



EVIDENCE MANAGEMENT UNIT

Network on Food Consumption Data Minutes of the 13th meeting

**Held on 11 December 2020
Tele-conference**

(Agreed on 06 January 2021)

Participants

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

Country	Name
Austria	Jürgen König
Belgium	Nicolas Berger
	Mirjana Andjelkovic
Croatia	Darja Sokolić
Cyprus	Sarandi Aspasia
	Economidou Naso
Czech Republic	Marcela Dofkova
Estonia	Keiu Nelis
Finland	Valsta Liisa
France	Dubuisson Carine
Germany	Krems Carolin
Greece	Georgios Marakis
Hungary	Pfaff Nóra
	Larnsak Loretta
Iceland	Holmfridur Thorgeirsdottir
Ireland	Breige McNulty
Italy	Stefania Sette
	Turrini Aida
Latvia	Inese Sikсна
Lithuania	Barzda Albertas
Luxembourg	Bohn Torsten
Malta	Pisani Giannella
Netherlands	Castemiller Jacqueline
	Ocke Marga
Norway	Lillegaard Inger Therese Laugsand
Poland	Stoś Katarzyna

Portugal	Carmona Paulo
Romania	Tanescu Bogdan
	Neagu Monica
Slovak Republic	Lenka Bartošová
Slovenia	Matej Gregorič
Spain	Rubio Maria José
Sweden	Ohrvik Veronica
Switzerland	Christine Zuberbuehler
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Katica Arar
North Macedonia	Katerina Jonovska
	Suzana Popovska
Serbia	Mirjana Gurinović
Turkey	Ozcan Fatma Nevra

- **Hearing Experts**

Holmes Bridget (Food and Agriculture Organisation), Rodrigues Da Silva Breda Joao Joaquim (World Health Organization)

- **EFSA:**

Evidence Management (DATA) Unit: Sofia Ioannidou (Chair), Davide Arcella, Mary Gilsean, Marina Nikolić (Minutes), Zsuzsanna Horváth (Minutes), Claudia Cascio, Bruno Dujardin, Petra Gergelova, Sara Levorato, Francesca Riolo, Alban Shahaj, Jasmin Wehner, Anastasia Livaniou, Saba Giovannacci, Ana Lambergar

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all participants.

Apologies were received from Bulgaria, Denmark, Albania, Kosovo* and Montenegro.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes. Etiquette and ways of interactions on the Teams web meeting were presented. Sofia Ioannidou (SI) invited all participants to interact and provide their comments, questions and suggestions during the meeting.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 12th meeting of the Network on Food Consumption Data held on 20-21st May 2019, Parma

The minutes were agreed by written procedure on 13 June 2019 and published on the EFSA website on 17 June 2019.

4. Use of Teams for network collaboration and communications activities

Saba Giovannacci presented the newly created Teams space "Food Consumption Data Network", which will be used as the new channel of communication for both the Network members and EFSA. She gave a live demo presentation on how Teams works and looks like, where the documents shared with the Network

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

members will be saved in future etc. She also encouraged participants to use Teams for future communication with EFSA and among the network.

5. Quick update on the EU Menu project and update of the Comprehensive database; Situation with running food consumption surveys in the Covid-era

SI gave an overview on the latest update of the Comprehensive database that took place in February 2020. For the first time, summary statistics are now presented, not only by the age groups, but also by gender. In addition, users can now select the most recent surveys, if more than one is available for the same country. Participants were also informed about additional corrections/amendments carried out to standardise reporting of food supplements and sweeteners[†]. These updates will be available soon in the online summary statistics and in the exposure tools (i.e. FAIM and RACE) using food consumption data from the Comprehensive database. She also mentioned that all current surveys in the Comprehensive database are now mapped to the food categories used for the authorisation of food additives (Annex II, Part D (Reg (EC) No 1333/2008)). SI also presented a list of countries that successfully finalized data collection under the EU Menu umbrella in 2020, and those that are expected to be finalized in the coming years. A new release of the Comprehensive database with additional new surveys is foreseen in Spring 2021. Challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic were presented as constraints to the timely execution of the pilot studies/field work which caused delays for many countries.

Carine Dubuisson (CD, France) asked if the food consumption data mapped according to the food additive legislation will be available to the Network members. Davide Arcella (DA) clarified that the mapping could be provided upon request for their own data. However, the classification will not be publicly available for all data in the Comprehensive database due in compliance to the General Data Protection Regulation.

Mirjana Gurinovic (MG, Serbia) asked about the possibility and the procedure for extension of the ongoing EU Menu projects. SI clarified that project coordinators should communicate the request via e-mail to her keeping the EFSA procurement in copy.

