

Draft Minutes

4th MEETING OF THE COMMUNICATIONS EXPERT NETWORK (CEN) Sofia, Bulgaria, 15-16 March 2018

Chair: Barbara Gallani

Members	
Bulgaria	<i>Mariela Pchelinska</i>
Croatia	<i>Sara Mikrut Vunjak</i>
Cyprus	<i>Charitini Frenaritou</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Vladimir Brychta</i>
Denmark	<i>Heidi Kornholt</i>
Estonia	<i>Piret Priisalu</i>
Estonia	<i>Angelika Lebedev</i>
Finland	<i>Johanna Pellinen</i>
France	<i>Alima Marie</i>
Germany	<i>Suzan Fiack</i>
Greece	<i>Dimitrios Kariotoglou</i>
Hungary	<i>Marcell Márton Tóth</i>
Ireland	<i>Jane Ryder</i>
Italy	<i>Carlotta Ferroni</i>
Lithuania	<i>Giedrė Čiuberkytė</i>
Netherlands	<i>Chris Krikken</i>
Norway	<i>Astrid Tvedt</i>
Poland	<i>Alicja Walkiewicz</i>
Portugal	<i>Filipa Melo de Vasconcelos</i>
Romania	<i>Ralucha Mihalachioiu</i>
Spain	<i>Juan-Julián Garcia Gómez</i>
Sweden	<i>Sara Johansson</i>

Observers	
Bosnia-Herzegovina	<i>Dalibor Vidačak</i>
Kosovo	<i>Lamir Thaçi</i>
Montenegro	<i>Jelena Vracar Filipovic</i>
Serbia	<i>Igor Grabez</i>
Turkey	<i>Fatma Nevra Özcan</i>

EFSA Staff

Barbara Gallani

Rory Harrington

James Ramsay

Anthony Smith

Piera Pozzatti

Giulia Nicolini

Apologies: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Macedonia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

1. Welcome from EFSA

Barbara Gallani, Head of the Communication, Engagement and Cooperation Department at EFSA, welcomed all the CEN members and gave a special welcome to the Bulgarian colleagues present and representing the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the European Union.

2. Welcome from the Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry

Dr Iliyan Kostov, Deputy Director of the Risk Assessment Centre on the Food Chain, who welcomed the CEN members to Bulgaria and introduced the priorities and objectives of the Presidency, including those relating to agriculture, food, and fisheries. Dr Kostov also provided a detailed overview of the Risk Assessment Centre on the Food Chain, the recent changes to its structure, and its main activities, including those foreseen for 2018. In particular, Dr Kostov emphasised the motto of the Bulgarian Presidency, 'United we stand strong'.

3. Continuation of welcome from EFSA

Barbara introduced the new alternate members, Angelika Lebedev from **Estonia**, Dimitris Kariotoglou from **Greece**, Alicja Walkiewicz from **Poland**, Ralucha Mihalachiou from **Romania**, Chris Krikken as returning alternate member from the **Netherlands**, and two new alternate members not present at the meeting, Elena Seite from **France**, and Lucia Gabrisova from **Slovakia**.

Barbara reminded the network that the appointment of new members and alternates should take place through the Advisory Forum.

Finally, Barbara introduced the EFSA colleagues attending the meeting: Rory Harrington, James Ramsay, Anthony Smith, Piera Pozzatti and Giulia Nicolini.

4. Communication activities in Bulgaria

Mariela Pchelinska, Chief Public Relations Expert at the Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, introduced the CEN members to the organisations working on food safety in Bulgaria. Ms Pchelinska provided an overview of recent communication activities and the upcoming communications agenda. In particular, she discussed the recent changes to legislation surrounding food and food safety in Bulgaria and how these are being communicated to the public and key stakeholders. She also considered some lessons learned from the Ministry's communications activities, and how these have contributed to increasing trust.

5. Work plan

Barbara presented the proposed CEN's work plan for 2018, covering the activities related to each of the three objectives:

1. Enhanced Cooperation and Preparedness
2. Sharing Best Practice and Strengthening Capacity in Risk Communications

3. Implementing Social Science in Risk Communications

She reminded the network of the possibility to facilitate calls on 'hot topics', which can be proposed by any of the members.

Anthony Smith from EFSA noted that the risk communications guideline has been recently updated with some more case studies. He proposed reformatting the various EFSA communications guidelines into a series of best practice guidance. Some CEN members offered to be involved in a review of the guidance.

Action: EFSA to circulate a proposal on how to review and reformat its guidance documents on risk and crisis communications.

