



# Minutes

## 75<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

### **Meeting details**

Date: 01-02 April 2020

Venue: Virtual meeting

Meeting hours: 10:00 – 13:00 (01.04.2020)

10:00 – 13:00 (02.04.2020)

| Members              |                                                |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Austria (AT)         | Klemens Fuchs                                  |
| Belgium (BE)         | Xavier Van Huffel<br>Benoit Horion             |
| Bulgaria (BG)        | Illian Kostov<br>Georgi Georgiev               |
| Croatia (HR)         | Darja Sokolić                                  |
| Cyprus (CY)          | Stelios Yiannopoulos<br>Charitini Frenaritou   |
| Czech Republic (CZ)  | Jitka Götzová<br>Petr Benes                    |
| Denmark (DK)         | Flemming Bager                                 |
| Estonia (EE)         | Piret Priisalu                                 |
| Finland (FI)         | Pia Mäkelä                                     |
| France (FR)          | Moez Sanaa<br>Salma Elreedy                    |
| Germany (DE)         | Andreas Hensel                                 |
| Greece (EL)          | Eirini Tsigarida                               |
| Hungary (HU)         | Ákos Bernard Józwiak                           |
| Ireland (IE)         | Pamela Byrne                                   |
| Italy (IT)           | Alessandra Perrella                            |
| Latvia (LV)          | Vadims Bartkevičs                              |
| Lithuania (LT)       | Snieguole Sceponaviciene                       |
| Luxembourg (LU)      | Patrick Hau                                    |
| Malta (MT)           | Ingrid Borg                                    |
| Netherlands (NL)     | Antoon Opperhuizen                             |
| Norway (NO)          | Cecilie Rolstad Denby<br>Danica Grahek-Ogden   |
| Portugal (PT)        | Pedro Portugal Gaspar                          |
| Poland (PL)          | Jacek Postupolski                              |
| Romania (RO)         | Simona Rădulescu                               |
| Slovenia (SI)        | Urška Blaznik                                  |
| Slovak Republic (SK) | Marica Kuzmiak Theiszova<br>Katarina Kromerova |
| Spain (ES)           | Ana Canals Caballero                           |
| Sweden (SE)          | Per Bergman                                    |



| Observers & Other Participants                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Albania (AL)                                                                         | Pamela Radovani                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Kosovo <sup>1</sup> (XK)                                                             | Fisnik Rexhepi                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Montenegro (ME)                                                                      | Ana Velimirovic                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Republic of North Macedonia (MK)                                                     | Zoran Atanasov                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Serbia (RS)                                                                          | Tamara Bošković                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Switzerland (CH)                                                                     | Vincent Dudler                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Turkey (TR)                                                                          | Serap Hanci                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| European Environmental Agency (EEA)                                                  | Xenia Trier<br>Caroline Whalley<br>Andrus Meiner                                                                                                                                                             |
| European Commission (EC)                                                             | Anastasia Alvizou<br>Marina Marini<br>Aude Kienzler (Joint Research Centre - JRC)<br>Stephanie Bopp (Joint Research Centre - JRC)<br>Joachim Maes (Joint Research Centre - JRC)                              |
| ANSES (FR) – for agenda item 3.3 b “Case study 2: EFSA-ANSES cooperation on enzymes” | Natalie Arnich (Risk Assessment Department – Deputy Head of Unit for Food-related risk assessment)<br>Matthieu Schuler (Risk Assessment Department – Director)<br>Coralie Bultel (EFSA National Focal Point) |
| Norwegian Scientific Committee (NO)                                                  | Kyrre Kausrud                                                                                                                                                                                                |

| EFSA Representatives   |                                                   |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Bernhard Url (Chair)   | Claudia Heppner                                   |
| Juliane Kleiner        | Yann Devos                                        |
| Guilhem de Seze        | Andrea Maiorano                                   |
| Barbara Gallani        | Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Advisory Forum Secretariat) |
| Marta Hugas            | Angeline Camus (Advisory Forum Secretariat)       |
| Olaf Mosbach-Schulz    | Doina Tiganu (Advisory Forum Secretariat)         |
| Claudia Roncancio-Pena |                                                   |

| Apologies                   |               |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA) | Dzemil Hajric |
| Iceland (IS)                | Jón Gíslason  |

## 1. Opening of the meeting & adoption of agenda

Bernhard Url, Chair of the meeting welcomed all members to the 75<sup>th</sup> Advisory Forum (AF) virtual meeting. The Chair noted that despite the pandemic disruptions, EFSA keeps working even in these exceptional circumstances. Attendance to the meeting will, this time, be broader, and includes the participation of 43 AF representatives from 27 MS and Norway, 7 Observer Countries, the EC, JRC and EEA colleagues, as well as EFSA colleagues.

