



ENGAGEMENT AND COOPERATION UNIT

1st Sounding Board meeting – Report

23 March 2020

Introduction

The Sounding Board aims at providing stakeholders general information on the state of play of the Transparency Regulation (TR) implementation. EFSA's 1st Sounding Board meeting took place virtually via the Microsoft Teams platform due to the Covid-19 restrictions on physical meetings in Italy and Belgium and was chaired by the Head of Communication, Engagement and Cooperation Department (COMCO). Stakeholder, EFSA Advisory Forum, DG SANTE and EFSA representatives participated in the meeting, with the full list of participants available on EFSA's website¹.

Engagement framework

The meeting started with a presentation on the joint DG SANTE/EFSA engagement framework on stakeholder engagement during the TR implementation, the applicable principles and purpose of the Sounding Board and Technical Groups. The Sounding Board Terms of Reference (ToR) were adopted. An update was provided on the progress of the 2 Technical Groups established, IUCLID for pesticides and Notification of studies database. An outlook on future engagement opportunities relating to the TR was given, including as regards the DG SANTE Advisory Group on the Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health meeting (currently planned for 8 May 2020), a DG SANTE Advisory Group Working Group that will be created to focus exclusively on TR implementation, a stakeholder meeting aimed at providing information for applicants with all stakeholder categories encouraged to participate, 2nd and 3rd Sounding Board meetings (June; September) and an information event on the overall implementation of the TR (October). Sounding Board participants were informed that Covid-19 may have an impact on all above-mentioned meeting dates (including the events organised by DG SANTE under the Advisory Group); Sounding Board members will be kept informed.

Main session – EFSA approach to the TR implementation and update per TR pillar

EFSA presented an overview of its approach to implementing the TR, including the timeline for implementation of the various provisions and an overview of the changes the TR brings for citizens, Members States, the European Commission, applicants and laboratories.

Transparency & confidentiality and Quality & reliability of studies

EFSA also presented an outline of the 7 Practical Arrangements (PAs) the TR stipulates, summarising the nature of PAs, the scope of the PAs that EFSA has advanced on the most, i.e. (1) Confidentiality,

¹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/2020/1st-sounding-board-meeting-participants.pdf>

(2) Transparency, (3) Public Access to Documents (PAD) & Aarhus Regulation, (4) Consistency of confidentiality assessments for new active substances (NAS) and renewals under the Plant Protection Products Regulation, and presenting a timeline for all PAs, including also the PAs on (5) Notification of studies, (6) Public consultation of third parties and (7) Pre-submission advice.

EFSA and DG SANTE explained the work being carried out on the update of EFSA Guidances and DG SANTE Implementing Acts respectively.

Governance and sustainability

EFSA also provided a summary of the activities on increased cooperation with Member States, including the approach to partnering with scientific organisations to contribute to EFSA's scientific work. EFSA briefly illustrated the considerations in the context of the establishment of the future Management Board.

Risk communication

The European Commission and EFSA updated Sounding Board participants on the preparatory work regarding the General Plan for risk communication, including on the technical input that DG SANTE has requested from EFSA's Social Science function in this context and envisaged future workshops with Member States and Stakeholders respectively.

Discussion

Participants used the Chat function to ask questions or the floor during the meeting and EFSA and the Commission provided replies in real time. The discussion focused on the possibilities of stakeholder engagement during the TR implementation and opportunity for providing input on the TR implementation. Questions from Sounding Board members also related amongst others to the implementation of transparency and confidentiality provisions, the composition of Technical Groups, and fact-finding missions. EFSA had received written questions in response to the Sounding Board draft agenda prior to the meeting and addressed questions where possible through the presentations given. EFSA aims at continuing the engagement and addressing questions not covered through the next Sounding Board, Technical Group meetings or other engagement opportunities as outlined above. EFSA also informed Sounding Board members that it would aim at providing additional information about the selection and composition of Technical Groups. EFSA and DG SANTE also highlighted that Stakeholders would be informed about the PAs in more detail and have the opportunity to comment during a future meeting of the DG SANTE Advisory Group Working Group that will be created to focus on the TR implementation; although details on the timing for this meeting are not yet known (highly dependent on the Covid-19 developments). EFSA will also provide information about the training it will offer for the use of the future technical platforms for e.g. the submission of applications.

Next steps

The Chair summarised the discussion and informed Sounding Board members they will be kept abreast of future engagement opportunities, while meeting documentation will be sent to Sounding Board participants and published on EFSA's website in due course. The next Sounding Board meeting is scheduled to take place in June.