



Draft Minutes

SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM

AUSTRIA CENTRE VIENNA (AUSTRIA)

19 MAY 2006

Members of the Advisory Forum

Chair: *Herman Kožter*, Acting Executive Director, EFSA

Austria	<i>Roland Grossgut</i>	Italy	<i>Paolo Aureli</i>
Belgium	<i>Charles Crémer</i>	Latvia	<i>Gratis Dzolius</i>
Cyprus	<i>Constantinos Michael</i>	Lithuania	<i>Aruna Jarasius</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Milena Vicenova</i>	Luxembourg	<i>Felix Wildschutz</i>
Denmark	<i>Hans Peter Jensen</i>	Netherlands	<i>Evert Schouten</i>
Estonia	<i>Henrik Kuusk</i>	Poland	<i>Jan Krzysztof Ludwicki</i>
Finland	<i>Tuula Honkanen-Buzalski</i>	Portugal	<i>Dias Barreto</i>
France	<i>Valerie Baduel</i>	Slovakia	<i>Jan Stulc</i>
Germany	<i>Andreas Hensel</i>	Slovenia	<i>Marusa Adamic</i>
Greece	<i>Krestos Vasilis</i>	Spain	<i>Felix Lobo</i>
Hungary	<i>Mária Szeitzné-Szábo</i>	Sweden	<i>Leif Busk</i>
Ireland	<i>Alan Reilly</i>	UK	<i>Judith Hilton</i>

Observers and Invitees of the Acting Executive Director

Norway	<i>Kristin Faerden</i>	INA-AFWG	<i>David Gott (UK)</i>
Switzerland	<i>Michael Beer</i>	Report: Our food, our health	<i>Andre Henken (NL)</i>
European Commission	<i>Jeannie Vergnettes</i>		

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Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

<i>Jan Bloemendal</i>	<i>Irene van Geest</i>
<i>Antoine Cuvillier</i>	<i>Lesley Koschel</i>
<i>Dirk Detken</i>	<i>Djien Liem</i>
<i>Mathilde Garcia Gomez</i>	<i>Veerle Robberechts</i>
<i>Anne-Laure Gassin</i>	<i>Valérie Rolland</i>

1 Welcome and introduction by the Austrian Authorities

- 1.1 Mr. Peter Kranner, head of the department responsible for food safety within the Federal Ministry for Health and Woman, warmly welcomed the Advisory Forum members to Vienna. Mr. Kranner pointed out that this was the first meeting of the EFSA Advisory Forum in Vienna and that his Ministry was happy to facilitate, by hosting this meeting, the coordination of Risk assessments at European level.
Mr. Kranner stressed the importance of this scientific cooperation and networking in order to be able to answer questions and address concerns of citizens and stakeholders properly and consistently. Mr. Kranner wished the AF a very fruitful meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair thanked Mr. Peter Kranner for opening the meeting, his friendly and encouraging words and the Ministry and AGES¹ for their great hospitality.

2 Introduction by Herman Koëter and adoption of the agenda (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 1)

- 2.1 The agenda was introduced by the chair and adopted after some of the members had raised a few extra items under Standing Matters.

3 Minutes of the meeting 3 March in Prague and matters arising (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 2)

- 3.1 The minutes of the Advisory Forum meeting of 3 March in Prague were approved without changes. They would be translated and published soon.

4 Update by Herman Koëter on progress at EFSA

- 4.1 Herman Koëter informed the meeting about the progress made on the establishment of a list of competent organisations in the framework of Article 36 of EU Regulation 178/2002. EFSA had received from the Permanent Representatives of the MS in total nearly 300 applications for registration. All of these had been screened internally whether these would meet the scientific and legal criteria laid down under Commission Regulation 2230/2003 and once questions were raised as to the suitability of inclusion of submissions on the list, the respective AF Members had been asked for confirmation or further clarification.

