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Communications Directorate

EFSA's Communications Strategy: 2010 – 2013 perspective

Cover note

1. EFSA has had a communications strategy formally in place since November 2006 when it was adopted by the Management Board¹. There have been important developments both in EFSA's internal and external environments since that time. EFSA has taken important steps forward in the areas of organisational vision and strategy – outlined in its Strategic Plan 2009-2013— as well as working processes and structures. This document updates the existing strategy in the light of experience and changing conditions.
2. At its meeting of 8 October 2009 the Board endorsed a discussion paper² proposing a methodology and timeline for the review of EFSA's Communications Strategy outlining the key factors to be taken into consideration by the Authority. In order to inform the review of the Communications strategy, EFSA commissioned qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative research was conducted by an independent consultant and carried out from October- December 2009 amongst its key target audiences³. The aim of the research was to assess awareness and understanding of EFSA (its role, organisation and principal outputs) as well as its overall image (in terms of expertise, value, usefulness of outputs, confidence in etc...).
3. EFSA has also commissioned a follow-up Eurobarometer survey on Food-related Risks in 2010. This quantitative research builds on findings from the initial survey conducted in 2005 and provides valuable insights on how European citizens perceive food-related risks and their confidence both in public authorities and the EU food safety system. The research sample is representative of consumers across the EU's 27 Member States. Learning from both research initiatives has been taken into account in the presentation of the updated EFSA Communications Strategy.
4. The draft EFSA Communications Strategy, updated in the light of key learning and outlining strategic priorities for 2010-2013, was submitted to the Board for discussion at its meeting on 18 March 2010 and endorsed for public consultation. In addition to comments from the European Commission (DG Sanco) 59 comments were received from external parties (stakeholders, research institutes, Advisory Forum members,...) through the online consultation published on EFSA's website from 5 May – 5 July 2010. Overall feedback was generally positive and concurred with the strategic approach proposed by EFSA for 2010-2013. Particular emphasis was given to the need for simpler language, a proactive communication approach to the independence of the Authority's scientific processes and outputs and continued development of stakeholder engagement initiatives (the full report will follow).

¹ EFSA Risk Communications Strategy and Plans (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/commstrategy.pdf>).

² Review of EFSA's Communications Strategy, 8 October 2009 (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/091008/docs/mb091008-ax7.pdf>)

³ EFSA Image, Qualitative Research Report, February 2010 (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/mb100318.htm>)

5. This revised draft integrates comments previously made by the Board and now considers the feedback received from EFSA's Advisory Forum and its Working Group on Communications, the Scientific Committee, the Advisory Group on Risk Communications, EFSA staff, the Stakeholder Consultative Platform as well as the public consultation process.
6. Input from the extensive consultation process on the draft communications strategy, involving EFSA's network of partners and stakeholders as well as other interested parties, ensures that this final document responds to the communication needs and expectations of our target audiences.
7. The revised draft Communications strategy 2010-2013 is submitted to the Management Board on 21 October 2010 for consideration and adoption.

See attached supporting documents:

- EFSA Risk Communications Strategy and Plans (2006)
- Review of EFSA's Communications Strategy (EFSA Management Board, 8th October 2009)
- Review of EFSA's Communications Strategy: what have we achieved? What have we learned?
- EFSA Image, Qualitative Research Report (February 2010)
- Report on the Public Consultation (to follow)



Communications Directorate

EFSA's Communications Strategy: 2010 – 2013 perspective

Executive Summary

EFSA communications: independent scientific advice to reinforce consumer confidence

1. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was set up in January 2002, following a series of food crises in the late 1990s, as an independent source of scientific advice and communication on risks associated with the food chain. EFSA was created as part of a comprehensive programme to improve EU food safety, ensure a high level of consumer protection and restore and maintain confidence in the EU food supply.
2. EFSA aims to deliver the best science, at the right time and in the most appropriate manner. This goal can only be achieved through effective cooperation in risk communications with all key actors. **Communications is therefore a central part of EFSA's core business**, supporting the scientific risk assessments in all areas of EFSA's remit.
3. Following the clear mandate laid down in EFSA's Founding Regulation⁴, EFSA developed its communications approach in close co-operation with its customers, partners and stakeholders. EFSA formalised its communications strategy in 2005, which following broad consultation, was adopted by its Management Board in 2006⁵. **EFSA's Strategic Plan 2009-2013 confirms as a key priority: "...to reinforce confidence and trust in EFSA and the EU food safety system through effective risk communications and dialogue with partners and stakeholders"**.
4. The review of EFSA's communications strategy and results to date, including learning from qualitative research carried out amongst the Authority's key target audiences, confirms that **EFSA is known and valued as "Europe's risk assessment agency for decision support in food safety."** EFSA is regarded as a good communicator, with significant output, and as a reference for many partners and stakeholders. **Coherence in risk communications between risk assessors and risk managers is seen to have improved.** However, EFSA needs to communicate to its audiences in a simpler and more meaningful way and should consider opportunities to expand its public outreach in cooperation with Member States.
5. Results from the **2010 Eurobarometer on food-related concerns**⁶ show that scientists and national and European food safety agencies (EFSA) are regarded as trusted sources of information on food risks. However,

⁴ Founding Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 of 28 January 2002.