6. Input from the network members

Marga Ocké (MO, Netherlands) gave a presentation on the ongoing project in Netherlands NethFIR – Netherlands Food Information Resource focusing on one of its four components, namely the Branded Food Databank (LEDA). She presented the data sources used for the compilation of the databank, advantages and disadvantages of this kind of database, its implementation in different applications and usability. The databank contains information available on the label such as barcode, food name, brand name, list of ingredients, portion size, nutrient content and fortification. The database currently covers ~75% of the marketed foods in the Netherlands. In addition, she presented a workflow and first results of the semi-automatic food matching between branded food records in LEDA database with generic food records in national Dutch Food Composition Database (NEVO).

[†] This was accomplished by using always as FoodEx2 base term the type of supplement or type of table-top sweetener available in the Exposure hierarchy of the FoodEx2 catalogue and indicating the fortifying agent or sweetening agent with the ingredient facet.

The Network members showed a great interest in the presentation and asked for details summarized below:

- Liisa Valsta (LV, Finland) asked about the quality of nutrient composition in the LEDA database and if the comparison study between the LEDA and NEVO databases has been performed. She emphasized that a similar study[‡] was performed in the Nordic countries where major differences were identified. MO clarified that a systematic study has not been done yet, but the same inconsistency between the food nutrient content present in the national food composition database and the one available on the food label is already recognized. Differences are either clear errors or coming from the variations of specific nutrients within the same food. The tool is also able to provide variations in the nutrient content within the same type of food so that users can look at nutrient variability. DA mentioned that it would be useful to contact food producers and ask about their food composition data sources (analytical results or food composition tables). He also asked if the Mintel database was considered as a possible source of information for the presented activity since it is used by EFSA. MO clarified that it was evaluated but not included in the data collection process. She will provide more details on the feedback on Mintel after the meeting. LV commented that information on the data sources and Mintel evaluation are available in the report related to the similar survey in the Nordic countries that will be provided to Network members.
- SI asked if the Open Food Facts database was used for data collection for LEDA. MO clarified that it was not included in the database, however other institutions in the Netherlands use it. She also clarified that she was not directly involved in the selection of databases but will collect information and report to the Network after the meeting.
- Carolin Krems (CK, Germany) asked if already existing food consumption data or composition data was used for development of the LEDA. MO clarified that LEDA was developed independently mainly based on food label information, and neither the consumption nor the food composition databases previously existing were considered.
- MG asked whether the NethFIR databases are already used in any project. MO confirmed this, giving as an example the use of this database in software applications providing food dietary advice and help with food choices in supermarkets. She emphasized that the matching between the foods present in the LEDA database with those in NEVO database, is still work in progress and not yet fully implemented. At this point MO invited all participants who are working on similar topics such as food matching to exchange experiences with RIVM.
- Nicolas Berger (NB, Belgium) asked if the method could be applied to other countries, and about the possibilities to recycle the algorithm for the matching between the label's database and the national food composition database. MO clarified that principles used are same for all countries, but the training dataset uses the national language and validation should be country specific due to market differences.
- SI mentioned that EFSA is developing an artificial intelligence model (Smart Coding App.) for automatic mapping of English food name with FoodEx2 codes

[‡] Link to be provided to the Network members after the meeting

using the data from the EFSA Comprehensive Food Consumption Database to train it. EFSA plans to launch this application in Spring next year. She proposed to MO to share LEDA database with EFSA in order to provide FoodEx2 codes and at the same time train the model, but MO said that this is possible only for generic food composition data that are translated to English, but not for LEDA which is available only in Dutch. She however, mentioned that the UK has also a branded food database that might be useful for the same goal.

- Darja Sokolic (DS, Croatia) informed the participants about the ongoing project, funded by EFSA called ID Risk partly focused on the development of an application that would allow FoodEx2 coding of food names in different languages. The app will be based on machine learning technology. After the project completion, the tool will be available for all Member States. In the meantime, Member States can contribute to the development of the tool by sharing their datasets in original languages mapped to FoodEx2.

7. Future activities in the area of food consumption and food composition

DA gave a presentation on the possible future EFSA activities in the area of food consumption and food composition data. As agreed during the last network meeting, it is fundamental to keep the EFSA Comprehensive database updated and therefore collection of high-quality food consumption and related data should continue as a primary long-term objective of EFSA. The new Transparency Regulation (EU) 2019/1381 that will enter into force in March 2021, and its impact on EFSA's work was presented. As a result of the new Regulation, an additional budget is allocated for grant and procurement activities. In view of this, the following four possible future project ideas were presented:

1. Evaluation of the results from the EU Menu projects,
2. Development of an EU open access and harmonised food composition database,
3. Pan-European survey (EU Menu II), and
4. Collection of data on rarely consumed foods.

