Minutes

ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS

HELSINKI, FINLAND

5 JULY 2007

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS:

Chair: GASSIN Anne-Laure, Communications Director

Austria	**WAWSCHINEK Oskar**
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Slovak Republic	**KAPLANOVA Jana**
Sweden	**CORP Eva**
The Netherlands	**MEIJER Jan**
United Kingdom	**COLLIS Terrence**
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Observers and Invitees of the Communications Director:

Croatia	**POLJAK Vedran**
Norway	**SOLEM KNUT Albert**

European Food Safety Authority Staff:

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Apologies:

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Denmark	**KORNHOLT Heidi**
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France	**LEYDET Valérie**
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Latvia	**SANTARE Dace**
Luxembourg	**HAU Patrick**
Poland	**ZAGRAJEK Monika**
Romania	**MONEA Alina - Ioana**
Turkey	**BUDAK Nurseren**

1. Adoption of the agenda by Anne-Laure Gassin

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1.1 Anne-Laure Gassin, Director of Communications at EFSA, opened the meeting, thanked the participants and introduced Jorma Hirn, Director of the Food and Veterinary Control Department at Finnish Food Safety Authority (EVIRA) and member of the EFSA's Advisory Forum. She also thanked him and Marja Laeslehto, Director of Communications at EVIRA, for hosting the event.

2. Welcome and presentation of "Evira: control, research and risk assessment" by Mr Jorma Hirn, Director of the Food and Veterinary Control Department at the Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira and Member of the EFSA Advisory Forum

2.1. After welcoming the participants to Helsinki and EVIRA, Jorma Hirn gave a detailed presentation on the organisation of the Finnish Food Safety Authority and in general on how the food and veterinary control works in Finland.

2.2 Several questions were posed to Jorma Hirn concerning the organisation of the Finnish Authority, its management team, how risk assessment is carried out, and the relationships and the communication process among provincial units..
Jorma Hirn also explained the origins of the word EVIRA, which is not an acronym but a "trade" name, where E is the initial of the Finnish name for food and V the initial of the Finnish word for Authority. He also explained how the logo was chosen and the reason for its simplicity.

3. Minutes of the meeting 24 04 07 and matters arising

(Doc **AF Comm WG 05.07.07– 2)**

3.1 Anne-Laure Gassin welcomed the new members: Eva Corp from Sweden, Jana Kaplanova from Slovak Republic, Jan Meijer from the Netherlands and Vedran Poljak, representative

from Croatia, present as observer. She also mentioned the apologies which among others included Mirella Taranto, new member from Italy.

3.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 24th April in Larnaka were approved with a minor amendment and will be posted on the EFSA's website.

3.3 Anne-Laure Gassin outlined that several matters arising from the meeting in Larnaka would be discussed with the group during the day, such as the web text to explain the EU food safety system, the supplement to the EFSAnews, the revisions of the Terms of Reference for the group, the contacts list of people responsible for media inquiries.

4. Update on progress at EFSA by Anne-Laure Gassin

4.1 In order to update the group on EFSA's scientific activities, Anne-Laure Gassin mentioned the work done by the nine panels and among the several issues she informed the group that a formal mandate on nanotechnology had been sent by the European Commission to EFSA and that more details on the subject of cloning would be provided by David Carlander, Scientific Officer at EFSA, under point 6.

4.2 Among the various events and initiatives undertaken by EFSA, Anne-Laure Gassin mentioned: the conference jointly organised with CIHEAM in Parma on 5th June; the event organised with the Italian Ministry of Health on 7th June in Rome; the important speech held by Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle on 13th June in Brussels, addressed to the EU Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) and published on EFSA's website and finally the agreement signed with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on 2nd July aimed at facilitating exchange of data and scientific cooperation.

4.3 Anne-Laure Gassin briefly updated the group on staff issues and recruitment and passed then to illustrate the recent communication activities. In particular, she mentioned the Web News Stories posted on the website, outlining the growing use of this tool for communications purposes. She also listed the recent publications and the latest issue of EFSAnews, no. 15, was distributed to the whole group.

4.4 Ingela Söderlund, Policy Officer at EFSA, informed the group about the outcomes of the Management Board Meeting which was held on 19th June in Parma. She mentioned the interesting presentation on work programme and future plans given by Albert Flynn, Chair of the EFSA's NDA Panel. She also informed members that actions were proposed in particular with regards to the reorganisation of EFSA's scientific work, in order to cope with the increasing workload. The creation of a new panel and the further use of scientific experts to support the Scientific Committee were considered. Anne-Laure Gassin added that EFSA will also consider opportunities to build recognition of the work of its experts amongst the scientific community.

4.5 Lucia de Luca, Press Officer at EFSA, illustrated to the group the joint event that had taken place the week before in Bratislava and which was together with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic focused on presenting to Slovakian stakeholders EFSA's work. About 160 participants attended the event and many stimulating questions were posed to EFSA's representatives. The conference was followed by a press conference which, considering the participation of 24 journalists had a positive result.
Jana Kaplanová, representative from the Slovak Republic, concluded stating that several journalists had got in touch with the agency after the press conference.