⁵ EFSA Risk Communications Strategy and Plans (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/commstrategy.pdf>)

⁶ Eurobarometer 2010 on food-related risks (*publication pending*).

independence is increasingly under scrutiny and opinions are more divided regarding the independence of scientific advice.

6. Taking stock of research learning and experience gained since the adoption of the 2006 Communications Strategy as well as important internal and external developments regarding EFSA's organisation, workload, external relationships and networks, EFSA proposes the following **key strategic priorities** to guide further development of its communications work in 2010-2013:

Simplicity and transparency	Increase relevance and understanding of EFSA communications for key target audiences and informed lay audiences, in co-operation with Member States.
Independence	Augment proactive communications on the independence of EFSA's risk assessment advice.
Visibility and outreach	Enhance outreach, in the EU and beyond, by increasing awareness and recognition of EFSA and its work.
Coherence	Further increase the coherence of risk communications across the EU and beyond.
Dialogue	Enhance dialogue with stakeholders and increase audience interactivity.

7. In support of these priorities, EFSA will continue to strengthen its capacity to develop, disseminate and oversee effective and efficient risk communications. The implementation of **communications in key thematic areas** in cooperation with the European Commission, Member States and in consultation with its stakeholders will increase the impact and effectiveness of its risk communications activities. **EFSA will achieve this through a more efficient and effective leverage of available human and financial resources.**



Communications Directorate

EFSA's Communications Strategy

2010 – 2013 perspective

I EFSA communications: independent scientific advice to reinforce consumer confidence

1. EFSA was created following a series of food crises including BSE and dioxins which undermined consumer confidence in the safety of the food chain and led to serious public and political concern regarding the capacity of existing authorities to fully protect consumer interests. It was therefore decided to establish a new scientific advisory body charged with providing an independent and objective source of advice on food safety issues while the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States retained responsibility for risk management.
2. Communications is therefore a central part of EFSA's core business supporting the scientific risk assessments in all areas of EFSA's remit: food and feed safety, animal health and welfare, nutrition, plant protection and plant health. It is integral to achieving the objectives behind the establishment of EFSA that were set out in the White Paper⁷... contribute to a high level of consumer health protection in the area of food safety, through which consumer confidence can be restored and maintained."
3. Europe's 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth highlights the importance of innovation in supporting the competitiveness of EU industries and economic growth. EFSA also supports this objective by providing independent, evidence-based assessments of products, substances and claims submitted for authorisation in the EU, thereby contributing to sustained confidence in an increasingly complex and technical food chain.

⇒ A critical success factor in achieving these goals lies in EFSA's ability to establish itself as an authoritative and trusted voice with regards to food safety issues.

II 2006 Communications Strategy: where do we come from?

4. The Communications strategy, adopted by the Management Board in November 2006⁸, defined EFSA's overall mission in communications as being "to provide appropriate, consistent, accurate and timely communications to all interested parties and stakeholders and to the public at large, based on the Authority's risk assessments and scientific expertise", in line with the clear mandate laid down in EFSA's Founding Regulation.

⁷ White Paper on Food Safety, European Commission, January 2000.

⁸ EFSA Risk Communications Strategy and Plans (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/commstrategy.pdf>)

5. The strategy identifies EFSA's **key target audiences** as being those who commission work from the Authority (ie the risk managers) and those who have a particular involvement and interest in food, food safety and nutritional issues (ie risk assessors in Member States and outside the EU, stakeholders with a specific interest in the food chain, the broader scientific community, and other specialised audiences (eg health professional networks).

III Review of EFSA's Communications strategy: what have we achieved? What have we learned?

