

Main framework for new Focal Point Grant Agreements (2019-2022)¹

¹ *Endorsed by majority of members at the 69th Advisory Forum meeting (Parma, 17.09.2018)*

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1. Introduction

The first Focal Point Agreements were signed between EFSA and Member States in 2008 and ended in 2014. The second cycle of Focal Point Grant Agreements started in January 2015 and is set to expire by end of 2018. A total of 30 Agreements is currently running with an overall budget of 1.02 M Euros.

Focal Point organisations are designated by Member States through their Permanent Representations in Brussels and contribute to the implementation of EFSA's Strategic Objective III – *Build the EU's scientific assessment capacity and knowledge community* – through a series of collaborative, networking and partnering activities carried out at national, EU and international level. Annual Focal Point Activity Reports² and Annual Scientific Cooperation Reports³ illustrate the variety of activities carried out by the Focal Point network overtime.

In 2016, EFSA's Management Board Decision on the operation of the Advisory Forum confirmed the important support the Focal Point network provides to the Advisory Forum on cooperation and networking activities, on agenda setting and on prioritisation of work.

At the end of 2017, well ahead of the end of the current four year cycle, EFSA Management took the decision to review the current Focal Point Agreements with the aim to assess the current strengths and weaknesses, and identify opportunities and new challenges for future work.

An EFSA cross-departmental Focal Point Task Force, involving EFSA's Science and Communication Departments and as well the Legal and Financial Units, was set up to look into different elements that could feed into the review process, in particular: the results of a SWOT analysis breakout session held in September 2017 on the Focal Point review process; strategic documents steering the work of the Focal Point network; the results of internal audits made to a sample of Focal Point annual reports in the past two years; input stemming from ongoing pilot projects impacting on Focal Point activities (namely the Article 36 review and the pilot on data quality); adequacy of the current grant framework and funding scheme.

The current document describes the proposed new concept for the new Focal Point Grant Agreements, to be implemented during 2019-2022, and takes into consideration all input received to date, including the one received from the Advisory Forum and the Focal Point networks.

² <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/doSearch?field1=Keyword&text1=Focal%20Points>

³ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/about/corporatedocs>

2. Focal Point Activities

The current Focal Point Grant Agreements are characterized by six main activities subdivided into 27 specific activities. These comprise 11 mandatory activities and 16 optional activities.

The work carried out by the EFSA Focal Point Task Force led to a simplification of the description of the activities. Input was sought at Focal Point and Advisory Forum meetings, followed by written consultation procedures (held with Focal Points following their 35th meeting, during the period 24.04.2018 and 09.05.2018; and with Advisory Forum and Focal Point representatives following the 68th Advisory Forum meeting, during the period of 20.06.2018 and 11.07.2018). The latter consultation included the sharing of an analysis of the differences between the activities included in current Agreements and their revised description as requested by the Advisory Forum. Comments received during both consultation periods were taken on board and a summary of those received during the last consultation, along with the replies provided, is available in [Annex III](#).

Given the inclusion of new activities in new domains and an overall stable budget, prioritisation criteria were developed by the EFSA Focal Point Task Force to identify mandatory and discretionary activities, and, among the latter, those with higher priority. The revised description of Focal Point activities is characterized by six main activities and a total of 21 specific activities. Three types of activities can be identified: mandatory (six specific activities); discretionary activities with high priority (eight specific activities); and discretionary activities with low priority (seven specific activities). A complete description of all activities is presented in [Annex I](#). New activities (or their respective new parts) have been highlighted in light blue in order to facilitate their identification.

The inclusion of new activities is the result of considerations agreed by the EFSA Focal Point Task Force based on supporting documentation and input received from relevant EFSA science Units (in particular the DATA Unit and the Applications Desk) and during the extensive consultation processes. The new activities will allow Focal Points to expand the breath of their cooperation, networking and partnering mandate in support of the Advisory Forum network and EFSA. Although the new activities may fall out of the remit of some Focal Point organisations, they are considered relevant from a country-wide cooperation perspective and fall under EFSA's remit. It is also important to highlight that almost all new activities have been set as "discretionary" under the new flexible approach (more details on this new approach in [Section 5](#)).

The majority of comments received during the consultation processes concerned two discretionary activities proposed in the area of regulated products and data.

In the area of regulated products, a new specific activity has been introduced with the following description: "*Focal Point provides information to relevant national institutions, as required, on available EFSA services in the area of regulated products during the entire applications life-cycle, enabling EFSA to provide targeted support to applicants (e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs))*". The support activities sought here from Focal Points concern the provision of information, on a need basis, to relevant national institutions about the available EFSA services on this domain (as described in EFSA's website [here](#)), including channelling such organisations to EFSA's Application Desk. It is not expected that Focal Points duplicate the task of EFSA's helpdesk and liaise directly with applicants. Instead, Focal Points could direct national organisations that deal with applicants to relevant information end processes. Since the current knowledge of Focal Points on this domain may be limited, induction trainings are being planned in future Focal Point meetings to enable the implementation of this new activity.

On data support activities, it is acknowledged that the location of the right competences for implementing this main activity may vary from country to country. Still, Focal Points, in close collaboration with relevant Scientific Network Data representatives, are well

placed to act as a central hub in overarching data initiatives, by facilitating two-way communication with national data providers and by raising awareness and / or promoting the use of open data portals. The support activities requested here from Focal Points are different from the ones requested from the “National Data Coordinators” as defined under the pilot on data quality. To facilitate the implementation of this task, the new Focal Point Grant Agreements may include a specific mention to this main activity allowing for flexibility in its implementation, in particular the possibility to delegate the task to other national entities/organisations.