¹ AGES: Österreichische Agentur für Gesundheit und Ernährungssicherheit GmbH

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- 4.2 Herman shared with the Members a recent accumulation of negative press coverage about EFSA's activities in the area of GMO's. In addition to regular attacks of a number of environmental NGO's, also some recent communications of the European Commission had worsened the picture. EFSA decided to explain its ongoing and future plans for cooperation with Member States' experts in the area of GMO risk assessments. Additionally, EFSA will consider how input from Member States could be addressed in a more visible way in its opinions. It was also agreed that EFSA would describe in more detail the scientific rationale underlying its risk assessments. EFSA relied on the AF members and their communications colleagues to get these messages across EU wide.
- 4.3 As regards EFSA's budget, Herman Koëter could inform the meeting that the current prospects for 2007 were that EFSA would keep almost its originally planned budget of 57 million Euro. This number should gradually increase until 2013, which would mean that the Authority eventually could employ around 375 staff. Herman also reported on negotiations between the European Commission and the EFTA countries on their financial contributions towards the EU, the outcome of which could also affect the participation of these countries to the AF. Herman expressed his wish to continue current relations and to enhance these where possible.
- 4.4 The meeting was informed that EFSA's Management Board had discussed the renewal of the Scientific Committee and nine Scientific Panels on 11th May and that it would soon publish the names of the newly appointed Members. There was still one position to be filled and EFSA needs to verify the acceptance of the appointment of the experts before the list can be disclosed. The Scientific Committee and nine Scientific Panels would start in their new configuration as from 1st June. The AF Members were thanked for their advice provided during the selection process.
- 4.5 Finally, the meeting was told for their information that a principal agreement had been made with an architect to design EFSA's ultimate seat in Parma.

5 Introduction to the EFSA Management Plan 2007 (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 3a & b)

- 5.1 Herman Koëter introduced the draft Management Plan for 2007, as agreed by the Management Board at its meeting in March. EFSA will have a new Executive Director, a partly renewed Management Board as well as newly established Scientific Committee and Panels. In 2007 also recommendations from the Evaluation report would have to be implemented. Moreover, the EFSA's Risk Communications Strategy would be implemented and results of the Transparency project of the Scientific Committee might become visible. With respect to EFSA's scientific work, the 9th Scientific Panel on Plant Health would start its activities as of June this year and new EU Regulations in the area of pesticides, and the area of nutrition and health claims are expected to create obviously extra work for EFSA.
- 5.2 In a first response, Forum members gave the following comments on the draft document:
- to be more specific in the budget needs per (group of) activities;
 - to put more emphasis on the nutrition dossier for 2007 (several members echoed this wish);
 - to give more detailed information on (certain) foreseen projects which would make it easier for Members to see whether they could participate, support, etc.;
 - to be more precise as to how EFSA plans to utilize the Art. 36 network;
 - to give priority in 2007 to: (i) harmonisation of risk assessments and methodologies EU-wide, (ii) initiating activities in the area of risk-benefit analysis; (iii) nanoscience

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and nanotechnologies and (iv) cumulative risk effects of several compounds (e.g. contaminants, pesticides and additives) in food;

- to make the Plan more precise on activities where close collaboration with national authorities could be envisaged.
- 5.3 With respect to the issue of cumulative effects of mixtures of chemicals, nutrition and micro-organisms, Sweden offered the meeting to give a presentation at a future AF meeting.
- 5.4 The Chair invited the Advisory Forum Members to discuss the draft Management Plan 2007 as broadly as possible with their contact persons in the Member States and to provide EFSA before September with their remarks, comments and suggestions in writing. These would be discussed at the next meeting of the Forum on 29th September in Bern. The recommendations of the Forum would be forwarded to EFSA's Management Board for their consideration.

6 Update on the progress of the Scientific Committee with regard to the work on the safety assessment of botanicals (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 4)

- 6.1 Valérie Rolland, scientific coordinator of EFSA's Scientific Committee, introduced a document on the progress of the work of a Scientific Committee Working Group on Botanicals and Botanical Preparations. It included a summary of the responses to the questionnaire that was previously circulated to the Advisory Forum and a proposal for the way forward.
- 6.2 The AF members showed their gratitude for the update and the report back on the EFSA questionnaire that was filled in by the members of the Forum in 2005. The Advisory Forum members, in particularly Belgium and France, expressed the wish to be kept informed on the progress of the work.