5. Key points arising from the AF meeting Bratislava 28-29 June by Anne-Laure Gassin

5.1 Anne-Laure Gassin presented the outcome of the Advisory Forum Meeting in Bratislava on 28th June. The Steering Group on Cooperation had meet on 15th May and agreed on the terms of reference for the scientific cooperation projects. As concern was expressed that the scientific cooperation working groups could affect EFSA's independence, it was proposed that the outcome of the scientific cooperation projects would go to the Scientific Committee and the Panels passing through the Executive Director, this both for legal reasons and independence. The Steering Group has also identified two new subjects for future consideration: risk assessment on nanoparticles and risk ranking. As far as risk ranking is concerned, Anne-Laure Gassin informed the group that although discussions are still at a very early stage and further clarifications on the subject are still needed, the AFWG on Communications could be discussing the subjects in the future. Gaby Fleur Böl promised the group to provide further information to EFSA on social science projects related to identification of perceived risks.

5.2 A template contract on the "focal points" was presented and it appeared clear that the process needs to be tailored to national needs. It was stressed that Member States will be free to make their own arrangements and that the contract would have the value of a legal document. A letter will be soon sent to the country representatives requesting the designation of focal points.

5.3 Anne-Laure Gassin said that the Advisory Forum was updated on the initiatives of the Working Group, these including the common web text describing the EU food safety system and the supplement to the EFSAnews, which would be discussed further during the meeting.

5.4 An update on the Advisory Group on Risk Communication was also given to the Forum which was informed that the mandate of the group had been renewed for a three-year term and that the number of members is open to be increased, in particular with experts coming from the nutrition area. Advisory Forum members have been invited to suggest names.

5.5 Finally, Anne-Laure Gassin informed the group that a specific meeting of the Advisory Forum will be organised to discuss GMO risk assessment.

6. Implications of animal cloning on food safety, animal health and welfare and the environment: EFSA's work by David Carlander

6.1 David Carlander, Scientific Officer at EFSA, gave a presentation on "Cloning of Animals: Animal Health, Welfare and Food Safety" explaining that EFSA had received a mandate from the Commission and that a Working Group has been charged with the preparation of an opinion to be published by November 2007. A public consultation will take place in December and the adoption of the opinion should occur by February 2008. David Carlander gave some technical details on how the opinion will be developed and stressed that EFSA will closely work with the French agency, AFSSA, and the US FDA.

6.2 Anne-Laure Gassin updated the group on a meeting that took place on 26th June gathering two members of the AGRC, Claude Fischler and George Gaskell, and three external experts active in this or related areas. The meeting was organised as EFSA considers cloning as a sensitive issue and wants to be well prepared when communicating about this. The experts discussed on public perception and other societal aspects of animal cloning, stressing that various factors will influence how the public will perceive the issue.

6.3 Several comments were made and questions raised by members on environmental and animal welfare, ethical aspect as well as public perception and the discussion led to several action points. A paper on consumer's perception of animal cloning, developed under the DG RDT FP6 Project, used for discussion at the meeting held in June, will be provided to members. EFSA will discuss with DG Sanco the possibility of carrying out a flash Eurobarometer on this issue and will share the outcome of the discussion on public perception and other societal aspects of animal cloning. Group members will identify possible research needs with respect to consumer perception and get back to EFSA with their input. It was also agreed to create a section on cloning on the Extranet.

7. Sharing learning experiences: A case study from Norway by Knut A. Solem

7.1 Following the decision taken during the previous meeting in Larnaka according to which members may volunteer to present a case history occurred in their countries, Knut A. Solem from Norway explained how the Norwegian Food Safety Authority handled a case of food poisoning that caused the death of a 4 year old child in spring 2006. He also illustrated and analysed the evolution of the case and how it created big concern due to factors such as: the involvement of children affected by the product, the producers being a renowned company as well as the death occurred.

7.2 Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Knut A. Solem for the interesting case and stressed again the importance of sharing experiences and key learnings in an open way with members of the group.

7.3 A session of questions and comments followed, in particular on the communications implications, the interaction between the public and the press, and on how the difficulties were handled by the Norwegian colleagues. Pascal Houbaert from Belgium draw the attention to the fact that training and supports need to be offered to spokespeople who can possibly been interviewed by media in cases of crises.

7.4 Capitalizing on this interesting presentation, Oskar Wawschinek summarized the outcome of the work done by Task Force on how to best react to misinformation in the media and presented a proposal on how to handle a situation of inaccurate information on food safety. The proposal, which mentions some of the key learnings presented in the Norwegian case, will be posted on the Extranet.

7.5 Members were asked to volunteer to do a session at the next meeting and present a case history to share their learning experiences.