3. The Grant Agreement cycle

The new Focal Point Grant Agreement cycle will comprise the following key moments in time on a yearly basis (see also Figure 1):

1. In November of each year (Year N-1), Focal Points will be asked to sign / renew their Agreements for the subsequent year (Year N);
2. In December of each year (Year N-1), Focal Points will be asked to submit their annual plan of Focal Point activities through a pre-defined template (to be provided by EFSA). The plan will make reference to the mandatory activities and will allow Focal Points to select the list of high and low priority activities they wish to implement in the subsequent year (Year N);
3. Once the yearly plan is submitted, EFSA will pay a pre-financing of the Grant (70%);
4. The period of relevance for implementation of Focal Points activities runs from January to December of Year N;
5. During November of Year N, EFSA will launch the reporting season for that year;
6. By end of December of Year N, Focal Points must submit their annual activities report.
7. By end of January of Year N+1 the balance of the Grant will be paid.

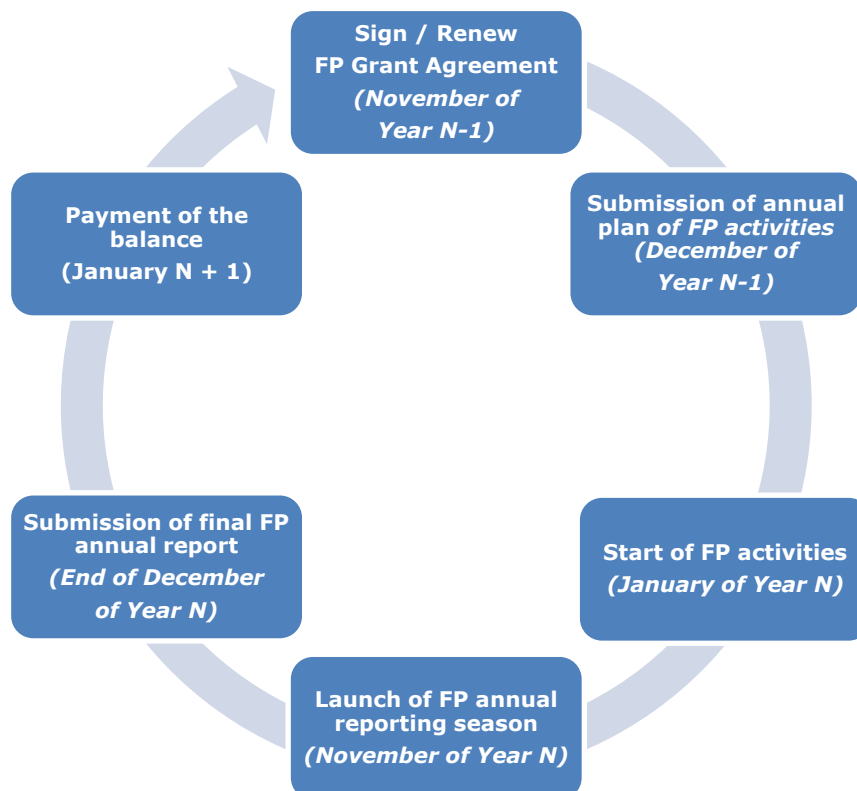


Figure 1 – Depiction of the new Focal Point Grant Agreement cycle

4. Performance-based Focal Point Agreements

The new Focal Point Grant Agreements will be set as performance-based and comply with the following key principles:

1. Each type of activity (mandatory, discretionary high priority and discretionary low priority) will have a dedicated lump sum grant weight attached;
2. For each specific activity, a performance target has been set in order for the respective full lump sum grant value to be paid.
3. Accordingly, the more activities a Focal Point implements and the more activities are implemented meeting the set target, the higher will be the overall grant amount, up to the maximum ceiling set for each country – see [Section 6](#) for more details;
4. Focal Points will fill in a yearly plan (to be submitted to EFSA during Year N-1), indicating the activities to be carried out and the respective level of execution. The yearly plan template will automatically calculate the estimated grant value;
5. During the reporting period (Year N), Focal Points will be able to indicate any deviations from their yearly plan of activities;
6. The final value of the grant to be paid will vary between 25,000 – 55,000 Euros up to the maximum ceiling set for each country and will depend on:
 - The number and type of activities reported to have been performed; and
 - The respective reported level of execution.

5. A flexible approach

The total number of possible Focal Point specific activities that can be implemented is 21. To achieve the maximum value of the grant set per country, Focal Points will need to execute, to their maximum extent, all six mandatory activities plus a flexible combination of discretionary activities, as shown in Table 1 below. Two categories of discretionary activities are available:

- High priority (eight activities in total);
- Low priority (seven activities in total).

Mandatory activities contribute with the highest unit value to the Focal Point grant; followed by the discretionary high priority activities; and the discretionary low priority activities. Table 1 below provides the combination of the different types of activities that allows Focal Points to reach their maximum grant value. As occurring in current Focal Point Agreements, these minimum limits shall not prevent the execution of a higher number of activities. As illustrated on the right column of Table 1, a number lower than two high priority activities (assuming full execution of all mandatory activities) will result in a grant value lower than the maximum ceiling set for the country.

Type of specific activity	Achieving the full Grant			Leading to partial Grant
Mandatory (max. 6 activities)	6 activities +	6 activities +	6 activities +	6 activities +
High Priority (max. 8 activities)	4 activities +	3 activities +	2 activities +	1 activity +
Low priority (max. 7 activities)	0 activities =	3 activities =	5 activities =	7 activities =
Total number of activities	10 activities	12 activities	13 activities	14 activities

Table 1 – Possible combination of different types of specific activities and grant value

6. Grant ceilings per country

The 2015-2018 cycle grant values per country were set back in 2014 based on two parameters: the annual salary costs in each country (yearly public administration salaries, including wages - 2010 data from Eurostat); and the population of each country (as an indirect indicator of the effort needed to implement cooperation and networking activities in the different countries).