The Chair thanked the Croatian delegation for all efforts in organising the meeting in Osijek, Croatia – which did not occur due to the COVID-19 crisis. Apologies were noted from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Iceland. The Chair welcomed Simona Rădulescu, new AF Member from Romania; Katarina

<sup>1</sup> 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.



Kromerova, new AF Alternate of the Slovak Republic; and Fisnik Rexhepi, AF Observer Alternate from Kosovo. The Chair informed that satellite events to this AF meeting took place on 31.03.2020, namely the RARA2020 Programme Committee meeting and 7<sup>th</sup> Task Force on Data Collection and Data Modelling. The Chair noted that the minutes of the 74<sup>th</sup> AF meeting were published on EFSA website on 21.01.2020. No additional items were raised under AOB and the Agenda was adopted.

## 2. Update on Corona virus epidemic

The Chair informed that the first block of Agenda items aims to provide updates regarding the COVID-19 crisis, including EFSA's measures in place to ensure the health and safety of its staff, as well as business continuity; followed by updates from DE and FR relating to the transmission of the Corona virus via animals and food.

### ■ 2.1 - Measures in place at EFSA

Barbara Gallani (EFSA) informed that EFSA encouraged staff to telework as of 27.02.2020. These measures were applied to all staff as of 09.03.2020 following the Italian Decree of confinement and restrictions of movement. Moreover, since then all travelling by staff was stopped and all meetings with experts and events were converted into virtual meetings, postponed or cancelled. Reference was made to additional measures such as the establishment of a Crisis Management Team, helplines for medical and psychological advice, support on human resource matters and technical support for teleworking. EFSA also strengthened its internal communication efforts, with daily updates to all staff on the evolution of the crisis in Parma, Italy and Europe. As per plenary request, EFSA's best practices will be shared with all AF representatives.

**Action point 1:** EFSA to share with AF representatives measures put in place on the COVID-19 crisis

### ■ 2.2 - Food as a transmission route of Corona virus

Germany briefed the plenary on the work of the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) on SARS-CoV-2, including transmission pathways, published data on virus stability and current list of FAQ. A list of preventing measures of transmission of the virus was presented, namely classic hygienic measures e.g. washing hands, keeping safe distances, and care when touching surfaces and food. It was noted that currently there is no evidence that food is a likely source of the virus, while there is clear evidence that the main route of transmission is the respiratory tract. BfR's activities are available on their website<sup>2</sup>, including upcoming initiatives and communications on this domain.

DG-SANTE informed that the EC has published new measures that allow MSs to carry out official controls on the agri-food chain in a more flexible manner due to the COVID-19 situation. The measures aim to prevent the spread of the disease through the establishment of rules for the movement of control staff and to facilitate the movement of animals, plants, food and feed into and within the EU. The measures do not modify the main EU rules on the matter, instead provide details on how they should be carried out during the current crisis. These rules foresee e.g. that veterinary and phytosanitary controls may exceptionally be carried out by designated persons when officials from the competent authorities cannot reach the place of control due to movement restrictions. Designated laboratories can also exceptionally be used when official laboratories are not available. For border controls, electronically submitted documents may exceptionally be accepted for completeness checks if the original documents can be made available as soon as possible. Physical meetings with food business operators may be replaced using any available means of communication. The measure is initially limited to two months and will be reviewed in the light of experience with its application.