7 Discussion on the paper prepared by the INA-AF Working Group (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 5)

- 7.1 A year after it had been set up and after having discussed the issue on how to improve the exchange of scientific information and cooperation between EFSA and the AF Members in four WG meetings, the Working Group – composed of AF representatives and members of EFSA's Scientific Committee, Panels as well as EFSA staff - reported back on their analysis and presented its recommendations to the Advisory Forum, by one of its members: David Gott.
- 7.2 The Forum highly appreciated the work done by the Working Group. It saw the document as a milestone in terms of describing tasks and responsibilities of the Forum and subsequently it supported its recommendations, amended as discussed. Comments were made in particularly on:
- the order of the chapters;
 - to be clear on not to exclude MS from specific flows of information;
 - the pre-notification of scientific opinions and the possibility of exchanging draft press releases allowing for suggestions for amendments;
 - valid reasons why (raw) data cannot be distributed yet (i.e. universities working at a scientific article) unless of course public health could be at stake and
 - the flow of information which should be monitored in terms of quality and quantity of the data dismissed.

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- 7.3 The Advisory Forum realised, however, that the extra tasks proposed would create a serious burden of time and resources for the Members. It therefore recommended to transform the document into a formal document addressing the agreed recommendations as commitments of the AF members. Such would help discussions in their countries on how to fulfil these tasks and to secure adequate resources. The revised paper should be on the agenda of the next AF meeting in September. The Meeting agreed that, subsequently, the INA-AF WG could be asked to prepare an implementation or action plan accordingly.

8 Discussion on the Extranet policy paper as prepared by EFSA (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 6)

- 8.1 Lesley Koschel introduced the Extranet policy paper which was prepared in EFSA by giving an overview of the following items:
- recent developments as regards the creation of the net, including the setting up of domains related to the panels, initiatives for meeting registrations, etc.;
 - EFSA proposals on who should get access to which parts of the Extranet and who should be able to upload documents. EFSA recommended to choose a liberal approach and this was backed by the Forum;
 - the relation of the AF domain and the ones of its Working Groups (on Communications and on IT) and
 - future further development of the policy in which the AF very much would be involved.
- 8.2 The Forum supported the future steps proposed. The Extranet at the end would be the electronic tool of EFSA with many partners in its outside world, at which it exchanges general, scientific and communications documents which are not ready for publication (yet).

9 Reporting back from the MB Away Day on the EFSA Evaluation report

- 9.1 Herman Koëter and Hans Peter Jensen gave brief introductions on the Away Day of the Management Board. Hans Peter had presented the opinions from the AF on the evaluation report and he was of the opinion that they were well received and had been ground for serious and considerable discussions.
- 9.2 The Management Board would now consider the report and all comments made on it and would turn these into recommendations which it would present to the Commission, European Parliament and the Council by the end of June.

10&11 Exchange of views concerning a list of food consumption database managers prepared by EFSA (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 7) & Exchange of views to provide EFSA names of exposure assessors (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 8)

- 10.1 Both documents (i.e. nos. 7 and 8) were introduced by Valérie Rolland. In the first paper, Members were asked to assist EFSA in establishing a network of Food Consumption Database Managers by providing (or confirming the annexed) names of food consumption database manager(s) in their country.
- In the second paper the Members were asked for advice on names of exposure assessors in their countries. These experts would then become involved in working groups to perform *ad hoc* exposure assessments or to revise and prepare guidelines for exposure assessments in support of EFSA's Scientific Panels.

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10.2 The documents were well appreciated and the Members agreed to send their responses to the EFSA Secretariat as requested.

12. Presentation and discussion of EFSA's Risk Communication Strategy (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 9)

12.1 Anne-Laure Gassin presented this document which was produced after consulting different players as among others, the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communications and EFSA's Expert Advisory Group on Risk Communications. The document had been prepared at the request of the Management Board and should take into consideration the recommendations on external communications made in the EFSA evaluation report.

12.2 The Risk Communication strategy is based on 'influencing the influencers', in which food safety organisations and stakeholders play an important role. The document gives a broad overview of the objectives on which EFSA will work on the coming years, etc.

13 Introduction to the outcome of the discussions in the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communication regarding communications on Avian Influenza in the EU

13.1 This point on the agenda followed the request of the Advisory Forum in November last year to discuss the subject of communications on Avian Influenza (AI) in greater detail with the members of the Communications WG working group.