6. The scope of EFSA's communications work has greatly expanded since 2006, mirroring the development of its scientific activity. **EFSA's scientific outputs have both increased and diversified since 2006** as the expectations of risk managers have evolved. Increased responsibilities have been placed upon EFSA by relevant Community measures particularly in the evaluation of applications. EFSA is being called upon to consider new matters such as efficacy of regulated substances, risk benefit and environmental impact. Work in the area of nutrition and health, nanotechnology and cloning have added new dimensions and challenges to its work and new relevance for a wider audience. New output types, such as data collection in areas supporting work in nutrition and on rapid response to new risks in the food chain (eg melamine in foods) as well as co-operation projects in Member States resonate with diverse audiences.
7. The processing of applications related to the **authorisation of regulated substances** (eg GMOs, pesticides, additives) or claims today constitute the majority of EFSA's scientific outputs (over 60% in 2010) and heighten the need for effective communications and dialogue with applicants and other stakeholders, ensuring open and transparent communications both of outputs and working processes.
8. EFSA's communications outputs and their uptake have significantly increased since 2006, attesting to the **growing visibility of its scientific work**. Indicators such as visits to the EFSA website, subscribers to email newsletters and the level of EFSA-related media coverage have all doubled from 2006 to 2009⁹. The increasing number of publications (including a greater number available in all EU languages) and events has supported outreach in Member States. Strengthened co-operation with Member States through the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communications as well as co-ordination of communications with the European Commission—in particular on rapid response issues such as dioxin contamination of pork or melamine in foods—and international outreach have facilitated **timely, coherent dissemination of risk communications messages** in Europe and world-wide.
9. Research findings indicate that EFSA has been successful in delivering its messages to its key partners. The qualitative research carried out amongst EFSA's target audiences confirms that EFSA is relatively well-known, its role as **"Europe's risk assessment agency for decision support in food safety"** is understood, and its image is quite positive: no one wants to go back to the "pre-EFSA days." EFSA is seen as a good communicator with significant output. Coherence in risk communications between risk assessors and managers is seen to have improved. However, research findings outline two key opportunities for EFSA with respect to the need to i) simplify its messages, making them clearer, relevant and more meaningful to the target audience and ii) expand its public outreach.
10. A key learning from this research is that EFSA needs to **simplify its communications across all outputs**: from the scientific opinions and reports it produces, to presentations at meetings and finally to its communications materials. EFSA's immediate target audiences request simpler and more relevant communications, including also clearer information as to why risk assessment has been requested and how it will be used.

⁹ From 2006 to 2009, media coverage has increased from 400 articles/month to 750; visits to the EFSA website from 100.000 to 200.000; newsletter subscriptions from 12.500 to over 24.000. Communications outputs also increased over this period: increasing number of press releases/web news stories from 40 to 71; publications from 6 to 139; events from 8 in 2006 to 19 in 2009.

11. With respect to **choice of target audiences**, research findings confirm EFSA's approach to **direct its communications activities to the immediate users and beneficiaries of its scientific work**: its customers, partners, stakeholders and other interested parties. Interviewees recognise the role of such networks in working with EFSA to reach broader audiences with coherent and clear messages and-- whilst there appears to be no real consensus regarding the desired approach-- research findings indicate that there is scope for EFSA to explore more direct engagement with the public.
12. Research findings from the 2010 Eurobarometer¹⁰ on food-related risks confirm that supporting interested EU citizens in meeting their information needs would be beneficial as: 37% of citizens are concerned about the safety of food and close to half (48%) believe it is fairly/very likely that they food they eat may damage their health (up from 42% in 2005). EFSA is well placed to meet this information need, in co-operation with national food safety agencies, given the **high level of trust of EU citizens in both scientists (73%) and national and European food safety agencies (64%) as sources of information on food risks**.
13. 2010 Eurobarometer data show that the majority of EU citizens think that public authorities take into account the most recent scientific advice when taking decisions regarding food risks (63%), they are quick to act when there is a health problem (63%), they consider citizens' concerns (61%) and do a good job in informing people about the risks related to food (56%). However, results of recent Eurobarometer surveys indicate that whilst scientists and food safety agencies (including EFSA) are regarded as trusted sources of information on food risks, **questions are raised regarding the independence of scientific advice**¹¹.

IV Looking forward: key strategic priorities for 2010- 2013

14. EFSA's fundamental mandate has not changed since 2006, but there have been important internal and external developments. EFSA has grown and matured as an organisation; its workload has diversified and increased; and its external relationships and networks have further developed. The communications landscape has also changed; new communications and technologies are available and impact on all communicators' approaches to targeting their audiences in the most effective ways.
15. These and other developments are reflected in the strategic plan 2009-2013, which recognises the importance of communications in priority 5: *"to reinforce confidence and trust in EFSA and the EU food safety system through effective risk communications and dialogue with partners and stakeholders"*. It is logical for the communications strategy to take into account this wider strategic context.
16. The review of EFSA's communications work¹² confirms that the strategic framework outlined in the 2006 strategy is as appropriate today as it was then. Taking into account the important developments in both internal and external developments, EFSA's **overall objectives** in the area of risk communications identified in 2006 – adjusted to reflect the Authority's increasing work in the area of nutrition and health – will continue to guide the Authority's work in 2010-2013.

These are to:

- Establish the Authority as an expert and trusted source of information on food safety and nutritional issues (within its risk assessment mandate)
- Promote the Authority's reputation as an open and responsive organisation dedicated to scientific excellence, independence and transparency
- Ensure that messages are relevant, understandable and address food safety and nutritional concerns.
- Enhance the coherence of information on food safety and nutritional matters across the Union.