The session was complemented with short online questionnaires using Slido app, focusing on the above project ideas. Participants were asked to select the most interesting project and 50% voted for a Pan-European survey (EU Menu II), 28% expressed interest for the project focused on Food composition data while 15% and 8% of participants selected collection of data on rarely consumed foods and Evaluation of the EU Menu results, respectively. Within the next poll participants were asked to select the projects in which the research organizations in their country would be interested in participating. For this question multiple choice was allowed. The majority of participants (74%) selected projects related to the Food composition data and Pan-European survey (EU Menu II). Projects related to rarely consumed foods and Evaluation of the EU Menu results were selected by 46% and 31% of participants, respectively. After these two polls, a discussion on these topics took place.

Aida Turrini (AT, Italy) emphasized the importance of EU MENU projects and asked if any strategy was adopted to keep the sustainability of the food consumption related projects. The Council for Agricultural Research and Economics (CREA) works on different research infrastructures that will be built in the food and health area within ESFRI (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure) and she proposed to link them with the future EFSA activities. Aida also mentioned the

importance of having a monitoring programme focusing on food consumption surveys. In addition, she proposed a specific conference to be organized on this topic. DA confirmed that synergistic effects and linkages between the similar ongoing and future projects in this area should be explored and used as much as possible. He mentioned that there are no current projects/plans to support a Pan-European food consumption survey and EFSA could consider this. At this point he clarified that no budget has been allocated to these activities, as this brainstorming is just intended to gather the idea and proposals.

Lillegaard Inger Therese Laugsand (Norway) commented that food consumption surveys should be designed at country level in order to allow answering different country specific research questions and to be used as much as possible, not only for risk assessment purposes. In this view she would favour the EU Menu II approach, where a dietary survey at country level will be organised and take place, rather than a unique Pan-European survey.

CK commented that she also supports the idea of the EU Menu II but emphasized the importance of having an EFSA Guidance to guarantee harmonized food consumption data on EU level. It is also particularly important to develop and use a harmonized/unique tool. She suggested to focus on the update of the guidance document before thinking about new surveys.

DA thanked the network members for their valuable input and launched the next online poll on future activities in the area of food consumption data collection. The participants were asked if a national dietary survey is planned in their countries within the next five years. This was confirmed by 53% of the network members, while 16% declared they are planning to implement a national dietary survey later. Another 16% of the members declared they are not planning the next survey yet and the rest of the participants do not know if such activity is already planned.

The participants were also asked about the methodology to be used in their next national dietary survey; 52% declared that they will use the EU Menu guidance, 10% will use another existing methodology and 10% will use a new methodology based on new technologies for the upcoming surveys; while 28% does not know yet which methodology will be used.

The last poll revealed that 79% of the participants would find it useful if an international dietary software tool was available for the next dietary survey.

Mary Gilsean asked which countries are planning to use a methodology different from the EU MENU methodology, and if they already know what it will be. LV declared that in Finland most probably will use FFQ (Food Frequency Questionnaires) for the next survey due to financial constraints, and that this is aimed to be implemented within five years. The current software of Finland is outdated; thus, they would be interested in a new one in long-term. MO declared that in the Netherlands a survey is ongoing according to the EU MENU methodology. In addition, a new application is being developed for the future consumption data collections which might replace the classic 24 hrs recall interviews. DS confirmed that Croatia is also planning to slightly modify the methodology as the Covid-19 pandemic prompted a need to re-consider in the future the use of face-to-face interviews during dietary surveys. AT suggested a multi-lingual data entry platform which could digest harmonized data from different software. She also suggested Automated self-administered 24 hrs recalls as an option for the future data collections. CD suggested an open source dietary intake software called Intake24. Bridget Holmes (BH, FAO) added that each

country application needs careful adaptation of the software. Intake24[§] is now managed by the University of Cambridge in the UK and is being used in the UK national dietary survey.