### ■ 2.3 - Potential role of domestic animals and food in virus transmission

France informed the plenary that ANSES was asked by the French government to evaluate potential transmission of the COVID-19 disease via contaminated domestic animals or food. ANSES urgently

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/home.html>



convened an expert group to address this request considering available scientific knowledge. The expert group concluded that there is no evidence that pets and livestock play a role in the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus causing this disease in humans. The cases of dogs in Hong-Kong and the cat in Belgium, do not provide enough data, and therefore there is no clinical evidence that infected pets can transmit the virus to humans. It was noted that the genetic structure of the SARS-CoV-2 virus suggests that an animal was its initial source. However, the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from humans to other animals currently seems unlikely. Since contamination of an animal is unlikely, the possibility of direct transmission of the virus through food derived from a contaminated animal has, so far, been ruled out by the expert group. The only hypothesis still under investigation is the possible contamination of food by a person who is sick or is an asymptomatic carrier of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Based on the current state of knowledge, transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus directly via the digestive tract can be ruled out. However, the possibility of the respiratory tract becoming infected during chewing cannot be completely ruled out. An infected person can contaminate food by preparing or handling it with dirty hands or via infectious droplets produced when coughing or sneezing. Good hygiene practices, when properly applied, are an effective way to prevent food from being contaminated with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The conclusions can be updated depending on new data that becomes available. This scientific opinion is available on ANSES website<sup>3</sup> along with additional information and other communications on the COVID-19.

**Action point 2:** AF representatives to share within the AF network any relevant news / measures in place at national level concerning COVID-19

### 3. Update on the implementation of the Transparency Regulation in the food chain

#### ■ 3.1 – Sustainability initiatives with MSs under the Transparency Regulation

The Chair introduced this agenda item by highlighting how EFSA has relied so far on the scientific support provided by MSs in order to address its work, noting that around 800-1000 experts collaborate with EFSA on an annual basis and that €10 million per year are also allocated to grant and procurement initiatives to MS organisations. With the entry into force of the new Transparency Regulation (TR) the legislator reinforces the sustainability of the risk assessment system at EU level by extending the financial means to increase MSs collaboration through these and possibly new and more efficient mechanisms. The Chair informed that EFSA is currently examining future options for such collaboration models to be further exploited and developed. This could be achieved by developing an outsourcing model based on partnerships through which further work could be entrusted.

Another concept introduced in the TR of a closer involvement of MS with EFSA is the fact that representatives from every MS will be in EFSA's Management Board (as from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022).

The focus of this standing agenda item is given to three streams: EFSA's relationship and increased financial support to MS experts; the way ahead for building enhanced partnerships leading to a more efficient collaborative framework with MSs; and how to best integrate latest scientific developments in regulatory science – hoping that in the future these initiatives will make the whole European system more sustainable.

#### ■ 3.2 – Future relationships with experts

Juliane Kleiner (EFSA) informed the plenary about EFSA recent initiatives concerning its experts, aimed at increasing the respective trust-based relationship. As of January 2020, EFSA has put in place a revised scheme to compensate the work of experts with increased daily allowances that cover as well days for preparatory work in order to ensure better preparedness and efficiency during meetings. EFSA is also looking into alternative ways to reimburse experts and increase EFSA's attractiveness e.g. through increased visibility of (co-)authorship in EFSA's Journal.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.anses.fr/en/content/covid-19-all-ansess-news>



With regards to the mandate extension of current Panel members and the new call for selection of the experts, Juliane highlighted that it will be up to the new Management Board (MB) to adopt the rules for the selection and appointment of experts. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the new MB is planned to take place in July of 2022, the selection process will likely be put into effect after the end of 2022. Considering that the selection process requires about 1.5 years overall, the new Panels will become operational as of July 2024. The vast majority of current Panel members have agreed to extend their term for an additional period of 3 years, with few opting to resign at the end of the current mandate. Recently EFSA has launched an assessment survey to evaluate Panel performance. Panel coordinators were requested to complete questionnaires evaluating the contribution of each Panel member. Survey results will be available in June 2020.

The Netherlands noted appreciation of the new revised scheme to compensate the work of experts and asked if there would be any indexation of current values to inflation in order to keep them regularly updated. The Chair clarified that no indexation has been anticipated for now but that the idea is good and will be further explored with DG-SANTE. The Chair further clarified that the full day attendance amounts now to €450 and that an extra day for expert preparation is included by default in the total indemnity, thus the value of €900 for a 1 day attendance of a Panel / Working Group meeting.