¹⁰ EFSA Eurobarometer 2010 on food-related risks (publication pending).

¹¹ Eurobarometer on Science & Technology (June 2010); EFSA Eurobarometer 2010 on food-related risks (publication pending).

¹² See supporting document: Review of EFSA's Communications Strategy: what have we achieved? What have we learned?

17. EFSA must however **improve the simplicity and relevance** of its communications for all of its target audiences, including its immediate partners and customers. **Promoting the independence of EFSA's scientific advice** is also a priority area for EFSA's communications efforts. Further more, there is an opportunity for EFSA to **expand its outreach to informed lay audiences**, in cooperation with national food safety authorities in Member States and to further dialogue with stakeholders. This will be achieved through **more effective leverage of human and financial resources** which are expected to remain stable over this period.
18. Taking stock of research learning and experience gained as well as directions outlined in EFSA's Strategic Plan, EFSA proposes the following **key strategic priorities** to guide further development of its communications work in 2010-2013¹³:

Simplicity and transparency	Increase relevance and understanding of EFSA communications for key target audiences and informed lay audiences, in co-operation with Member States.
Independence	Augment proactive communications on the independence of EFSA's risk assessment advice.
Visibility and outreach	Enhance outreach, in the EU and beyond, by increasing awareness and recognition of EFSA and its work.
Coherence	Further increase the coherence of risk communications across the EU and beyond.
Dialogue	Enhance dialogue with stakeholders and increase audience interactivity.

In support of these priorities, EFSA will continue to strengthen its **capacity** to develop, disseminate and oversee effective and efficient risk communications, taking into consideration financial and human resources.

19. In implementing these strategic priorities, EFSA will introduce a **new thematic approach** to its communications work in 2010-2013. Recognising the importance of a holistic approach in addressing and communicating public health issues, the Authority will – in addition to ensuring transparent communications of individual outputs—communicate in key focal areas. EFSA will seek to develop integrated communications plans in key thematic areas in cooperation with Member States and stakeholders, thereby increasing the impact and effectiveness of its communications activities.
20. Themes will be identified that reflect both European consumer concerns and public health priorities. These themes will consider the Authority's ongoing and future activities and will be determined in collaboration with Member States and consultation with stakeholders. In defining its communications approach with regards to its scientific opinions and advice, EFSA takes into account considerations such as:
- the significance of the risk assessment results (e.g. routine vs. new findings)
 - the nature of the risk (e.g. emerging, possible, identified and confirmed)
 - the potential public health impact
 - public perception and anticipated reactions
 - the legislative and market contexts, as appropriate
 - the urgency of the request.

Such criteria will also be utilised in selecting topics for thematic communications.

21. The implementation of a thematic approach will: **allow a more efficient use of resources**; support development of more relevant communications by enabling users to better understand the context and rationale

¹³ See Annex I: EFSA's key strategic priorities, initiatives, measurement tools and performance indicators for 2010-2013.

for EFSA's overall work as well as the relevance of individual scientific outputs; and facilitate the development and dissemination of coherent messages on food-related issues.

V Implementing the strategy

22. For EFSA, **ensuring scientific independence and implementing sound procedures for its scientific work are essential preconditions for the development of effective communications.** The quality of EFSA's scientific advice and working processes, (eg the clarity of its scientific opinions, the selection of experts, practice of openness, and continuous enhancement of risk assessment methodologies) are critical to attaining its communication objectives.
23. One of the key elements underpinning EFSA's establishment, enshrined in its Founding Regulation, is the principle of **transparency.** This not only underpins the ways of working of the whole organisation, but provides the backdrop to its communications approach. Transparency places a responsibility on the whole organisation, and focuses its communications efforts on developing tools and channels, delivering outputs and working in ways that live up to that key value.

Target audiences: who does EFSA communicate with?



(EFSA's immediate target audiences are indicated in the inner circle)

24. The primary targets and recipients of EFSA's scientific advice and related communications activities are those who commission work from the Authority and/or have a particular involvement in areas covered by EFSA's remit. EFSA's key target audiences include: the European institutions who can task EFSA to carry out scientific work (ie the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States); national food safety authorities; stakeholders with a specific interest in the food chain (including consumer organisations, industry, environmental and other NGOs); stakeholders from the scientific and academic communities; and other audiences with a particular interest in food, food safety and nutritional issues (eg health professional groups).
25. Much of EFSA's scientific work is by nature highly technical and specialised. However, food safety issues are important to everybody and EFSA's work can therefore be of interest to a wide range of audiences and ultimately to the consumer. EFSA can best serve European consumers through close cooperation with key partners at national level. By seeking to grow its communications through a thematic approach, outlining how the scientific outputs relate to public health issues, the Agency aims to provide a greater understanding of its work.
26. Given the different levels of consumer awareness, interest in and attitudes towards communications on food, food safety, nutrition and health, it is neither possible nor desirable for EFSA to seek to address the resulting diverse and multiple information needs of consumers in Member States through a single and unique message disseminated across Europe. When crafting effective communications, one size does not fit all.
27. All of the opinions of EFSA's Scientific Panels and EFSA's own scientific outputs are ultimately available to the public at large, notably through their publication on the Authority's website. Whilst EFSA's scientific advice is technical in nature and cannot cater to all the information needs of the public at large, it must nevertheless be

understandable to non-scientists and, within a broader public audience, be meaningful and relevant to those with an interest in EFSA's work and notably to an informed layperson.