Action: Member States to indicate their willingness to be part of a taskforce on reformatting communications guidelines.

6. EFSA stakeholder engagement: communicators lab

James Ramsay, Head of the Engagement and Cooperation Unit at EFSA, presented on the pilot consultation of the Comms Lab project, which is part of EFSA's new approach to stakeholder engagement. The aim of the Comms Lab is to elicit feedback from stakeholders on the usefulness and usability of specific communications products. James presented the two products which were tested, the redesign of the EFSA topics pages, and the AMR data visualization tool. Yammer was used as the platform for stakeholders to provide feedback, and was deemed a useful tool for eliciting quick and simple replies, which are visible to registered users of the platform, enhancing transparency. The third product which will be reviewed is the plain language summaries.

7. Update on ILGRC & interactions with WHO emergency team

Lucia de Luca joined by phone from Parma and provided an update on the activities of the International Liaison Group on Risk Communication. The ILGRC will have a meeting in Parma, on the occasion of EFSA's scientific conference in September 2018. She explained the rationale for having an international group, and provided an update on the meeting in China.

Action: EFSA to circulate to CEN further information on time of the meeting and draft agenda.

8. Advisory Forum

Barbara provided an update from the Advisory Forum meeting in Utrecht, which took place on 6th February 2018. The main focus of the meeting from a communications perspective was a joint statement committing support to the European Risk Assessment Research Agenda (RARA), taking advantage of the timing of the RARA event.

Barbara then provided an update on the ongoing REFIT exercise, which is being run by the European Commission. She also provided details on the areas identified for improvement, including risk communication. In parallel to the REFIT, a Pesticides Special Committee has been set up by the Parliament, partly in response to the citizen initiatives against glyphosate.

Participants discussed the many communication issues which go beyond EFSA's remit and supported greater alignment of communications between risk assessors and managers, and greater coordination more generally.

Action: Member States to contribute to the EC public consultation.

9. Update on EFSA's review of social science

Barbara updated participants on EFSA's social science activities. The social science report is available

10. Workshop on communicating uncertainty

The members and EFSA staff took part in a group exercise on communicating uncertainty, led by Anthony Smith. Participants were split into four groups of 7-8 people and given an example of an EFSA assessment. Two examples were used between the four groups.

Working as a group, the members were asked to navigate a selected section of the guidance document, develop messages on the uncertainties, and devise a brief strategy for communication based on the recommendations in the guidance document.

Following the exercise, each group presented their work during a short plenary discussion. A feedback form was distributed to collect comments and suggestions on the exercise, which will be used in the development of the guidance document.

Anthony informed the members of the next steps for the development and finalisation of the guidance document, including a public consultation expected to run in May-June.

11. EU Insights

Giulia Nicolini presented the results of the second EU Insights survey, on consumer perceptions of emerging risks. Giulia provided a brief overview of the survey methodology and some key findings of the report, including that consumers were more concerned with 'established' rather than 'emerging' categories of risks, and that traditional channels of communication such as TV, radio and newspapers were the preferred source for learning about emerging risks in the food chain.

Barbara then led the discussion on the selection of a topic for the third EU Insights survey. A brief presentation was given to remind the members of the purpose of the survey, and of previously suggested topics: sugar and endocrine disruptors.

The members suggested a number of new topics:

- Novel food/ topic around nutrition (Italy)
- Food supplements (Cyprus and Portugal)
- Chemical mixtures (EFSA)
- Plastics (EFSA)

Germany noted that according to BfR's Consumer Monitor survey, people are more afraid of microplastics in food than glyphosate. It was suggested that genome editing could be difficult to look at given that consumers do not know much about it, and that the survey would first have to explain genome editing is. Consumers do not always understand the term 'contaminants in food' in the same way that experts do. This could be something to further explore.

Participants asked whether EFSA is planning to carry out a Euro Barometer survey. They noted the usefulness of comparing between countries on topics such as trust in authorities, trust in science etc. Barbara told the group that participation in the Euro Barometer could be reconsidered if supported by member states.

Action: EFSA to summarise ideas for new topics and collect feedback the week following the meeting, so that we can commission the new survey.

Action: EFSA to communicate the decision of the new topic to the CEN members, the Advisory Forum, and the Commission.

12. Opening of second day

Barbara opened the meeting and summarised the previous day's activities and presentations.