The Chair noted as well that, as a step further, EFSA will be exploring with DG-SANTE other ways of possibly financially compensating the organisations of origin of experts in order to bring more clarity and favour a more sustainable relation between experts, organisations of origin and EFSA. This idea could be materialised via dedicated contracts or service level agreements between EFSA and the organisations of origin of experts. The Chair clarified that these are preliminary ideas and that further discussions with DG-SANTE are required in order to further explore it.

Ireland thanked EFSA for the information provided and asked if, in addition to the Expert Mutual Assessment carried out, other similar exercises are planned in the future. Juliane clarified that this initiative is planned to be repeated at the end of the mandate of current Panel members and that, if it proves to be satisfactory in delivering results, the survey will be extended as well to other expert groups, such as Working Groups and Scientific Networks.

Norway noted that if MS Institutions start to receive financial contributions for allowing their experts to collaborate with EFSA this may lead to issues concerning compromised perceived independence. The Chair thanked Norway for the comment and noted that EFSA has a robust independence policy, which addresses not only conflicts of interest but as well perceived conflicts of interest; and that, experts would still need to collaborate with EFSA on their individual capacity and not as representatives of their countries or organisations. The Chair acknowledged as well the huge variation in the regimes applied in the different countries that enable national experts to collaborate with EFSA and reiterated that the overall purpose is to bring further clarity to the relation between EFSA, experts and respective MS organisations of origin, being careful at the same time not losing the interest of experts in collaborating with EFSA.

Belgium finally noted the need for a system that is sufficiently flexible in order to allow covering the different realities in MSs. The Chair thanked for the comment and informed that due note was made of it for future discussions with DG-SANTE.

### ■ 3.3 – Partnerships for Risk Assessment, now and in the future

Guilhem de Seze (EFSA) introduced the topic noting that, in order to increase sustainability of the EU risk assessment model, the new Transparency Regulation (TR) introduced the possibility for Article 36 organisations to prepare (part of) scientific opinions for peer-review by EFSA Panels. Such change led as well to an increase of EFSA's operational budget to this end. EFSA and MSs will be able to build stronger partnerships and further enhance its pan-EU risk assessment capacity.

Guilhem further explained that EFSA is addressing this change with a two-step approach: in a Phase 1, EFSA will be seeking to launch new collaborative initiatives within the existing collaborative framework, while preparing with DG-SANTE for the subsequent phase, during which the abovementioned new provisions will be implemented. On Phase 2, a new partnership model will be



deployed, ensuring more systemic and strategic partnerships, equal quality standards and the application of confidentiality and independence provisions. Partnerships for both risk assessment opinions and preparatory activities are also one of the main pillars of EFSA's 2027 strategy, currently under development.

As part of Phase 1, EFSA has identified several areas where new collaborations could be initiated. EFSA will be seeking to raise MSs interest in the coming months to develop some of these with existing instruments under the current collaborative framework. To sustain both phases, a gradual increase in EFSA's budget for operational expenditure will occur, ranging from its current €10 million up to €78 million in 2022. Phase 2 requires further dialogue with DG-SANTE and will aim to identify possible new partnership models, including the drafting of specifications and the outsourcing of work. There will be the need to integrate in the new partnership models a quality management system that will ensure scientific rigour, independence and confidentiality. It was also noted that it will be equally important to build an early communication strategy, including the mapping of capabilities and competences at EFSA and MS level.

Belgium underlined that there are structural differences and capacities between organisations in different MSs and asked how the new framework will consider their size and level of specialisation. A potential solution could be the creation of consortium where "larger" national organisations could jointly work with "smaller" organisations enabling knowledge transfer and capacity building. Belgium further raised the question on how to properly map Article 36 organisations and their competences.

Sérgio Potier Rodeia (EFSA) noted that currently information on organisational competence is collected in the Article 36 database at a rather general level as reported by MSs when organisations are included on the Article 36 list. Sergio further informed that EFSA has been in touch with JRC for testing a tool that could provide topic-driven competence mapping of organisations at EU level, in other words drawing up a list of organisations active in specific areas, including whether they are included in the Article 36 list or not. Results deriving from the use of this tool by EFSA would then be submitted to MSs (EFSA National Focal Points) for early engagement of identified national organisations, including, in the case of grants, for checking interest and eligibility of non-Article 36 organisations in joining Article 36 list (if compatible with the grant's time-frame). Such activity would be rolled out via the Focal Point network as per the last amendment made to Focal Point Agreements. The Chair added that this might be a laborious exercise, while there would also be the need not only for competence mapping but as well to ensure capacity to organise the process, therefore the need for co-production and co-designing of this methodology with MSs.