In establishing the new grant agreements for the cycle 2019-2022, a full review of the methodology for calculation of the new grant ceilings per country was undertaken. This followed a management request to develop an objective and lean methodology that can be applicable in the future, avoiding complex and time-consuming calculations while ensuring full external auditability. Thereafter, maximum grant ceilings per country were re-calculated maintaining a constant overall Focal Point budget of 1.02 M Euros. The updated computations per country are based on a stricter application of the parameters abovementioned while considering their respective fluctuation, i.e. the current cost of human resources in each country (now based on the EFSA grant Administrative Unit costs); and the updated population figures (Eurostat, 2017).

In order to ensure continuity, the minimum and maximum ceilings from current Focal Point Grant Agreements were kept (i.e. 25,000 and 55,000 Euros, respectively). Moreover, in order to limit significant changes deriving from the new calculation, variations, when identified, were limited to a maximum of $\pm 5,000$ Euros.

The steps followed to calculate the ceilings per country are described below. Table 2 summarises the process per country.

- **Step 1:** considering the category of "Administrative Unit costs"⁴ and using as reference point the closest value to their average (i.e. Spain Administrative Unit costs), a correction coefficient for this parameter was calculated;
- **Step 2:** considering the population of each country⁵ and using as reference point the average value, a correction coefficient for this parameter was calculated;
- **Step 3:** the correction coefficients obtained in steps 1 and 2 were equally weighted (i.e. 50% weight each) in order to derive the overall correction coefficient for each country;
- **Step 4:** starting from an average grant value of 31,000 Euros (considering the overall FP budget available), a maximum ceiling for each country was calculated under the assumption of a performance execution of 100% for each specific activity and applying the overall correction coefficient derived in step 3;
- **Step 5:** the obtained values were mathematically rounded to the closest interval of 5,000. Where the values obtained were below or above the pre-set minimum or maximum grant values (i.e. <25,000 and >55,000 Euros, respectively), the resulting grant value was adjusted to such minimum and maximum ceilings. Countries where this has occurred are marked with an * in column 4 of Table 2;
- **Step 6:** when compared to past grant values, variations were limited to a maximum of $\pm 5,000$ Euros;
- **Step 7:** the final grant value for each country was established - column 5 of Table 2.

The new maximum ceilings set per country using the methodology described above were presented and approved by EFSA Management – [Annex II](#).

⁴http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/art36/qpefsaalpha201802/qpefsaalpha201802_ax1.pdf

⁵ Population in 1 January 2017 as provided by Eurostat (value x 1000)

Country	Administrative Unit Cost ⁴	Population ⁵	Grant Value Step 5	Final Grant Value
Austria	200	8,772.90	35,000	35,000
Belgium	223	11,365.80	40,000	45,000
Bulgaria	31	7,101.90	25,000*	25,000
Croatia	98	4,154.20	25,000*	25,000
Cyprus	98	854.80	25,000*	30,000
Czech Republic	60	10,578.80	25,000*	25,000
Denmark	219	5,748.80	35,000	50,000
Estonia	44	1,315.60	25,000*	25,000
Finland	165	5,503.30	25,000	30,000
France	196	67,024.50	55,000*	55,000
Germany	207	82,800.00	55,000*	55,000
Greece	91	10,757.30	25,000	25,000
Hungary	45	9,797.60	25,000*	25,000
Iceland	184	338.30	25,000	25,000
Ireland	178	4,774.80	30,000	40,000
Italy	176	60,589.40	55,000*	40,000
Latvia	39	1,950.10	25,000*	25,000
Lithuania	36	2,847.90	25,000*	25,000
Luxembourg	225	590.70	30,000	35,000
Malta	59	440.40	25,000*	25,000
Netherlands	172	17,081.50	40,000	45,000
Norway	253	5,258.30	40,000	35,000
Poland	50	37,973.00	45,000	40,000
Portugal	79	10,309.60	25,000*	25,000
Romania	47	19,638.30	25,000	25,000
Slovakia	71	5,435.30	25,000*	25,000
Slovenia	93	2,065.90	25,000*	25,000
Spain	119	46,529.00	55,000*	40,000
Sweden	198	9,995.20	35,000	35,000
United Kingdom	163	65,808.60	55,000*	55,000

Table 2 – Parameters used and grant value for each country

Annex I – List of activities for new Focal Point Grant Agreements⁶

1. Exchange of scientific information	
Specific activities	Priority
<i>1. Focal Point (FP) shares with EFSA, AF and FPs information on national planned Risk Assessment (RA) activities (including mandates) through the R4EU database.</i>	<i>high</i>
<i>2. FP shares relevant evidence (e.g. scientific outputs) and/or supporting documents (e.g. datasets) on EFSA's remit through the Knowledge Junction (KJ) and promotes its use through national networks e.g. through email, information sessions, training sessions, webinars, etc.</i>	<i>high</i>
<i>3. FP disseminates at national level or through the FP network, using the EFSA MS word template, requests for specific information sent by other FPs or EFSA or originating from his/her own country, respectively.</i>	<i>high</i>
<i>4. FP disseminates at national level, by email or other tools⁷, other information⁸ submitted to the FP network by EFSA and/or other FPs; and disseminates to EFSA and other FPs, using the same tools, information about national, regional or international scientific cooperation activities.</i>	<i>mandatory</i>
<i>5. FP provides information to relevant national institutions, as required, on available EFSA services in the area of regulated products during the entire applications life-cycle enabling EFSA to provide targeted support to applicants⁹.</i>	<i>low</i>

⁶ Rows highlighted in blue concern new Focal Point activities.