13. EFSA 2018 communication activities

Rory Harrington gave a presentation on EFSA's communications calendar for 2018 and upcoming highlights which could be of relevance to all or some member states, who may be interested in taking part in 'hot topic' conference calls prior to publication to further outreach and support coherence in communication. During such teleconferences EFSA would share information on communication key messages and a scientist be available to answer technical questions. CEN members and EFSA would also discuss media relation activities and share post-publication information on media coverage.

On the issue of perfluoroalkylated substances (PFAS/PFOS), Rory informed the group that his team will soon be talking to EFSA scientists in order to fully understand any changes in tolerable weekly intake, and what the implications will be for consumers. Germany suggested that PFAS/PFOS might be a topic for a phone call.

Action: EFSA to share a calendar of communication activities and request that CEN members indicate where they would be interested in taking part in a hot topic call.

On the publication of data on Fipronil, Rory noted that the report was being finalised.

Rory highlighted the guidance on risk assessment of chemical mixtures, which is the culmination of 8-9 years of work. Other topics which are likely to generate media attention are neonicotinoids in May and phosphates in food in December.

In response to a question on organic food from France, Rory noted that data on pesticide residues in organic foods are reported in the annual Pesticides Residue Report.

Rory asked the CEN members whether they had any other ideas for improving the sharing of information between members and EFSA.

There was support for informal exchanges between meetings and for the use of teleconferences.

Action: EFSA to share the latest report on organic food.

Action: EFSA to find out whether the guidance on chemical mixtures contains information on bromium and chemicals used to fight fires (on request from Portugal).

Action: EFSA to update Whatsapp list of contacts.

14. Key country issues

Spain: Collaboration plan for the improvement of the composition of food and beverages 2017-2020

Spain gave a presentation on the collaboration plan in Spain to improve the composition of food and beverages, taking place in 2017-2020.

The plan responds to public health demands from consumers. The prevalence of obesity and overweight in Spain was considered, and the creation of an observatory for the study of obesity in Spain was briefly discussed.

The questions and discussion addressed how to engage with industry on this issue.

Germany: Influence of TV cooking shows on kitchen hygiene

Germany presented on a BfR project which looked at the influence of TV chef's practices on kitchen hygiene. The public tends to underestimate the risks of foodborne illnesses from kitchen hygiene in the home. BfR conducted a systematic analysis of cooking shows during 'Green Week' in 2018. Their report on the study used a positive message, so as not to antagonise chefs. The report received national and some international coverage.

Germany also briefly presented the key results from the BfR Consumer Monitor, and talked about BfR's new science magazine, 'BfR 2 Go', and the process behind publication.

Croatia: 5 keys to safer food: old story in a new manner

Croatia presented on new ways of communicating messages about food safety and hygiene in a changing world and in light of people's changing lifestyles. She played a video which was financed by the Ministry and aired on national television, in which a popular Croatian rapper provides information on food safety to a catchy song. The video was received enthusiastically by the members.

15. 10th anniversary of Focal Points

James Ramsay updated the group on the activities planned for the Focal Points network's 10th anniversary, and sought suggestions and comments from the CEN members. The plan was developed in conjunction with the FP.

France suggested doing a survey among national contacts to gauge how they feel about the role of the FP.

Croatia commented that the timeline of what has already been achieved is useful, but it could also be interesting to know where the FP network is going, looking to the future.

Sweden suggested using social media to engage people. A web story could describe the achievements of the FP.

Action: EFSA to circulate materials regarding 10th anniversary of FP network.

13. AOB

Barbara thanked all the members for their participation in the meeting, and the Bulgarian colleagues for their hospitality, and reminded the network that the next meeting will be in Vienna on 27-28 November, with a half day joint session with the Advisory Forum.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS	
Action no.	Actions
1	EFSA to circulate a proposal on how to review and reformat its guidance documents on risk and crisis communications.
2	Member States to indicate their willingness to be part of a taskforce on reformatting communications guidelines.
3	EFSA to circulate to CEN further information on time of the IRGLC meeting and draft agenda.
4	Member States to contribute to the EC public consultation on the REFIT.
5	EFSA to summarise ideas for new EU Insights survey topics and collect feedback the week following the meeting, so that we can commission the new survey.
6	EFSA to communicate the decision of the new EU Insights topic to the CEN members, the Advisory Forum, and the Commission.
7	EFSA to share a calendar of communication activities and request that CEN members indicate where they would be interested in taking part in a hot topic call.
8	EFSA to share the latest report on organic food.
9	EFSA to find out whether the guidance on chemical mixtures contains information on bromium and chemicals used to fight fires.
10	EFSA to update contacts of CEN Whatsapp group.
11	EFSA to circulate materials regarding 10th anniversary of FP network.