Ireland asked how to best ensure the participation of "smaller" organisations that may not have the capacity to compete/lead major outsourcing needs but do detain the expertise. Ireland further supported the idea of cooperation between different types of organisations ("smaller" and "larger") from different MSs, and indicated the need to ensure strong quality assurances and address effectively independence issues while expressing concern that leading MSs/organisations may not have the capacity to generate the necessary engagement of "smaller" organisations located in other countries.

Spain highlighted the difficulty of carrying out, at national level, engagement tasks of organisations via the Focal Point network given the lack of knowledge for mapping organisations and to identify activities in specific scientific areas, as well the lack of capacity to assess the respective level of competence.

The Netherlands noted that the consortium idea raised by Belgium will require further thought and elaboration, considering that the universe of organisations might be limited to the Article 36 list and that, beyond that universe, Focal Points might have difficulties in reaching out to other organisations.

The Chair concluded discussions highlighting that Phase 2 will require further dialogue with DG-SANTE and aimed to identify possible new partnership models, including the drafting of specifications and possible outsourcing of work, that will ensure scientific rigour, independence and confidentiality are respected.



DG-SANTE explained that quality assurance and independence are the key elements of future partnership models and that it will work closely with EFSA to ensure the best legal framework.

### ■ 3.3.a - Case-study 1: EFSA-BfR Framework Partnership Agreement

Germany presented the current work for renewing an existing Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) between EFSA and BfR, already running for the last three years. Germany underlined that in some cases MSs already detain tools at national level that possibly could be adopted at an European level, which in the case of this FPA includes the FoodChain-Lab Software and Repository Model, good examples of successful projects. The Chair complimented the open access of tools developed and noted that this might be one of the ways for maximising the dissemination and use of existing tools. Luxembourg reported back on good use made of this tool in their country.

### ■ 3.3.b – Case-study 2: EFSA-ANSES cooperation on enzymes

France jointly with Claudia Roncancio-Pena (EFSA) presented ongoing work aimed at establishing a partnership in the food enzymes area. The joint presentation highlighted the need for EFSA to increase its capacity in handling new dossiers in this domain through existing capacities in MSs, namely in France. Such need derives from an expected increase in this activity in the coming years due to the growth on the number of innovation paths in food technology and also due to the growing interest to develop solutions in the context of circular economy. Several stages of implementation of the partnership are planned to be carried out, including: Stage 1 (2020-2021) for reviewing of ANSES and EFSA procedures, working methods and their adaptation on a need basis, staff exchanges and training sessions; Stage 2 (2021-2022) as trial period of the ANSES Working group; and Stage 3 (2022-2023), aimed at the establishment of an operational partnership conducting parallel work with working groups managed by ANSES & EFSA.

The Chair complimented this collaboration model which will serve as a model for further Europeanisation of this activity; and highlighted the time needed for moving from pilot stage to a full partnership. France pointed out that this model of information exchange is one of the best ways to share expertise and to understand the mechanisms and ways of working. Sweden expressed the view that these two different case-studies will feed the future partnership models in a multi-step process, enabling its further progressive development and establishment, and wished that other MSs will also be willing and able to contribute.

The Chair concluded discussions noting the high interest of several MS in participating in these discussions and contributing to the establishment of future partnership models, suggesting further discussions in the future meetings. Given time restrictions, the Chair further noted that any additional written comments received from AF representatives on this topic will be shared with all AF members, and replies provided as possible.

### ■ 3.4 – Integrating latest scientific developments in regulatory science

Claudia Heppner (EFSA) introduced the newly established Office on Science Studies and Project Identification & Development Office (SPIDO) which is allocated to the chief scientist office and aims to: (1) identify areas deserving investment in forward-thinking studies and projects (2) increase knowledge sharing and capacity building on these areas; (3) implement new methodologies and data generation in these areas; and (4) best communicate science in food safety risk assessment. Claudia further explained that the new Transparency Regulation foresees that, in specific cases, EFSA might commission studies with the objective of verifying evidence used in its risk assessment process and that EFSA's 2027 strategic directions call for preparatory actions to address challenges in regulatory science – and that these were one of the main reasons for the creation of this Office. The main objectives of SPIDO can only be achieved through multi-country and EU-wide partnerships. The process of identification and selection of scientific themes will be coherent, in particular with JRC and RTD activities, including those planned in Horizon Europe.



