

Briefing Note: Focal Point Breakout Session on National Networking

Background:

Networking between EFSA and Member States (MS) organisations is a key aspect in supporting both EFSA and MS in meeting the objectives of scientific cooperation as established in Regulation No 178/2002/EC. Facilitating the development of a scientific cooperation framework is supported by the coordination of activities, the exchange of information, the development and implementation of joint projects and the exchange of expertise and best practices in the fields within the Authority's mission.

Building the EU scientific capacity and knowledge community is one of EFSA's strategic objectives. MS play a significant role on this by facilitating the shift from the classical two-way networking between EFSA and MS onto a collaborative environment where knowledge and expertise are pooled, and through which organisations and other relevant stakeholders network at national, European and international level. To this end, setting up, maintaining and making the best use of national networks is essential to ensure the involvement of all competent actors at MS level. Focal Points play a key operational role in this process.

Objective:

Focal Points need to continuously maintain a robust, up-to-date overview of all relevant national players and of the national competences available. Through national networking, targeted on a need basis, Focal Points are able to identify and liaise with the relevant players at national level that have the expertise and competence for cross-institutional, cross-national, European and international cooperation in all relevant domains.

The purpose of the breakout session is to brainstorm how to further develop national networking, building on what has already been achieved in different countries and sharing good practices and experiences from well-established national models.

Breakout Session:

The session will consist of the following:

1. Introduction – 10 minutes;
2. Breakout Group Discussion – 50 minutes;
3. Plenary Feedback – 30 minutes.

Focal Points will be divided into 5 groups.

Each group will have a designated Facilitator and will need to appoint a Rapporteur who will report back to the plenary session.

The role of the **Facilitator** will be to introduce the topic to the group, providing any clarification needed on the expected output of the group. In most cases this will be an EFSA staff member.

The **Rapporteur** is responsible for taking notes of the discussions in order to provide feedback to the plenary session and to provide a short summary of the discussion, as soon as possible, to EFSA, after the Focal Point meeting. The activities of note taking for plenary discussion and reporting back to EFSA may be separated.

Each group will be asked to answer two out of the three questions below, with question 3 being asked to all groups and the remaining two to be assigned on the day:

1. How can Focal Points **further extend their networking outreach** beyond the classical national networks (e.g. Art. 36 organisations, Scientific Networks, other national distribution lists), in order to **cover the full spectrum of relevant national stakeholders** (i.e. ensuring that all national organisations – from local, regional, central level - and areas falling within EFSA's remit are covered)?
2. How can Focal Points **further improve the interaction with their national networks**, e.g. by clustering stakeholders per areas of expertise, better targeting information and activities, and increasing responsibility and visibility as "EFSA ambassadors"?)
3. What are the **difficulties** encountered for promoting an **efficient national networking** and how can these be overcome?