28. To make sure that consumers receive the right type of information through channels they are familiar with and in a format and language that they can best understand, EFSA works in partnership with the bodies responsible for food safety in the EU Member States, in particular food safety authorities responsible for risk assessment and risk communications at national level.
29. EFSA's communications strategy therefore focuses on **"informing the influencers"** and on providing those organisations who engage regularly in consumer communications at national level as well as stakeholder and other groups in direct contact with consumers, with the information they require and with messages which can be further adapted and tailored to meet specific audience needs. Media are an important conduit and channel for reaching these groups as well as a broader audience with more targeted messages.
30. In 2010-2013 EFSA will seek to **strengthen its co-operation with national food safety authorities** in order to expand its communications outreach and understanding of messages by consumers with an interest in the issues addressed by EFSA. EFSA will work with the Member States to identify key communications themes and to develop a broader range of tools and outputs that reflect the different levels of knowledge and interest in its work.

How does EFSA undertake its communications work?

31. In carrying out its communications work to address the 2010-2013 strategic priorities, EFSA seeks to:

- Understand consumer and public perception of food, risk and risks associated with food
- Tailor information to audience needs
- Harness support of key actors to reach consumers with pertinent and effective messages
- Promote coherent risk communications across the risk assessment/risk management interface.

Understand consumer and public perception of food, risk and risks associated with food

32. The development of effective risk communications messages requires an in-depth knowledge of target audiences including: their level of awareness and understanding of food safety issues; their attitudes to food in general and food safety in particular; the possible impact of communications on behaviour; and the appropriate channels for effective dissemination of messages.

Tailor information to audience needs

Bridge the gap between science and the consumer

33. In order to be effective, risk communications must explain and contextualize risk. In developing public communications, EFSA seeks to translate scientific evidence into clear, accessible and meaningful messages, addressing the needs of key audiences. This requires close co-operation between risk assessors and risk managers, taking into account their respective roles. In addition to explaining risk assessment findings, risk communications must also, where required, provide clear advice to the recipients as to whether individual action is required and set out clearly any action steps recommended for any or all interested parties (ie governments, industry and/or consumers). Close co-ordination of communications by risk assessors and risk managers is therefore a prerequisite for ensuring coherence in risk communications.

Meet the needs of immediate target audiences

34. Learning from the target audience research carried out in 2009 indicates that EFSA's communications are too technical, even for the audiences with which it directly interfaces. Knowing that the website is the primary means by which partners and stakeholders access EFSA-related information and material, EFSA will seek to provide a greater breadth of information and tools, with different levels of technical details, so that users can match these with their corresponding needs. Furthermore, through the use of thematic communication, users will gain a

greater understanding of the context and rationale for EFSA's scientific outputs. EFSA will monitor progress in this area through quantitative research to be carried out amongst its key target audiences every 3 years as of 2011.

Engage with the scientific community

35. Recognising that the scientific community has different communications needs, EFSA will build its visibility, utilising appropriate channels and tools of the academic community. For instance, the launch in 2009 of the new EFSA Journal will foster this outreach by presenting EFSA scientific outputs in a way that these can be more easily considered and referenced in scientific reference databases.

Harness support of key actors to reach consumers with pertinent and effective messages

36. EFSA seeks to involve national food safety authorities in Member States and stakeholders both in the development and dissemination of its scientific advice. This in order to ensure that messages are culturally sensitive and adapted to the needs of specific populations groups within each of the Member States. EFSA liaises closely with national food safety authorities through its Advisory Forum and **Advisory Forum Communications Working Group** (which brings together all of communications representatives from national food safety authorities) so as to facilitate timely and consistent dissemination of risk communications messages across the Union. The support of Focal Points further expands outreach of messages to stakeholders and other audiences at national level. EFSA also co-operates with the European Commission to ensure that EFSA risk communications, whilst independent of that of risk managers, forms part of a coherent approach to risk communications across risk assessment and risk management.
37. EFSA seeks to engage in a dialogue on risk communications with all of its stakeholders including consumer associations and other NGOs as well as industry in order to strengthen understanding of EFSA's work, build learning regarding risk perception and augment the dissemination of risk communications messages to stakeholder constituencies and consumers.
38. EFSA's risk communications work is also supported by an expert **Advisory Group on Risk Communications** (AGRC), established in 2005. This multi-disciplinary group of social science experts assists EFSA in the implementation of its mission with regard to risk communications by providing advice, on an informal basis, regarding the development and implementation of its risk communications strategies and plans.