The main questions raised in plenary concerned the methodology used for the identification of scientific schemes and the selection of topics; what role should the AF play; and what is the link, if any, of this work and the EU Risk Assessment Agenda. Marta Hugas (EFSA) highlighted that some activities are already ongoing as per discussions held in recent AF meetings e.g. in the area of combined exposure to multiple chemicals and artificial intelligence; and that comments from AF representatives on the remaining topics are most welcome.

The Chair highlighted that the EU Risk Assessment Agenda (EU-RAA) was set under priorities stemming from the Delphi study (2015) while SPIDO looks into newly identified priorities; and that EFSA will double-check for any overlaps with currently running projects or project ideas submitted by MSs in the EU-RAA in order to find synergies and avoid duplication of work between both initiatives.

**Action point 3:** *AF representatives to provide any written comments on discussions under Agenda 3 - Transparency Regulation - by 29.04.2020; and EFSA to share the respective summary (and the replies as far as possible) with all AF representatives ahead of the next AF meeting.*

## 4. Update on EFSA Communication Activities

### ■ 4.1 – EFSA contribution to General Plan on Risk Communication

Barbara Gallani (EFSA) provided an overview on developments in support of the establishment of a General Plan on Risk Communication (GPRC). Barbara noted that EFSA received the official request for provision of technical assistance in the field of Risk Communication from the EC at the end of February 2020, and that a new mandate was accepted and is now publicly available on EFSA's website (mandate number M-2020-0059 and Question number EFSA-Q-2020-00213). The main output includes a main scientific report to be prepared during 2020 by the Working Group on Social Research Methods and Advice and finalised by early 2021. In support of the scientific report, three external reports are currently procured. A Steering Group has also been set up, consisting of three representatives from the MSs (Croatia, Germany and The Netherlands), as well as Communication Experts and EC officials. The Communications Experts Network where all MSs are represented is regularly informed and updated on developments in support of the establishment of a GPRC. A summary of the most recent high-profile communications and media highlights was also presented.

DG-SANTE underlined that the GPRC is of high importance and no legal deadline has been set for its delivery. The EC, however, aims to have it by 2023. DG-SANTE plans to organise a workshop with MSs with the presence of EFSA later this year and possibly a workshop with stakeholders as well. The Chair highlighted that EFSA is happy to support the EC in setting a risk communication vision and to look carefully into the science of communications and the social aspect of communications.

Germany, Ireland and Luxembourg raised questions regarding operational and structural aspects of the communication process and how EFSA intends to increase overall confidence on the public. France asked whether and how risk managers will be involved. Hungary requested how MS organisations can contribute to the GPRC.

Barbara clarified that the GPRC aims to bring together risk assessors and risk managers not only at EU but also at national level. The GPRC must lay the foundations for preventing crises; when they emerge the general crisis preparedness plan shall be activated; the EC will ensure a smooth interaction between risk assessors and risk managers.

**Action point 4:** *EFSA to share with AF representatives current initiatives and to flag up further opportunities where assistance from MSs regarding the GPRC will be sought during and beyond 2020.*

### ■ 4.2 – Update on Reputation Barometer

Barbara Gallani (EFSA) updated the plenary on EFSA's Reputation Barometer, a tool designed to better understand the expectations and perceptions of those with whom EFSA regularly interacts. For EFSA this objective remains crucial, especially now that EFSA is moving towards a new regulatory framework





and a new strategic cycle that will put more emphasis on building partnerships and broadening engagement. A Reputation Barometer survey will soon be launched and EFSA invites AF representatives to provide feedback along with EC Colleagues, other experts and stakeholders being consulted.