⁷ E.g. FP Webpages, newsletters, Social Media, intranets.

⁸ E.g. calls for expressions of interest, Grants & Procurement (G&P) calls, calls for data, events.

⁹ E.g. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

2. Networking and engagement	
Specific activities	Priority
1. For the purpose of information dissemination, FP maintains a list of national contacts that ensure EFSA's remit is covered as far as possible.	high
2. FP liaises with organisations and facilitates processes at national level and with EFSA, in line with described procedures, to ensure that all organisations on the list of competent organisations meet the criteria and information in the profiles is updated regularly, at least every 3 years.	mandatory
3. FP implements the new processes and tools for managing the list of competent organisations. To this end, FPs shall exchange experiences and best practices among themselves, referring in particular to the appointed regional groups ¹⁰ .	mandatory
4. FP disseminates, at national level, information on networking opportunities from EFSA and beyond, as appropriate.	mandatory
5. FP supports new partnerships and, when appropriate, the formation of consortia, including the exchange of information and implementation of research-oriented and research funding-oriented actions. To this end, FPs are encouraged to liaise with relevant national organisations that directly interact with research funders, for example the national contact points for Horizon 2020 ¹¹ .	low

3. Outreach and scientific visibility	
Specific activities	Priority
1. FP maintains national webpages to inform about EFSA and/or FP activities requiring a wide dissemination / outreach ¹² . To this end, the FP should request relevant support within the organisation and as well from the Communication Expert Network (CEN) representative.	high
2. Through the use of tools available to FP's in their organisations, FP supports communication initiatives that raise EFSA's visibility and outreach ¹³ . Support from Communication Expert Network (CEN) representatives is recommended.	low
3. FP organises, delivers presentations, presents posters and / or facilitates EFSA's and/or other FPs contribution to national, regional or international events, of relevance to EFSA and other FPs ¹⁴ .	high

¹⁰ The five regional country groups have been set and the coordination of these groups follows the Article 36 FP Task Force structure established in 2018. This specific activity, including the appointed coordinators and country groups shall be revised by the FP network following the experiences gathered during the first year (2019) of implementation of the new approach.

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/support/national_contact_points.html

¹² E.g. EFSA corporate information, relevant scientific outputs, calls for expressions of interest, G&P calls, EFSA job offers, EFSA public announcements such as newstories & press releases, new services and initiatives included in the Catalogue of Services, etc.

¹³ E.g. through use of Social Media, printed or e-media material such as newsletters, factsheets, and infographics.

¹⁴ E.g. conferences / seminars / workshops.

4. Capacity building	
Specific activities	Priority
1. FP disseminates to relevant national networks information notably provided by EFSA or other FPs regarding publicly funded capacity building initiatives in risk assessment, including with international dimension ¹⁵ .	mandatory
2. FP supports capacity building initiatives, including with international dimension ¹⁶ .	low

5. Support on data related matters	
Specific activities	Priority
1. FP maintains an up-to-date list of national data providers across data domains (areas) relevant to EFSA's remit ¹⁷ .	low
2. FP supports EFSA in facilitating two-way communication with national data providers on a need basis ¹⁸ .	low
3. FP supports the promotion of best practices for sharing public sector information. To this end, and if needed, the FP shall identify a national contact point to support the implementation of this activity.	high

6. Support to scientific networks	
Specific activities	Priority
1. FP liaises with Advisory Forum (AF) member, exchanging relevant information concerning AF, FP and scientific network activities.	mandatory
2. FP liaises with scientific network representatives facilitating information exchange (e.g. through regular meetings with network representatives and AF member) and promoting best practices ¹⁹ .	high
3. FP supports the AF member in the identification of national representatives for the FP network and EFSA's scientific networks.	low

¹⁵ E.g. Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) training courses, EFSA risk assessment training courses, webinars, EU-FORA calls, Partnering Grant calls, and any other capacity building initiatives shared by FPs.

¹⁶ Through e.g. support to national risk assessment training courses, identification of candidates, recommending tutors, supporting the setting up of consortia for G&P capacity building initiatives, and promoting the dissemination of training material.

¹⁷ E.g. contaminants, pesticide residues, etc.

¹⁸ E.g. when other communication channels do not work; or on cross-cutting issues.

¹⁹ E.g. the use of the procedures laid down on the existing guidelines.

Annex II – Maximum grant ceilings per country

<i>Country</i>	<i>Grant value ceiling</i>
<i>Austria</i>	<i>35,000</i>
<i>Belgium</i>	<i>45,000</i>
<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Croatia</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>30,000</i>
<i>Czech Republic</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Denmark</i>	<i>50,000</i>
<i>Estonia</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Finland</i>	<i>30,000</i>
<i>France</i>	<i>55,000</i>
<i>Germany</i>	<i>55,000</i>
<i>Greece</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Hungary</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Iceland</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Ireland</i>	<i>40,000</i>
<i>Italy</i>	<i>40,000</i>
<i>Latvia</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Lithuania</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Luxembourg</i>	<i>35,000</i>
<i>Malta</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>45,000</i>
<i>Norway</i>	<i>35,000</i>
<i>Poland</i>	<i>40,000</i>
<i>Portugal</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Romania</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Slovakia</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Slovenia</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>Spain</i>	<i>40,000</i>
<i>Sweden</i>	<i>35,000</i>
<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>55,000</i>