Promote coherent risk communications across the risk assessment/risk management interface.

39. Risk communications is a shared accountability of risk assessors and risk managers. EFSA's own role in risk communications is to inform risk managers, national authorities, stakeholders and the public at large about scientific aspects of food safety and nutrition and to provide scientific advice in an open and transparent manner. For EFSA, co-ordination with risk managers (in particular the European Commission and national food safety authorities in Member States), whilst maintaining the Authority's independence, is critical to ensure coherence of public communications. Such an approach is particularly important where a risk in the food chain has been identified and confirmed and an increase in public awareness is required.
40. EFSA has established procedures to **pre-notify important announcements** to external parties, including the European Commission, national food safety authorities and, where appropriate, to selected stakeholders concerned by a specific announcement. This process enables interested parties to prepare their own communications and hence foster a more consistent communications approach. With respect to stakeholders, EFSA liaises with both consumer and industry groups on the premise that: confidentiality is respected; the organisations concerned are supportive of EFSA's role in these areas; and that they can contribute to the dissemination of public messages. In addition, EFSA advises key international organisations and food safety agencies outside the EU (eg WHO, FAO, OIE, FDA, Health Canada, FSANZ, Japan Food Safety Commission..) prior to the dissemination of selected public announcements.

Tools & Channels

41. EFSA has a well-established set of communications channels and tools to serve its core audiences, which are the basis for the Communications Directorate's structure: press office, web team, publications and events team. The different communications channels are mobilised in an integrated way, by co-ordinating activities to ensure the various channels are suitably exploited to reach target audiences on key issues. EFSA will continue to closely monitor the communications and media landscape –exploring emerging online communications tools such as social media – to ensure that the most appropriate mix of channels are developed and used for EFSA's communications.
42. EFSA will continue **to strengthen its online communications strategy**. A 2010 survey¹⁴ showed that over 92% of respondents were satisfied with the overall website. The same research investigated how often the Agency's website visitors use social media tools in a professional context. The survey showed that few respondents use these tools; however EFSA recognises the growing use of social media and will consider these as part of its integrated approach to communications. EFSA will therefore develop social media guidelines for use by EFSA staff and a social media strategy.

VI. Evaluation: how do we measure success?

43. Ultimately, EFSA's communications work aims to:
- Increase awareness and confidence in EFSA and its scientific work amongst key target audiences
 - Increase consumer confidence in the EU food safety system and the role of public authorities – including EFSA—in protecting consumer interests.
44. EFSA seeks to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its communications activities taking into account learning from: consumer and target audience research; media monitoring and analysis; output analysis (eg understanding of messages; timeliness of publications); web traffic analysis and web user surveys etc... Harnessing learning from these various tools and findings, EFSA will work with social scientists from its Advisory Group on Risk Communications in order to develop an overall evaluation plan allowing the Authority to assess confidence of key target audiences in its work as well as EFSA's contribution to increased consumer confidence in the EU food safety system. This will include the definition of key milestones which EFSA can integrate in its work programmes and can utilise to monitor its progress over time.
45. The revised draft Communications Strategy 2010-2013 is submitted to the Management Board on 20 October for consideration and adoption.

To be adopted in Brussels, Belgium on 21 October 2010

Chair

¹⁴ Survey conducted between 19 July – 13 August (3540 respondents).

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To reinforce confidence and trust in EFSA and the EU food safety system through effective risk communications and dialogue with partners and stakeholders (*Strategic Plan 2009 – 2013*).

Priorities	Initiatives	Monitoring tools	Key indicators
<p>Simplicity and transparency</p> <p>Increase relevance and understanding of EFSA communications for key target audiences and informed lay audiences, in cooperation with Member States</p>	<p>Deepen EFSA's understanding of key audience needs and consumer risk perception, to inform communications approaches and messages.</p> <p>Establish effective communication channels to reach audiences – who, what, why and how.</p> <p>Develop specific strategy on social media taking into account possible implications of these new media for EFSA and its communications activities.</p>	<p>Target audience research to evaluate awareness, communication needs, usefulness and appreciation of EFSA communications (every 2 years).</p> <p>Eurobarometer survey results on risk perception (every 3 years).</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring of data on audience uptake of press, web, publications and events products.</p>	<p>Awareness, image and confidence in EFSA.</p> <p>Understanding of messages</p> <p>Positive trends in media analysis - EFSA's scientific advice increasingly and accurately reported in media.</p> <p>Positive trends in web statistics - EFSA's website increasingly used by target audiences as a reference point for food and feed safety information.</p> <p>Positive trends in uptake of publications and events products.</p>
	<p>Provide simple, clear and meaningful messages based on EFSA's scientific advice.</p> <p>Identify key themes on which to communicate proactively such as zoonoses, pesticides, nutrition, new technologies.</p>	<p>Target audience research to evaluate awareness, usefulness and appreciation of EFSA communications (if possible every 3 years).</p>	
		<p>Media monitoring statistics e.g. on most covered issues and Panels.</p>	
		<p>Web statistics e.g. on most visited pages and downloads on EFSA website.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring of data on audience uptake of press, web, publications and events products.</p>	