A number of comments were received about difficulties to receive funding for a representative survey, to develop a sustainable tool for data collection, and to achieve a good overall response rate in the survey. The Covid pandemic makes this even more difficult at present. CD confirmed that new technologies might help to increase the participation rate, and this should be considered while developing the new guidance. AT added that new technologies might be appropriate for certain age classes, but not for all. NB added that in Belgium the next survey is planned for 2022, whereas the Globodiet software is no longer supported due to its costs. DS emphasised the multi-use of these data among nutritionists, exposure assessors, dietitians, industry and policy makers. She informed the network about the EFSA Advisory Forum Taskforce on Data Collection and Data Modelling in which she participated with the objective to deliver strategic recommendations on food chain safety data, their management and use. A [technical report](#) is published describing the recommendations of the Task Force. It is envisaged that selected recommendations will be translated into projects with Member States, starting in 2021, and within the frame of EFSA's next (2027) strategy. She added that in the future instead of data collection, data connection will become even more important. LV commented that before implementing these future activities, evaluation of EU MENU data is crucial. Liisa noted that this project idea received less votes in the poll due to the fact that participants were allowed one choice only in the relevant poll.

Participants were asked to suggest proposals for any other multi-annual, multi-partner projects in the area of food consumption and/or food composition. The suggestions are summarized below:

- MO proposed to work on the development of matching databases – i.e. a methodology which would allow the better use of existing data such as to translate data from national languages to FoodEx2.
- LV suggested that in the area of food composition, comparison of available food label data and analytical data should be carried out. She added that in the Nordic countries food composition data has an annual update, which is an expensive but important activity. However, most new/updated data are based on food labels rather than on laboratory analyses. She added that some software apps use also the labelling data for nutrient intake assessments. Liisa also noted that when the uncertainty in nutrient label data can be due to acceptable tolerances about +/- 20% and in some cases even over +/- 30%, the monitoring of reformulation may become questionable, if more accurate information is not available, as seen in Table 1 of this [referenced report](#). MO also added that the update of food composition data is continuous in the Netherlands, but with relatively few laboratory analyses. Veronica Ohrvik (Sweden) and NB confirmed that the situation is the same in Sweden and in Belgium. Inger Therese emphasized the importance of updating food composition data. CD added that in France the generic food composition database is still mainly based on analyses, while new analyses are carried out on various food groups every year.

[§] <https://intake24.co.uk/>

- AT mentioned that development of the research infrastructure (tools) for the organisation of meta data related to the food composition databases should be explored to facilitate easier and more accurate data collection.
- MG suggested to consider FNH-RI (PROSPECT) ESFRI ROADMAP** application 2021 to link with the future plans.

DA thanked participants for their input and closed the brainstorming session. SI confirmed that in addition to the SLIDO questionnaire, a more detailed questionnaire will be sent after the meeting where countries can better express their opinions. The results of the survey will be considered in the planning of the new projects.

8. Any other business

- Standard weight databases for fruits and vegetables available at the country level

Zsuzsanna Horvath presented the recent activities of EFSA on the 4th edition of Pesticide Residue Intake Model (PRIMo4) and on the Raw Primary Commodity model and how standard weight databases for fruits and vegetables available at the country level could be used for the development of PRIMo4. She anticipated that EFSA will invite the countries after the meeting to share their data if available. MO commented that their data is available online <https://portie-online.rivm.nl/> but in Dutch language.

- Opportunity to contribute with peer reviewed papers on EU Menu surveys in a special issue in the Nutrients journal

DA presented the possibility to contribute peer reviewed papers on EU Menu surveys in a special issue in the Nutrients journal. MG asked if it was possible to publish an article about an ongoing EU MENU survey. SI and DA advised her to consult the journal editors on this but believed that focusing on e.g. the methodology without results yet, may be considered acceptable.

DA also informed the network about a recently published [paper](#) on the harmonized food consumption data collection written by EFSA team members.

In addition, DA proposed to close the former inactive Linked-in group of the Network and to use actively the Teams space in the future. MO asked if more than one person from a national team could use the Teams space. EFSA is happy to grant access to the Network members and alternates.

9. Date for next meeting

Communication on a date for the next network meeting will be shared through the Teams channel.

10. Conclusions

The Chair summarised the main outcomes of the meeting. In particular, Network members welcomed EFSA's initiative in the area of food consumption and food composition data and made themselves available to provide more detailed input through a questionnaire that EFSA will shortly circulate with the objective of identifying, prioritizing and/or better framing possible grant and procurement

** <https://fnhri.eu/>

projects in this remit. As additional actions: a) the network members will be asked to share information on unit weights of fruits and vegetables, b) the former inactive Linked-in group of the Network will be closed and substituted by the relevant Teams space.

The Chair finally welcomed new members of the Network: Nicolas Berger from Belgium and Nora Pfaff from Hungary who briefly introduced themselves.

11. Closure of the meeting

The Chair thanked all participants for their valuable contribution and closed the meeting.