Annex III – Summary of comments received on Focal Point activities

Spain (22.06.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
General comment	
<p>We understand that the detailed description of the activities relate directly to the annual report, and that, as in the current agreement the Annex I "description of the action" will only refer to those indicated as "main activities". Therefore, since the annual report slightly changes every year, those activities included in the document may vary from year to year. Is that correct?</p>	<p>We can confirm that the six main activities will remain as Annex I while the underlying activities will be included in Annex III and, as in the past, subject to possible yearly modifications / updates on a need basis (e.g. due to priority setting, development of new tools, etc.). An important conceptual change anticipated for the new agreements (that was not provided at the AF meeting due to lack of time) is that the new flexible approach will be performance-based (the more one does the more one receives up to a certain limit) and that it will allow FPs to choose among different non-mandatory activities, therefore focusing on the most relevant activities at national level. This is still work in progress; more details will be made available during the course of July.</p>
Activity 1.5	
<p>AECOSAN, as the Spanish FP, cannot assume this task; we can only provide that information in our web as it is now. Also some examples about what is expected would be of help.</p> <p>(Activity 1.5: FP provides information to relevant national institutions, as required, on available EFSA services in the area of regulated products during the entire applications life-cycle enabling EFSA to provide targeted support to applicants (e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs))</p>	<p>This activity is currently planned as non-mandatory thus each country will be able to choose whether to implement it or not. The key idea behind this activity concerns the provision of support/information by FPs to national organisations operating on the regulated products domain in order make them better informed / aware of the services EFSA can provide. To this end, FPs will need to be provided with information sessions on the matter in order to best perform this task.</p>
Activity 2.3	
<p>Further clarification is needed on for which 5 countries the activity is relevant (Art. 36 Task Force?) and if this activity will expire after 2019, when the implementation of the new art. 36 concepts is finished.</p>	<p>The five countries are DK, FI, GR, IT and NO. This activity will be reconsidered each year on a need basis.</p>
Activity 5 (i.e. Support on date related matters)	
<p>All the items below represent new activities, please confirm.</p>	<p>Yes they are all new.</p>

Norway (27.06.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
Activity 1.5	
<p>How much involvement does this need? As it is described here it could be simply sending a link to the APDESK but it sounds almost like it could be taking over some of APDESK tasks? Needs clarification.</p> <p>(Activity 1.5: FP provides information to relevant national institutions, as required, on available EFSA services in the area of regulated products during the entire applications life-cycle enabling EFSA to provide targeted support to applicants (e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)).</p>	<p>This activity is currently planned as non-mandatory thus each country will be able to choose whether to implement it or not. The key idea behind this activity concerns the provision of support/information by FPs to national organisations operating on the regulated products domain in order make them better informed / aware of the services EFSA can provide. To this end, FPs will need to be provided with information sessions on the matter in order to best perform this task.</p>
Activity 5.3	
<p>Sounds a bit vague, for example, what best practices are we considering here? Needs clarification.</p> <p>(Activity 5.3 - FP supports the promotion of best practices for sharing public sector information. To this end, and if needed, the FP shall identify a national contact point to support the implementation of this activity).</p>	<p>As a first step you can check the European Open Data Portal which is an aggregator of national data portals. This is the result for Norway</p> <p>https://www.europeandataportal.eu/data/en/organization?spatial=NO</p> <p>We would recommend that you contact the portals at national level</p> <p>https://www.europeandataportal.eu/data/en/organization/about/data-norge-no with the aim to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 - To find out about data that is already accessible and may support their work; 2 - Following such contacts, if the FP has any relevant data that could be published on such portals. To this end, the FP should contact the national portals for advice and support, and ensure that data included there will feed also onto the European Open Data Portal.

Lithuania (02.07.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
Activity 1.5	
<p>Please provide further explanation of this Activity – what information should be provided by FP, what do you mean regulated products?</p> <p>(Activity 1.5: FP provides information to relevant national institutions, as required, on available EFSA services in the area of regulated products during the entire applications life-cycle enabling EFSA to provide targeted support to applicants (e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)).</p>	<p>This activity is currently planned as non-mandatory thus each country will be able to choose whether to implement it or not. The key idea behind this activity concerns the provision of support / information by FPs to national organisations operating on the regulated products domain in order make them better informed / aware of the services EFSA can provide. To this end, FPs will need to be provided with information sessions on the matter in order to best perform this task (with regards to the regulated products area covered by EFSA, please have a look on this EFSA webpage for a better understanding).</p>