**Action point 5:** *AF representatives are invited to participate in the EFSA Reputation Barometer survey to be launched.*

#### ■ 4.3 – Main outcomes of EFSA’s 1<sup>st</sup> Sounding Board meeting

Spain and Hungary, jointly with Barbara Gallani (EFSA), reported on key points of discussion and main outcomes of the 1st Sounding Board (SB) meeting, organised virtually on 23.03.2020. The Sounding Board is a body that EFSA established with the aim to provide general information on the state-of-play of the Transparency Regulation (TR) implementation to stakeholders. In addition to EFSA registered stakeholders, also volunteers from the AF (Spain, Hungary and Sweden), DG SANTE and EFSA participate in meetings. The 1st meeting covered a wide range of topics, including stakeholder engagement, transparency and confidentiality, notification of studies and fact-finding missions. The next meeting will be organized in June and the third one in September 2020. Presentations from this meeting are available on EFSA’s website and the respective link will be shared with all AF representatives<sup>4</sup>.

**Action point 6:** *EFSA to share meeting documents, including final agenda and report, of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of EFSA’s Sounding board.*

## 5. Thematic discussion: Changing Context for Environmental Risk Assessment

### ■ 5.1 – Introduction

The Chair introduced the general context of the thematic discussion on environmental risk assessment (ERA). The ERA of regulated products connected to agricultural food / feed production (such as plant protection products, genetically modified organisms, feed additives) is part of EFSA’s scientific remit. In this context, EFSA provides risk managers with scientific advice on the potential risks that a given activity may pose to humans, animal health and the environment throughout the food chain. EFSA is also responsible for assessing the impact of quarantine plant pests on biodiversity and ecosystem services. The main goal of this discussion is to map the state of the art of ERA in the food chain, and explore preparedness for possible mandates and/or policy initiatives triggered by EU’s new Green Deal goals and “Farm to Fork” strategy.

### ■ 5.2 – EFSA activities on ERA

Yann Devos (EFSA) presented the state of play of EFSA's activities in ERA domain, the changing ERA context and some collaborative initiatives in this field, proposing the creation of an EU collaborative platform for ERA. The presentation included a quick overview of EFSA's activities on ERA as well as reference to the changing context in which EFSA is currently operating, with a focus on collaborative initiatives. These activities are led by DG-SANTE, which has organised a series of workshops involving national authorities, stakeholders such as Farmers Associations, applicants, academics, retailers and non-governmental organisations. EFSA collaboration has mostly focused on MSs, in particular with France and Germany, who work together to establish an operational framework on pesticides. EFSA has also collaborations with other EU Agencies i.e. with ECHA on pesticides and on hazard identification of endocrine disruptors; with EEA on climate change scenario; and with EMA on areas of common interest. Yann further explained that the proposed EU collaborative platform on ERA for regulated products associated to agricultural food/feed production, while building on the existing regulatory framework and involving risk managers, may facilitate cooperation on current and future ERA

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/1st-sounding-board-meeting>



challenges/needs for the EU; promote the exchange of relevant ERA and monitoring data, knowledge and expertise among relevant actors and key stakeholders; validate new tools and methods and promote their acceptance and uptake in regulatory science; bridge gaps in regulatory science; offer opportunities for European citizens to engage with regulatory bodies; and thus advance ERA and ensure preparedness. EFSA also referred to the EU Chemical Strategy under preparation and informed that EFSA and ECHA are drafting a paper to be sent to the Commission.

DG-SANTE pointed out the broad scope of EFSA's initiatives in ERA domain, recognised its potential, and suggested further reflection for best designing and implementing them. Since the new Sustainable Chemical Strategy is likely to come out during the second half of 2020, DG-SANTE cannot commit at this stage with resources. DG-SANTE further informed that a wider internal discussion/consultation involving other EC General-Directorates will also be needed in order to best support these initiatives.

Norway expressed support to the EU collaborative platform initiative and further mentioned that the use of geographical information system (GIS) data has great potential in this context. Norway further suggested to think about an holistic conceptual framework, even if it goes beyond EFSA's remit. Belgium highlighted the need of more formal framework.

The Chair concluded discussions supporting the idea of thinking about ERA in a holistic way and expressing the need joining forces in this domain. Guilhem de Seze (EFSA) informed that EFSA is working with ECHA on Bisphenol S, and that there are several other areas of potential collaboration.

### ■ 5.3 – Joint Research Centre (JRC) activities on ERA

Aude Kienzler, Stephanie Bopp and Joachim Maes presented the work of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) on ERA, with focus on: (1) combination of different stressors putting pressure on the environment; (2) the bridge across human health and ecosystem health and the need to integrate different types of information for a holistic approach of ERA; (3) the importance of considering combined exposure to multiple chemicals; and (4) explaining the potential of mapping ecosystem services for improving the advice to risk managers.