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Priorities	Initiatives	Monitoring tools	Key indicators
<p>Simplicity and transparency</p> <p>Increase relevance and understanding of EFSA communications for key target audiences and informed key audiences, in cooperation with Member States</p>	<p>Develop appropriate messages that are clear, relevant and meaningful for different audience groups, with support from AFWGC and Focal Points.</p>	<p>Feedback from AFWGC and Focal Points on usefulness and appreciation of EFSA communications.</p> <p>Target audience research to evaluate awareness, usefulness and appreciation of EFSA communications.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring of data on audience uptake of press, web, publications and events products.</p>	<p>Awareness, image and confidence in EFSA.</p> <p>Understanding of messages</p> <p>Positive trends in media analysis -EFSA's scientific advice increasingly and accurately reported in media.</p>
	<p>Develop comprehensive communication plans mobilising all communications channels to reach target audiences on key themes (i.e. across press, web, events, publications, institutional relations, etc...).</p>	<p>Target audience research to evaluate awareness, usefulness and appreciation of EFSA communications.</p> <p>Findings of internal debriefing processes on communications campaigns.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring of data on audience uptake of press, web, publications and events products.</p>	<p>Positive trends in web statistics - EFSA's website increasingly used by target audiences as a reference point for food and feed safety information.</p> <p>Positive trends in uptake of publications and events products.</p>

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Priorities	Initiatives	Monitoring tools	Key indicators
Independence	Pro-active communications on EFSA's independence and related initiatives in cooperation with Member States.	Media monitoring and analysis. Target audience research.	Understanding and confidence in EFSA's work Positive trends in media analysis
	Promote understanding of best practices in science and the risk assessment process, including process of scientific debate and consensus building.	Uptake of new tools addressing independence Web user survey Feedback from AFCWG and Focal Points	Greater understanding of EFSA's scientific work by stakeholders and a positive trend in media coverage.
	Research the relationship between independence, openness and transparency in collaboration with partners (AFCWG, DG Research) to gain a better understanding of stakeholder perceptions.	Message testing - target audience research.	Greater efficacy of EFSA communications on independence

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Priorities	Initiatives	Monitoring tools	Key indicators
Visibility and outreach Enhance outreach in the EU and beyond, by increasing awareness and recognition of EFSA and its work.	Build a strong EFSA brand and support brand equity through organisation-wide guidelines and initiatives.	Target audience research to evaluate awareness and appreciation of EFSA's work (if possible every 3 years). Ongoing monitoring of data on audience uptake of press, web, publications and events products.	Consistent messages in all elements of communications mix. - Awareness, image and confidence in EFSA. Positive trends in media analysis – EFSA's scientific advice increasingly and accurately reported in media.
	Promote EFSA's reputation as an organisation dedicated to scientific excellence, independence, openness and transparency, by mainstreaming these principles in all EFSA communications.	Target audience research to evaluate awareness and appreciation of EFSA's work (if possible every 3 years). Media monitoring data on accuracy of reporting on EFSA and its work.	Positive trends in web statistics – EFSA's website increasingly used by target audiences as a reference point for food and feed safety information. Positive trends in uptake of publications and events products.
	Increase visibility in the scientific community, including further development of online EFSA scientific journal.	Monitoring of scientific referencing databases in relation to EFSA outputs. Monitoring of scientific literature in relation to EFSA outputs.	EFSA scientific outputs successfully included in online referencing databases. EFSA's scientific advice increasingly referenced in scientific literature.
	Improve communications delivery to informed lay audiences, including using the website to better explain EFSA's role in risk communications and how it relates to the national food safety agencies.	Web user survey Feedback from AFWGC and Focal Points (i.e. target audience research)	Awareness, understanding and confidence in EFSA. Understanding of messages.