Germany (02.07.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
General comment	
<p><i>As outlined by EFSA at the 68th Advisory Forum meeting in early June the agreements can be flexibly adapted to the specific requirements in the individual Member States.</i></p>	<p><i>We confirm that an important conceptual change is anticipated for the new agreements. A new flexible approach will be introduced allowing the setting of performance-based grants (the more activities are planned, the higher the grant, up to pre-defined limits currently being set); and as well enabling FPs to choose among different non-mandatory activities, therefore focusing on the most relevant ones for national implementation. This is still work in progress and thus more details will only be made available during the course of the coming months.</i></p>
Activity 1.5	
<p><i>Focal Point support regarding available EFSA services in the area of regulated products, including targeted support to applicants (e.g. SMEs) during the application life-cycle. BfR is responsible for risk assessment as well as risk communication and for undertaking of the institute's own research on topics which are closely related to its assessment tasks in consumer health protection and food safety. As the assistance of companies with regard to application issues belongs rather to management tasks, we would suggest modifying this point in analogy to the above-mentioned data-related matters.</i></p>	<p><i>With regards to FP activities in the area of regulated products, the same principle applies: this activity is currently planned as non-mandatory thus each country will be able to choose whether to implement it or not. The key idea behind this activity concerns the provision of support / information by FPs to national organisations operating on this domain in order make them better informed / aware of the services EFSA can provide to applicants. Important to note that FPs will not liaise directly with applicants as this is a task for the EFSA REPRO APDESK and for relevant national risk management bodies. To best perform this task, FPs will be provided with information sessions on the topic during upcoming FP meetings.</i></p>
Activity 4 (on capacity building)	
<p><i>With regards to global challenges we favour in particular the extension of capacity building initiatives to an international scale which has been taken up e.g. by the AF discussion group on capacity building.</i></p>	<p><i>We are pleased to read that you welcome the extension of capacity building initiatives (e.g. information dissemination, as well as support of coordination and implementation) onto an international scale.</i></p>
Activity 5 (on support on data related matters)	
<p><i>A flexible agreement would be appropriate for the newly defined task of data-related matters. As it is known, the participation in the pilot project for a 'Strategic Partnership with Germany on Data Quality' was shared between two institutions, the BfR and the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL), the latter in the role as national coordinator. When the national data coordinator is not affiliated to the same institution as the EFSA Focal Point, a close cooperation and information exchange between the national data coordinator and the EFSA Focal Point on all data transmitted to EFSA and related issues needs to be ensured. Therefore the agreement should take this constellation into consideration which might occur in other Member States as well. An extended funding additionally for the respective organization which takes over the majority of these tasks in the individual Member State should be ensured.</i></p>	<p><i>We do not anticipate to allocate the role of national data coordinators (as defined on the pilot on data quality) to FPs but instead seek their support (on a non-mandatory, optional basis) on certain data related issues at national level (e.g. mapping of national data providers, information exchange on matters requiring coordination at national level (e.g. PAD requests, data licences, data standardisation) on a need basis, and promotion of open data portals). The possible appointment/funding of national data coordinators will depend on the outcome of the pilot on data quality pilot and is currently disconnected from the context of future FP agreements.</i></p>

Denmark (03.07.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
Activity 2.3	
<p><i>Suggestion: Five FP's have a role as facilitator in the implementation of the new Art. 36 procedures. We foresee that it may involve a fair amount of work and we propose that this specific task be given a time limit, or perhaps that it is rotated between member states. To my mind this would appear reasonable in that the five FPs originally volunteered for the working group, not expecting this permanent – as it appears now – task to be a consequence.</i></p> <p><i>(Activity 2.3 - When applicable, nominated FP acts as facilitator for the processes & tools for managing the list of competent organisations and networking by: mentoring FPs within their regional groups, e.g. to new FP members; providing advice on processes, tools and assessment of organisations; and supporting the exchange of experience and best practices among FPs).</i></p>	<p><i>This is applicable in 2019 to five countries (DK, FI, GR, IT and NO). We do anticipate to: (1) assess the degree of take up of the new Art36 procedures at year end; and (2) in case still needed, to implement it on forthcoming years on a need basis. In this latter scenario we will certainly take into consideration your suggestion for this to happen on a rotating basis.</i></p>

Greece (11.07.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
General comment	
<p><i>Although the specific activities are now reduced from 27 to 21, each general activity with its specific activities may need much more effort in terms of both allocated time and resources. All proposed new activities are important and we generally agree on them; however the FPs and/or the AF may need to put specific priorities and objectives for each year. E.g. the new procedure on Article 36 is a major milestone for 2018 & 2019.</i></p>	<p><i>We do agree that priority setting will need to be made with regards to the listed activities. To this end, with the implementation of the new agreements we are preparing a flexible scheme where by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• EFSA will pre-define the level of priority for each activity (i.e. mandatory, high-priority and low priority);</i> <i>• MS will be able to select, at the beginning of each year the high and low priority activities they wish to implement (as more relevant to each country) and, in this way, together with the mandatory activities achieve the maximum ceiling set for the grant to be allocated to each country – in other words, set an yearly Focal Point plan. This will also allow, of course, the execution of more activities beyond the selection of activities that allows achieving the maximum ceiling.</i>

Slovak Republic (11.07.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
Activity 5 (on support on data related matters)	
<p><i>The national data from the official control on food and feed are pursuant to Slovak Constitution governmental data. The governmental obtained data that are submitted to EFSA can be provided to third parties only with the consent of the owner of the data, who is responsible for the processing and providing of data from the official control program of the food chain – Slovak Republic. Third parties cannot harvest the data without the consent of the owner of the data pursuant to Act on Access to Data. Consent can be given to previously submitted data only under the condition that they will be statistically processed as aggregated data.</i></p>	<p><i>The current draft for the new Focal Point activities, in particular with regards to activity 5 on data domains, does not limit data sharing initiatives to be carried out by FPs, namely on the Knowledge Junction or on open data portals, under the assumption that such initiatives are required to comply with national (or other) data sharing acts or rules the country is bound to follow.</i></p>

