td>
<td>Laura Sighinas</td>
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<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Lubomir Janiuk</td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Polona Juntes</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>Soledad Collado Cortés</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Marion Simmons</td>
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<td>Norway</td>
<td>Bjorn Nass</td>
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- **Hearing Experts**

Not applicable

- **European Commission:**

Lucie Carroué (DG SANTE)

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1 Indicate first full name and them surname (John Smith) all throughout the document
- **EFSA:**
  BIOCONTAM Unit (Angel Ortiz-Pelaez – chair; Valentina Rizzi, Pietro Stella – secretariat; Frank Boelaert - speaker)

- **Others:**
  Derek Belton (OIE)
  Jan Langeveld (external expert)
  Maurizio Pocchiari (external expert)
  Maria Puopolo (external expert)

### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

Apologies were received from representatives from Denmark, Edvins Olsevskis (Latvia), Marius Masiulis (Lithuania), Petras Maciulskis (Lithuania), Maria Jose Pinto (Portugal), Maria Nöremark (Sweden), Peter Braam (Switzerland).

### 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

### 3. Agreement of the minutes of the 9th meeting of the Network on BSE-TSE held on 7-8 October 2014, Parma.

The minutes were agreed by written procedure on 31 October 2014 and published on the EFSA website on 4 November 2014.

### 4. Topics for discussion

#### 4.1. Briefing on action points from previous meeting

The EFSA BIOCONTAM Secretariat reminded the Network that a short Report summarising the discussions held during the 2014 Network meeting was published at the end of 2014 and is available on the EFSA website ([link](#)).

During the 2014 Network meeting, the Network expressed an interest to strengthen the collaboration of the Network with the International Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and other international organisations/agencies, and to consider the future invitation of representatives from Third Countries in order to have insights on BSE-TSE related issues from a non-EU perspective. In reply to these suggestions, OIE participation was confirmed for the 2015 Network meeting, and EFSA has taken contacts with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), inviting representatives from the ECDC former EuroCJD Network for participation in the 2015 Network meeting. Invitation of representatives from Third Countries will be considered in future meetings.

#### 4.2. Round-the-table on activities of Network Members in the field of TSE since the last meeting

The Members of the Network provided an update on the situation of classical and atypical transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) in their countries and summarised to the group the scientific activities in the field of TSE, including risk assessment activities, which had been undertaken in their respective countries since the previous Network meeting. Austria, the Czech
Republic and France reported that the EFSA TSE infectivity (TSEi) Model presented during the 2014 Network Meeting, and provided by EFSA to the three countries upon request, was asked and possibly used for study/research purposes.

4.3. TSE activities of EFSA BIOHAZ Panel and BIOCONTAM Unit

The EFSA BIOCONTAM Secretariat presented the EFSA activities in the field of TSE already completed and ongoing since the 2014 Network meeting. Completed activities include one Scientific Opinion of the BIOHAZ Panel (on the zoonotic potential of ovine scrapie prions – link). Ongoing activities include two mandates for scientific and technical assistance and a procurement activity: a) the evaluation of applications of Denmark, Finland and Sweden to be recognised as having a negligible risk status for classical scrapie; b) the revision of the BSE monitoring regime in Croatia; c) procurement activity on an experimental study on the infectivity of sheep embryos.

4.4. Results from search and safeguarding of TSE-resistant goats

Dr. Jan Langeveld (external expert), senior TSE researcher and coordinator of the GoatBSE and Goat-TSE-FREE European Projects, presented to the Network an overview on the results of several research projects carried out in the EU over 13 years, focusing on the work conducted in the last few years by the Goat-TSE-FREE consortium in relation to genetic resistance to TSE in goats. He presented the different goat genotypes identified in several EU countries and the association of genotype distribution and occurrence of scrapie. He presented results from experimental challenges of goats of different genotypes with different TSE agents and from the use of several mouse models to study TSE infectivity in goats. Dr. Jan Langeveld concluded that, based on current scientific evidence, the K222 allele and some other polymorphisms of the prion protein gene have shown to confer resistance to TSE in goats. The representative of Cyprus, indicated that the studies on genetic resistance to classical scrapie in goats in Cyprus, presented to the 2014 Network meeting, have been progressing and that final results will be reported soon to the European Commission.

4.5. Update on UK/EURL activities and research projects

Dr. Marion Simmons, representative of the United Kingdom (UK) and head of the TSE EU Reference Laboratory (EURL), presented to the Network an update of the results of 2015 TSE surveillance in the UK, also including a recent case of classical BSE in a cow, currently under investigation. She presented results of studies on atypical BSE transmission to sheep and of studies investigating the presence of prion accumulation in human appendices. Dr. Simmons also updated the Network on the activities of the TSE EURL, including results from studies on the diagnostic sensitivity of rapid tests for the detection of TSE in goats.

4.6. Investigation on the origin of a case of Classical BSE in Ireland

Dr. Jarlath O’Connor, representative of Ireland, updated the Network on the classical BSE case detected in a five-year-old cow in June 2015 in Ireland. He presented the results of the epidemiological investigation aimed at detecting the origin of the case, which has not produced so far evidence to support
horizontal transmission of classical BSE to the cow following to environmental exposure or feed, vertical transmission or iatrogenic transmission.