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Priorities	Initiatives	Monitoring tools	Key indicators
<p>Visibility and outreach</p> <p>Enhance outreach in the EU and beyond, by increasing awareness and recognition of EFSA and its work.</p>	<p>Continued monitoring, analysis and investment in online communications, including appropriate use of emerging online communication tools such as social media.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of data on audience uptake of online communications products.</p>	<p>Positive trends in audience uptake.</p>
	<p>Increase outreach in the Member States through mobilising the Focal Point networks to ensure all relevant national audiences are reached.</p>	<p>Information from Focal Points on national networks and audiences reached.</p>	<p>Statistics showing a high level of outreach at national level.</p>
	<p>As part of EFSA's International Strategy, increase outreach with international partners including international organisations, EU bodies and national organisations outside the EU.</p> <p>Organise international risk communications conference in 2011 in collaboration with the Advisory Forum.</p>	<p>Feedback from international partners on EFSA communications initiatives and services.</p> <p>Media monitoring and analysis.</p>	<p>Statistics showing a high level of outreach at international level.</p> <p>International risk communications platform established with key partners.</p>

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Coherence Further increase the coherence of risk communications across the EU and beyond.	Continue to strengthen the AFWGC as a forum for ensuring coherence of food safety messages across the Union, including development of Risk Communications Guidelines.	Feedback from AFWGC on EFSA communications initiatives and services. Media monitoring and analysis.	Successful implementation of risk communications guidelines.
	Further develop communications channels with Member States including early warning mechanisms and joint communications activities.	Feedback from Member States on EFSA communications initiatives and services. Monitoring national food safety authorities' communications in relation to EFSA outputs. Media monitoring and analysis.	EFSA's scientific advice increasingly cited by Member States, Commission and international partners.
	Further develop coordination of communications with the European Commission.	Feedback from Commission customers on EFSA communications initiatives and services. Media monitoring and analysis.	Greater coherence of messages between EFSA and Member States, Commission and international partners.
	Continue to cooperate with non-EU national bodies and international organisations and consider opportunity for joint communications initiatives on issues of global relevance (eg. cloning, bisphenol A, aspartame).	Feedback from international partners/ customers on EFSA communications initiatives and services. Media monitoring and analysis.	
	Development of social media guidelines for EFSA staff.	Monitoring of social media and analysis.	Objective portrayal of EFSA and its work in the social media community.

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Priorities	Initiatives	Monitoring tools	Key indicators
<p>Dialogue</p> <p>Enhance dialogue with stakeholders and increase audience interactivity.</p>	<p>Further develop EFSA activities with stakeholders including the SH consultative Platform, stakeholder meetings on specific themes and online consultations on draft scientific outputs.</p>	<p>Target audience research to evaluate awareness, usefulness and appreciation of EFSA communications (if possible every 3 years).</p>	<p>High level of appreciation and forward dissemination of EFSA communications-</p>
	<p>Continue to gather input from stakeholders and strengthen dialogue in priority areas, including the revision of its pre-notification policy and support of the Working Group on Stakeholder Engagement in EFSA Activities</p>	<p>Stakeholder feedback on EFSA consultation, meetings and other activities.</p> <p>Level of stakeholder participation in key stakeholder initiatives.</p>	<p>High level of appreciation and participation in stakeholder initiatives.</p>
	<p>Take initiatives to enhance interactivity and dialogue with target audiences to maximise accessibility and user-friendliness, including the production and update of a rolling work plan.</p>	<p>Statistics on number of interactive initiatives launched by EFSA.</p> <p>Statistics on public consultations, technical hearings...</p>	<p>Successful launch and enhancement of initiatives, "Ask EFSA" service and online subscription services.</p>

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Priorities	Initiatives	Monitoring tools	Key indicators
Capacity Strengthen EFSA's capacity to develop, disseminate and oversee effective risk communications.	Ensure communication considerations are integrated into EFSA's scientific processes, from receipt of mandate to publication of scientific output.	Mandates Review Committee Handling plans Communications Review Committee Target audience research	Understanding of messages Positive trends in media analysis
	Continue to strengthen EFSA's communication processes through further development of planning, SOPs, and handling plans on high profile issues.	Communications Review Committee Handling plans Risk Assessment Workflow SOPs	Timeliness Integrated communications plans RAW workflow for communications outputs
	Contribute to EFSA's work on the harmonisation of risk assessment terminology and its implication for communications.	Scientific Committee Working Group on harmonisation of risk assessment terminology. Media monitoring & analysis.	Consistent use of risk assessment terminology by media.
	Streamline and more effectively coordinate the development of communications initiatives and research across EFSA.	Communications Review Committee. Communications calendar / handling plans. Quarterly planning meetings with EFSA Management Team	Timeliness Integrated communications programmes.
	Clarify roles and responsibilities of staff involved in drafting, reviewing and validating messages for external communications.	Job descriptions, CDACs. Communications development process.	Revised SOPs Integrate in job descriptions and CDACs.
	Continue to train communications and science staff in drafting and delivery of effective communications messages. Pursue media training for scientific panel experts.	Training programmes. Media monitoring and analysis. Target audience research.	Effectiveness of communications outputs and spokespeople.