The Chair thanked JRC for their presentation, which shows that JRC is a very strong partner in this area, and noted that while some information might be new for some AF representatives, it fits well into an holistic view of ERA necessities.

### ■ 5.4 – European Environmental Agency (EEA) activities on ERA

Caroline Whalley and Xenia Trier presented EEA's work on ERA, with focus on EEA's systemic view on chemicals and a short update on the state of EU water bodies in terms of chemical status, including a brief overview of the main messages of EEA's 2020 State of the European Environment Report<sup>5</sup> chapter on chemicals, as well as on recent EEA outputs involving land data.

The Chair noted the relevance of information provided for EFSA's working environment, and the possible use of the Copernicus data in future projects.

### ■ 5.5.a – A spatial perspective on GIS in ERA

Kyrre Kausrud (invited expert from Norway) presented a spatial perspective on the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in ERA, highlighting that GIS is and has always been a key tool of risk analysis. Three examples on how the Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment (VKM) is using GIS data in their scientific assessments were presented: in a scientific opinion concerning the risk to Norwegian biodiversity and aquaculture from pink salmon; in a scientific opinion on factors that can contribute to the spread of Chronic Waste Disease; and in a scientific opinion on wild boar population growth and expansion - implications for biodiversity, food safety, and animal health in Norway. The Chair thanked Kyrre for his presentation noting the good contribution for developing good, spatially and temporally explicit risk analysis where data are gathered and analysed adaptively on every level.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/soer-2020>



■ **5.5 b – Use of landscape data/GIS for biological hazards risk assessment at EFSA: examples from animal and plant health**

Andrea Maiorano (EFSA) presented the use of landscape data and GPS information for biological hazards and risk assessment at EFSA. Andrea noted that Animal and Plant Health Unit’s (ALPHA) risk assessments are not ERA, however they include spatial and temporally explicit environmental aspects that can be included in the risk assessment of biological hazards. Andrea further noted that EFSA is preparing a project on “Integrated spatial analysis in biological risk assessment” to develop standard data management processes and data services for use when including spatial and environmental data/aspects in EFSA risk assessment”

The Chair thanked Andrea for his contribution to this thematic discussion, noting that these examples from animal and plant health show the advantages of a landscape-based risk assessment, particularly when assessing risk for the EU and its MSs in a geographic-georeferenced way.

The Chair thanked all participants in the thematic discussion, noting that further reflection is needed jointly with other EU bodies and MSs with regards to the establishment of an EU collaborative platform on ERA; and highlighted the challenging road ahead for collaborative work to materialise given its multi-disciplinary nature, the different regulatory frameworks comprised and the unique opportunity for making use of the *momentum* for joining forces in the ERA domain.

**Closure of virtual meeting**

The Chair gave the floor to Sérgio Potier Rodeia (EFSA) who informed the plenary about upcoming AF meetings in 2020 and topics identified for thematic discussions.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking AF representatives, the EC, JRC and EEA, external participants and observers, as well as EFSA Colleagues for their input to fruitful discussions during the course of the meeting, with a special mention to all EFSA Colleagues that, despite the circumstances, enabled for the possibility for this meeting to take place in virtual mode.

**LIST OF ACTION ITEMS**

| Reference | Who        | What                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Action 1  | EFSA       | to share with AF representatives measures put in place on the COVID-19 crisis                                                                                                                               |
| Action 2  | AF Members | to share within the AF network any relevant news / measures in place at national level concerning COVID-19                                                                                                  |
| Action 3  | AF Members | to provide any written comments on discussions under Agenda 3 – Transparency Regulation - by 29.04.2020; and EFSA to share the respective summary with all AF representatives ahead of the next AF meeting. |
| Action 4  | EFSA       | to share with AF representatives current initiatives and to flag up further opportunities where assistance from MSs regarding the GPRC will be sought during and beyond 2020                                |
| Action 5  | AF Members | invited to participate in the EFSA Reputation Barometer survey to be launched                                                                                                                               |
| Action 6  | EFSA       | To share meeting documents, including final agenda and report, of the 1 <sup>st</sup> meeting of EFSA’s Sounding board                                                                                      |