France (11.07.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
Activity 1 (on exchange of scientific information)	
Good title, although we would like to see the word relevant somewhere if possible either in the title or in the specific activities.	The comment will be taken aboard on the wording of the specific activities under Activity 1.
Activity 1.5	
<p>The FP should not be the one to provide targeted support to applicants. This would be the task of a Helpdesk (which goes beyond the responsibility of a Focal Point. See for example the national helpdesks for Biocides and for REACH regulations, on the ECHA website https://echa.europa.eu/support/helpdesks) but should be able to redirect applicants to the appropriate EFSA service. This is not so clear in the wording.</p> <p>(Activity 1.5 - FP provides information to relevant national institutions, as required, on available EFSA services in the area of regulated products during the entire applications life-cycle enabling EFSA to provide targeted support to applicants (e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)).</p> <p>Editorial change: FP provides information to relevant national institutions at national level.</p> <p>National public institutions - which organisations: public bodies? Applicants?</p> <p>Editorial change: ...applications life-cycle enabling EFSA to provide relevant national institutions the provision of targeted...</p> <p>FPs will be provided by EFSA (APDESK) with the necessary training: does training mean we don't only redirect the applicants to the relevant and appropriate EFSA services but the FP actually provides targeted support? FP shall not provide targeted support, just general information and, when needed, redirect national organisations to APDESK.</p>	<p>There is no intention that the FP liaises with applicants. The FP activity is aimed instead at ensuring the FP is knowledgeable and able to redirect national organisations to EFSA APDESK and as well provide generic clarifications to national organisations on the services EFSA has available on this domain. To this end, FPs will be provided with information session(s) as needed on the subject at upcoming FP meetings. Note also that this activity will be optional and considered of low priority (i.e. it will be possible to not select it, with no impact on the full grant).</p> <p>Editorial change accepted.</p> <p>By "national public institutions" we mean the national organisations that deal with applications and applicants.</p> <p>Editorial change accepted.</p> <p>The training aims to increase the knowledge of FPs on the services EFSA has available on this domain in order to capacitate them to carry out this support/information activity.</p>
Activity 2 - Title: Networking, engagement and research	
We would like to see the word "cooperation" somewhere as it is the heart of the FP role. Also research comes under engagement no?	Fine with deleting research as it is a minor element in this main activity. As to adding "cooperation" it really depends how broad one frames it, as other main activities also concern cooperation. We propose then "Networking and engagement".
Activity 2.3	
<p>We don't think it is necessary to add an activity which is only relevant to 5 FPs out of 30. We would remove this task as the activity can be identified on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p>(Activity 2.3 - When applicable, nominated FP acts as facilitator for the processes & tools for managing the list of competent organisations and networking by: mentoring FPs within their regional groups, e.g. to new FP members; providing advice on processes, tools and assessment of organisations; and supporting the exchange of experience and best practices among FPs).</p>	We do agree that the activity is restricted to 5 out of 30 FPs, thus the footnote included (Footnote: When relevant (i.e. for those countries taking up the facilitator role (5 out of 30 countries)). We will reflect further on your proposal from a grant implementation (i.e. financial) perspective considering also the work associated in having one or two types of annexes in grant agreements.
Activity 2.5	
<p>Editorial change: FP supports new partnerships and, when appropriate, the formation of research consortia. Dedicated attention to research coordination and interaction with funders, for example through national FP events. FP supports the exchange of information and implementation of research-</p>	<p>Editorial change: text has been reworded in order to be made clearer. Also, the suggested text proposed has been added.</p> <p>(Activity 2.5 now reads - . FP supports new partnerships and, when appropriate, the formation of consortia, including</p>

<p>oriented and research funding-oriented actions. To this end, FPs are encouraged to liaise with relevant national bodies that directly interact with research funders, for example the national contact points for Horizon 2020.</p> <p>We don't think the activity is the same. Where is this activity in current FP agreements?</p> <p>We don't believe FPs should act as a specific link between research and interaction with funders but FPs should support the exchange of information and implementation of research oriented actions such as RARA, EU RAA, grants (including partnership grants), etc. Suggest completing with: "FPs could be encouraged to liaise with relevant national bodies that directly interact with research funders, for example the national contact points for Horizon 2020".</p> <p>https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/support/national_contact_points.html</p>	<p>the exchange of information and implementation of research-oriented and research funding-oriented actions. To this end, FPs are encouraged to liaise with relevant national organisations that directly interact with research funders, for example the national contact points for Horizon 2020).</p> <p>In the current FP Agreement (Annex III, Part B – updated version has been attached to letter of renewal for 2018 here) there are two activities that read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FP organised meeting(s) and/or established contact with (potential) Article 36 organisations, providing updated information and stimulating networking for calls for proposals and tenders. • FP supported Article 36 organisations in applying for calls for proposals/tenders once issued. <p>We have merged the "networking support" activities included in these 2 activities and combined it into one activity, simplifying the text, thus the reason why we did not consider this a new activity. Still we do agree the research element included is new.</p> <p>We fully agree and this was our intention, thanks for the suggested text that has been added to the activity (see above the new wording proposed for this activity).</p>
Activity 5 (on support on data related matters)	
<p>Support on data related matters - we still don't see why it is necessary to have this as a main activity. It should be part of networking, cooperation, engagement.</p>	<p>The support activities requested to FPs in this Section are not the same as in the data pilot for the "national data coordinator" but much lighter. We anticipate that FPs will be able to perform these activities with the support of the relevant Scientific Network data representatives. Finally, these activities will not be mandatory - more information on the new flexible approach to be provided soon.</p>
Activity 5.1	
<p>Ok, to be added as an activity in mains activity 2: networking etc. (Activity 5.1 - FP maintains an up-to-date list of national data providers across data domains (areas) relevant to EFSA's remit (e.g. contaminants, pesticide residues, etc.)</p>	<p>(no comment made as reply above covers this comment)</p>
Activity 5.2	
<p>We don't think the FP is the appropriate channel for this. We see with the FR data quality pilot that the FP does not have the capacity to carry out this task but the data quality focal point does and works with the data providers. Adding the FP in the loop will not streamline communication but only slow things down and add another layer. The objective to have fast response to requests is therefore not obtained by adding another layer. EFSA needs to have a data focal point within the data networks. That would be more efficient.</p>	<p>The wording of the activity has been modified in order to make clear that these two-way communication support activities shall only be requested to FPs in case regular communication channels do not work; or when there is a need to communicate with data providers on cross-cutting data issues.</p> <p>(Activity 5.2 now reads - FP supports EFSA in facilitating two way communication with national data providers on a need basis (e.g. when other communication channels do not work; or on cross-cutting issues).</p>
Activity 5.3	
<p>The FP is not the appropriate channel for this; the competences are not with the FP (at least in FR) but with other specialists such as data mining specialists, information specialists, IT specialists, and/or scientific watch specialists...</p>	<p>Although the location of the right competences for implementing this activity may vary from country to country, we are of the view that the FP is well placed to act as a central point to facilitate achieving the expected</p>