8. Looking ahead: revision of the Terms of Reference of this WG: Anne-Laure Gassin

(Doc **AF Comm WG 05.07.07 – 3)**

8.1 Anne-Laure Gassin passed the floor on to Karen Talbot who referred to the previous meeting when it was agreed that the role and the work of the group should be reviewed. A paper with questions and points to facilitate discussion was tabled and presented and members were asked to comment on that. After receiving their comments, revised Terms of Reference will be discussed with the whole group at the next meeting in autumn and presented to the Advisory Forum at the December's meeting.

8.2 Terrence Collis, representative from the United Kingdom, commented that more contacts and bilateral sharing between meetings would be useful. Moreover, the subject of frequency of the meeting was also discussed.

8.3 Anne-Laure Gassin mentioned the issue of interpretation and informed the group that a question on requirements will be added to the above mentioned discussion paper. Members were asked to express their specific needs regarding interpretation. Once revised, the questionnaire to seek input on the work of the group will be re-circulated to members and published on the Extranet.

8.4 Before discussing the following item on the agenda, Lucia de Luca referred to the mailing list grouping the most relevant person in each national agency dealing with media and informed that some names were missing. It was agreed that the final list will be shared with members and that they will always be copied on all information going to such media

contacts list. EFSA will also evaluate the possibility of Extranet access for people on the mailing list.

9. Co-operation and communication: Progressing on the A-4 supplement to the EFSAnews and the web text on EU food safety system

(Doc **AF Comm WG 05.07.07 – 4)**
(Doc **AF Comm WG 05.07.07 – 5)**

9.1 Lucia de Luca referred to two action points arisen from the previous meeting: the creation of a web text on EU food safety system to be used in the websites of the national agencies and the publication of an A-4 supplement to the EFSAnews.

9.2 A draft of the web text has been prepared by EFSA and group members should provide their comments. Members were informed that the text should be considered as a template to be used by the national agencies to explain to web users how cooperation between EFSA and Member States works and that each national agency will be free to adapt the text to their websites. Group members were asked to liaise with their respective web managers who will have to contact Sarah Weatherley, EFSA's web manager, in charge of implementing the text across the AF members' websites. An update on the development of this project will be provided to the Advisory Forum on the occasion of the September's meeting.

9.3 Lucia de Luca presented a proposal outline related to the occasional A-4 supplement to the EFSAnews. She gave details on possible format, editorial line, frequency, workflow and languages and members were invited to comment on the proposal. After some questions and answers on the issue, it was agreed that the editorial board will finalise outline and timing of the project for presentation to the Advisory Forum in September. Anne-Laure Gassin also proposed that the first edition coincides with the EFSA's 5th Anniversary events taking place on 20-21 November in Brussels.

10. Communications: information exchange and forward planning

a. Key country issues regarding risk communications (country templates to be pre-circulated by members)

(Doc AF Comm WG 05 07 07 – 6)

Key issues were received from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Finland, Hungary and Ireland and some of the members gave details on the information sent.

b. EFSA: overview of upcoming scientific issues and related communication activities by Alun Jones

(Doc AF Comm WG 05 07 07 – 7)

Alun Jones gave an overview of upcoming scientific issues and, among others, he mentioned the work in progress on food colours. Karen Talbot updated the group saying that the EFSA's scientific opinion on the safety of Allura Red AC (E129) and Red 2G (E128) was being finalized and that some communications activities would follow up. Terrence Collis added that the Southampton University is working on a research on food colours in drinks which in some circumstances seem to cause a change in children's behaviour in children. He informed that results will be published soon and that he will keep the group updated on the situation.
Alun Jones mentioned other scientific issues as: hormones in beef, on which a press release was being drafted: the guidance for presentation of applications for authorization of health claims; killing and skinning of seals; fish welfare and finally, the mandate from the European Parliament on risk assessment of feeding meat and bone meal to non ruminants.

11. EFSA's 5th Anniversary, an update and co-ordination of activities: Alun Jones

11.1 Alun Jones, supported by Lucia de Luca, presented an update on the EFSA's 5th Anniversary Project. They gave an overview on the activities which took place in May in Parma and Ispra whilst Bruno Gautrais, representative from the European Commission, reported briefly on the Open Day in Brussels on 5th May.

11.2 The group was also informed that the invitation to the Scientific Forum taking place on 20-21 November in Brussels will be sent out by the end of July. Anne-Laure Gassin added that the presence of a speaker and good communicator from the food industry would be interesting and asked members to possibly provide names.

12. Any other business

12.1 Anne-Laure Gassin informed the group that the date originally scheduled for the meeting in Parma (24 September) can not be maintained due to the several commitments in the same period and the dates of 23 and 24 October were proposed. Members were asked to confirm their preference.

12.2 No other points were raised and the Chair closed the meeting at 15.30 by thanking members for their participation and the EVIRA staff for the excellent support to the organization.