4.7. **Investigation on the existence of spontaneous cases of Classical BSE**

Dr. Miroslaw Polak, representative of Poland, and Dr. Anne Buschmann, representative of Germany, presented to the Network the results of joint studies on classical BSE isolates from cattle and comparison with atypical BSE cases using biochemical characterisation and mouse bioassay.

8 October 2015

5. **Welcome and apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed the participants for the second day of the meeting.

6. **Topics for discussion**

6.1. **Recent ANSES activities on TSE**

Dr. Thomas Maignien, representative of France, updated the Network on the most recent TSE risk assessments carried out by ANSES. In particular, he presented the results of an assessment of the surveillance programmes for TSE in small ruminants in France, of two assessments of the human TSE transmission risks linked to a possible change of the list of specified risk material, and of one assessment of the risks linked to the use of ruminant fat in animal feed.

6.2. **Practical problems and challenges with the design of TSE surveillance in small ruminants**

Dr. Branko Sostaric, representative of Croatia, updated the Network on the TSE surveillance in small ruminants in his country. Surveillance in small ruminants started in Croatia in 2002 and the number of animals tested increased only in 2010-2015. Despite almost 11 000 tests in sheep and 3 000 tests in goats, classical scrapie has never been detected, and only two cases of atypical scrapie (in 2013 and 2015) have been detected. Also considering the epidemiological situation in neighbouring countries, Dr. Branko Sostaric concluded that it seems surprising that classical scrapie has not been detected in Croatia so far. A discussion followed on relevant issues that Croatia may consider when studying the situation and designing and implementing a surveillance programme aimed at maximising the chances to detect classical scrapie if present, including: a) investigation on genotypes of the small ruminant population; b) implementation of risk-based active surveillance (e.g. focused on fallen stock); c) use of incentives to encourage reporting and presentation of animals for testing; d) consideration to breeding for genetic resistance.

6.3. **Distribution and trends of vCJD and associated risk factors**

Dr. Maurizio Pocchiari, ad hoc external expert for the meeting and representative of the former EuroCJD Network, managed by ECDC, presented to the Network a recent analysis on the distribution and trends of human vCJD cases. He discussed vCJD case definition, clinical and diagnostic features, including differences between EU countries, and risk factors for
vCJD development. Dr. Pocchiari recommended continued surveillance of all forms of CJD in the EU, also to allow a better study and comparison of human and animal TSE epidemiological data.

6.4. Update on the OIE activities in the field of TSE

Dr. Derek Belton, representative of OIE, explained to the Network the procedure for setting OIE standards and provided an update on the recent activities carried out at the OIE in relation to TSE. In 2015 the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code was updated to specifically exclude atypical BSE from the OIE process of official BSE risk status recognition ‘as a condition believed to occur spontaneously in all cattle populations at a very low rate’.

6.5. Update on the activities of the European Commission in the field of TSE

Dr. Lucie Carrouée, representative of the European Commission (DG SANTE), updated the Network on the recent TSE-related risk management activities in the European Commission, as a follow-up of the TSE Road Map 2, in relation to feed ban, specified risk material (SRM), TSE surveillance in cattle and small ruminants, and other measures on scrapie eradication and intra-EU trade. The European Commission is planning to send EFSA new mandates in relation to genetic resistance to classical scrapie in goats and an update on a past EFSA risk assessment of the BSE risk in processed animal proteins.

The representative from Slovenia pointed out that the current BSE surveillance excludes mandatory TSE testing of healthy slaughtered cattle of all ages, including older animals, and that this limits especially the possibility to monitor the incidence of atypical BSE in cattle, given the disease is also diagnosed in healthy cattle over 8 years of age. Also, as a consequence, healthy slaughtered cattle infected with atypical BSE may enter undetected the food chain. The representative of the European Commission underlined that TSE testing represents primarily a tool for epidemiological surveillance rather than a public health protection measure, and that atypical BSE-related concerns have been taken into account by the risk manager when recently revising SRM removal measures, which is the main public health protection measure.

The representatives from France and United Kingdom also commented that the relaxation of both surveillance measures and control measures at the same time would result in a lower ability to monitor the effect of the control measures remaining in place.

6.6. Future EFSA involvement in drafting the Annual report on TSE monitoring in the EU

The EFSA BIOCONTAM Secretariat updated the Network on the future transfer from the European Commission to EFSA of the responsibility for the preparation of the annual report on animal TSE surveillance in the EU (as of 2016, with respect to the analysis of 2015 data), and related data collection (as of 2017, with respect to 2016 data). In relation to 2015, no changes are expected for Member States on the collection and transmission of data to the European Commission, while in future years EFSA will reflect on the opportunity to adjust the requirements and the system for data collection.
6.7. Round-the-table discussion on the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE-TSE

Network members were invited to provide, also after the meeting, suggestions for improvement of the functioning of the Network and possible issues for future discussion in the Network.

7. Any Other Business

The representatives of Italy provided to the Network information with respect to a Workshop on TSE that is going to take place on 10 December in Torino (Italy), organised by the Italian National Reference Centre for TSE, and intended for EU Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries.

8. Closure of the meeting

The discussions held during the meeting are going to be summarised in meeting minutes and in an annual report, that would be circulated by EFSA Secretariat in due time to all participants for comments and agreement.

The next meeting of the EFSA Network on BSE-TSE will be organised during the third quarter of 2016.

The Chair thanked all speakers for their presentations, and all Network Members and Observers for attending the meeting and for their active participation in the discussions, and closed the meeting.