<p>The expected outcome is publication of data relevant to EFSA's remit in national open data portals – this is not the role of the FP and a list of national contact points established to promote and share best practices – this could be the role of FP but the wording then of the activity is not clear. Add an activity under main activity 2: networking, cooperation with a specific activity clearly, identifying this expected outcome: "FP supports the promotion of best practices for sharing public sector information by identifying, when required, a national contact point on the subject."</p>	<p>outcome - increased awareness and publication of data in national open data portals. Similarly to what happens with the Knowledge Junction, we do not expect the FP to be active on the action of publication of evidence on such national data portals but instead promote their identification and stimulate the sharing of evidence by national organisations in such portals, even if this implies the identification of a national contact point for this purpose. Again, this activity will not be mandatory. We have used the proposed wording for making this activity more clear.</p> <p>(Activity 5.3 now reads - FP supports the promotion of best practices for sharing public sector information. To this end, and if needed, the FP shall identify a national contact point to support the implementation of this activity).</p>
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Sweden (12.07.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
General comment	
<p>We note with appreciation that the number of activities have been reduced and that this mainly is due to merging of previous activities. By this procedure the new agreement is clearer and more easily interpretable. We note that the consolidated comparison does not indicate mandatory and non-mandatory activities. In our analysis we have thus assumed that this has not changed for any current activities. For new activities we are looking forward to any clarification you might have. We also note that, even though the number of activities has been reduced, the actual amount of activities has not. In fact several new activities have been added to the new agreement and no mandatory activity from the present FP agreement has been dropped. We would appreciate clarification by EFSA if the amount of mandatory activities has been increased in the draft agreement.</p>	<p>The current draft proposal envisages that 6 out of all activities for the new agreements will be considered mandatory (with no changes from those currently considered as mandatory); all remaining activities will be considered either of high (8) or low priority (7), including all new activities. FPs will be able to choose a selection of these, as more relevant to their countries (which means that not all high + low priority activities will need to be carried out and that the country will still receive the respective full grant by executing a selection of them). More details on how this will be done will be circulated soon.</p>
Activity 1.5	
<p>The tasks may in fact be outside our mandate. We would be happy to investigate regarding mandate, but we would, as a first step, appreciate any clarification available from EFSA regarding if the activity is mandatory or not.</p> <p>(Activity 1.5 - FP provides information to relevant national institutions, as required, on available EFSA services in the area of regulated products during the entire applications life-cycle enabling EFSA to provide targeted support to applicants (e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs))</p>	<p>With regards to the single activity in the regulated products domain (set as low priority), we're aware that, for some countries, the activity may fall outside the mandate of the designated FP organisation. Still, the role of the FPs here will be more of a support nature e.g. in case of requests for information, to channel national organisations dealing with applicants to EFSA's APDESK; or simply provide information about the APDESK services available (to this end, information sessions will be provided to FPs). All this under the assumption that the FP represents the country and not just the designated FP organisation and the respective mandate (as done already for other domains).</p>

Italy (17.07.2018)

COMMENTS FROM MS	REPLY FROM EFSA
Activity 1.1	
<i>Focal Point (FP) shares with EFSA and FPs information on national planned Risk Assessment (RA) activities (including mandates) through available tools (in particular the R4EU database). It is considered appropriate that the sharing with the Advisory Forum should be explicitly indicated, so that the Member States are aware of the activities that are carried out in all countries.</i>	<i>The comment has been taken aboard. The new wording for this activity now reads "Focal Point (FP) shares with EFSA, Advisory Forum and FPs information on national planned Risk Assessment (RA) activities (including mandates) through the R4EU database".</i>
Activity 1.5	
<i>FP provides information at national level, as required, on available EFSA services in the area of regulated products during the entire applications life-cycle enabling relevant national institutions the provision of targeted support to applicants (e.g. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)) - Italy believes that the Focal Point should not provide preventive support.</i>	<i>The key idea behind this non-mandatory activity concerns the provision of support / information by FPs to national organisations operating on this domain in order to make them better informed / aware of the services EFSA can provide to applicants in the area of regulated products. Important to note that FPs will not liaise directly with applicants as this is a task for EFSA APDESK and for relevant national risk management bodies. To best perform this support task, FPs will be provided with information sessions on the topic during upcoming FP meetings.</i>
Activity 5.1	
<i>FP maintains an up-to-date list of national data providers across data domains (areas) relevant to EFSA's remit (e.g. contaminants, pesticide residues, etc.). Regarding this aspect, we represent that in Italy the competence on databases belongs to the Central Authority and cannot be entrusted to a scientific body pursuant to Art. 36 of the Reg. (CE) n. 178/2002 as the national FP.</i>	<i>EFSA does not anticipate to allocate the role of national data coordinators (as defined on the pilot on data quality) to FPs but instead seek their support (on a non-mandatory basis) on certain data related issues at national level (e.g. mapping of national data providers, information exchange to be carried out on a need basis on matters requiring coordination at national level (e.g. PAD requests, data licenses, data standardization) and promotion of best practices for sharing public sector information). We anticipate that FPs will be able to perform these activities with the support of the relevant Scientific Network data representatives.</i>

Document history

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