13.2 From the discussions in the Working Group it had appeared that messages communicated by Member States are consistent and broadly in line with those of EFSA, the European Commission, and WHO advice. The WG Members also had stressed that AI is first and foremost an animal health issue and should be presented as such. Clear and co-ordinated communications from all relevant authorities was considered very important. Public authorities should seek to inform in a timely manner, and providing regular updates as soon information becomes available.

13.3 The WG Members underlined the need for a high level of transparency, notably regarding areas of uncertainties, which would be key to building trust. Finally, the AF members agreed with their Communications colleagues that national food safety authorities, given their proximity with consumers, would have a unique role to play, especially also in putting EFSA messages across.

14. State of Play on the question from Germany regarding alternative tests for marine biotoxins (Doc AF 19.05.2006 – 10)

14.1 Germany had sent a question to EFSA as to whether the mouse bioassay still deserved the status of a method of reference for detection of marine biotoxins. Djien Liem introduced a document on how EFSA's Contaminants Panel would deal with this request. The mandate will be addressed by the Panel at its plenary meeting in June.

14.2 Valerie Baduel gave a presentation on marine biotoxins and informed the Members on outbreaks Afssa was dealing with in the south-western part of France. She informed the meeting in particular on difficulties arisen with the testing of the biotoxins. The Chair thanked France, on behalf of the Forum, for the clear and interesting presentation.

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- 14.3 The Advisory Forum confirmed that the mandate adequately covered the issues for which an EFSA opinion would be necessary. It was suggested to take note of recent discussions and papers prepared in the CODEX and to involve experts from the Community Reference Laboratory in its assessment.

15 STANDING MATTERS

- 15.1 Anne-Laure Gassin reported back from the meeting of the AF Communications Working Group that was held on 26th April in Parma. Next to discussion on the EFSA's Risk Communications Strategy and on the communications approaches of AI, the Group also had a presentation of a colleague of ECDC. Furthermore, the working group had break-out groups to discuss how to develop and disseminate effective risk communication messages..
- 15.2 Norway informed the meeting that it just had finalised a risk-benefit analysis on fish consumption. The report would be presented at the 6th Scientific Colloquium of EFSA, dedicated to Risk-benefit analyses, to be held in July in Tabiano (It).
- 15.3 Germany informed the meeting on some cases where people had to be hospitalised because of the use of certain nanosprays intended for use in kitchen and bathrooms sealings. Apparently these sprays did not contain nanoparticles but, because of the very fine nozzle, had produced nano-size droplets which could easily reach alveoli in the lungs.
- 15.4 Germany informed the meeting that the BfR currently was conducting a risk assessment on the consumption of poultry and the exposition of micro-organisms to consumers especially via cross contamination. The BfR would be happy to let others join into this study and to share results.
- 15.5 Belgium informed the meeting that its government had issued a Belgium Nutrition Plan with proposals for improving the consumption habits of its citizens, tackling obesity, etc. The Plan could be found on the AF Extranet.
- 15.6 Also Slovenia had produced a Food and Nutrition Action Plan. Also in this country cardiovascular diseases and cancer related to the negative impact of unhealthy nutrition and irregular physical activity increased alarmingly. The Plan would be circulated among the AF members in the coming period.
- 15.7 Finland gave a brief presentation about its new Food Safety Authority, Evira. This agency will focus on ensuring the safety of food, promoting the health and welfare of animals and providing the required preconditions for plant and animal production as well as plant health. It will be led by Dr. Jaana Husu-Kallio. Finland will host the next AF meeting on 30th November, which meeting would be followed by a seminar late afternoon also open for the Heads of Agencies who would meet the following day.
- 15.8 The Netherlands - Andre Henken from the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, RIVM – formally presented the report, entitled “Our food, our Health (Healthy diet and safe food in the Netherlands)”. to the Acting Executive Director. The report has been prepared by the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and presents the outcomes of a study on various health-related aspects of diet and nutrition. EFSA considers this report to be a significant contribution to the international discussion on the risks and benefits of food as well as a relevant reference for its Scientific Committee and Panels. The main outcomes of the report would be presented

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at the forthcoming EFSA Science Colloquium on risk-benefit analysis of foods which would be held on 13-14 July 2006 in Tabiano.

16 Closing of the meeting

- 16.1 The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the members and observers for their positive and constructive approach. He also thanked the interpreters, the Authority's team and the Austrian Food Safety Agency for their assistance, contributions and kind hospitality, respectively.