
Minutes

ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS

**PRAGUE, THE CZECH REPUBLIC
21-22 OCTOBER 2009**

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS:

Chair: GASSIN Anne-Laure, Communications Director

Austria	PUBLIG Elisabeth
Belgium	CASSART Pierre
Bulgaria	PCHELINSKA Mariela
Czech Republic	BALGA Josef
Denmark	KORNHOLT Heidi
Estonia	PRIISALU Piret
Finland	LAESLEHTO Marja
France	THOMANN Carole
Germany	BÖL Gaby-Fleur
Greece	LOUKA Stamatina
Hungary	CSEH Júlia
Ireland	RYDER Jane
Italy	TARANTO Mirella
Norway	SOLEM Knut Albert
Norway	BJERKÅS Astrid
Poland	WISNIEWSKA Iwona
Portugal	SEABRA Maria João
Slovak Republic	KOVÁČ Milan
Spain	GARCIA GÓMEZ Juan Julián
Sweden	GUSTAFSSON Karin
The Netherlands	MEIJER Jan
Turkey	AYDIN Gokalp
United Kingdom	COLLIS Terrence



Observers:

Croatia	ILEŠ Davor
European Commission	MORETTI Barbara
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	JONOVSKA Katerina

European Food Safety Authority Staff:

ADAMOVA Monika	GASSIN Anne-Laure
AVANZINI Francesca	BULLER Christoph
TESTA Elena	TALBOT Karen
DE LUCA Lucia	GERVELEYER Andrea (22/10/09)

Apologies:

Slovenia	VRDELJA Mitja
Cyprus	PARTASSIDES Dora
Lithuania	KUNICKIS Saulius
Luxembourg	HAU Patrick
Romania	MONEA Alina-Ioana
EFSA staff	BONDURI Gianluca

DAY 1: 21ST OCTOBER 2009 - 14H00 - 17H00

1. Welcome and Presentation of the work of the Food Authority at the Czech Ministry of Agriculture by Jitka Götzová, Director of the Food Safety Department

- 1.1 Anne-Laure Gassin opened the meeting by thanking the Food Authority at the Czech Ministry of Agriculture for hosting the event and gave the floor to Jitka Götzová, Director of the Food Safety Department. After welcoming the participants, she presented the work of the Czech Food Authority. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked the Director.

2. Adoption of the agenda (Doc AF Comm WG 21-22.10.09 – 1)

- 2.1. Anne-Laure Gassin welcomed all participants, in particular new members, and informed the group of apologies received.



- 2.2. She thanked the members who had already filled in their Declarations of Interests and reminded the remaining few that they should complete the electronic form at their earliest convenience.
- 2.3. As no additional items were indicated by the members, the agenda was adopted as proposed.

3. Minutes of the meeting 09 07 2009 and matters arising

(Doc AF Comm WG 21-22.10.09 – 2)

- 3.1. Anne-Laure Gassin informed the members that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2009 in Uppsala were approved by written procedure and published on the Extranet and the EFSA website.
- 3.2. She outlined the matters arising from the meeting in Uppsala that would be discussed with the group during the day.

4. Update on progress at EFSA and communication activities

- 4.1. Anne-Laure Gassin updated the members on the latest developments in EFSA, including the ongoing review of EFSA communications strategy. She mentioned, in particular, the framework for the review of strategy, key inputs and points of consideration, methodology and key milestones as well as timetable for delivery of final strategy. She also explained the reasons behind the revision, i.e. significant developments in both external and internal environments, changes in communications landscape, etc.
- 4.2. Following a discussion, the members were invited to provide comments on the development of the draft EFSA communications strategy, especially on the issue of target audience and interface between EFSA communications and those of national food safety authorities. It has been agreed that the revision of EFSA's communications strategy would be on the agenda again of the next AFCWG meeting in Parma on 25-26 Feb 2010.
- 4.3. Lastly, Anne-Laure Gassin highlighted some EFSA scientific activities carried out since the last meeting, including an update on main related communication activities. She also mentioned the different media materials published and activity undertaken and reported on the coverage gathered and the key topics covered by the European media.



5. “Key Topic” - discussion about food safety topics in Europe

- 5.1. Karen Talbot introduced this new agenda topic that has been proposed to enhance the exchange of information within the group. Member States raise country issues of topical interest at the Advisory Forum and often they are issues with a communications angle. So it would be good to follow-up on these issues with a subsequent presentation and discussion at the Working Group by each relevant country. Following the recent Advisory Forum meeting where Member States had presented country issues the Working Group members from each country had subsequently agreed to present on these issues today, focusing, on the implications for communications.
- 5.2. Germany informed the members about the issue of Glycidol fatty acid esters that were detected in refined vegetable fats and BfR was asked to conduct a preliminary risk assessment. The Netherlands covered biogenic amines in food, Austria reported on the case of benzene in baby food, Sweden updated the group on the Acrylamide index & Glycoalcaloids in potatoes cases and lastly Ireland presented the case of taste disturbances after pine nut ingestion.
- 5.3. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked the members for their contributions. The group agreed that this will become a standing agenda item. The members will regularly report on “emerging issues” tabled at the Advisory Forum meetings, focusing on the communications aspects.
- 5.4. It has also been decided to merge this agenda item with a “Key Country Issues” agenda topic as they are related and cover similar issues. This will be applied as of the next meeting, where “Key Topics prepared by Member States” will become a standing item.
- 5.5. Anne-Laure Gassin then updated the group on EFSA work on Bisphenol A. She informed the members that EFSA has been asked to evaluate a major new study on possible neuro-developmental effects of BPA (by May 2010). The study has also been sent to several Member States. She pointed out that as this may trigger a new wave of media interest, it would be useful to know what the Member States are planning in this area, in terms of both scientific and communications activities, so that the approach can be coordinated as far as possible. Members agreed to table Bisphenol A topic at the next meeting in Parma on 25-26 Feb 2010. Austria, Germany and France volunteered to provide contributions for the debate.



6. Food safety and consumers: a journalist point of view by Libuše Alterová, journalist from Zemědělec (Farmer), specialised weekly magazine

- 6.1. Anne-Laure Gassin introduced Libuse Alterova, an experienced Czech journalist in the field of agriculture and food. She studied food technology and worked for four years in the press section of the Czech Ministry of Agriculture and since the end of the nineties she has been an editor of the weekly journal Zemědělec (Farmer).
- 6.2. Her contribution focused on food safety and consumers. She touched upon the importance for media to receive timely and correct information and the danger of rumour for both media and producers.
- 6.3. The subsequent discussion focused on media reporting styles on food related issues; both subjective and objective ways of reporting were discussed. It has been highlighted that it helps when journalists have a scientific background in order to communicate scientific issues accurately to consumers. The members also pointed out that tabloid media have a broad circulation but do not necessarily provide scientifically sound information.

7. Communications: information exchange and forward planning

- 7.1. Lucia de Luca provided an overview of upcoming scientific issues for which future communications may be foreseen. These included: food colours, arsenic in food, additives, dioxins, antimicrobial resistance, nutrition and health claims, dietary reference values, TSE resistance in goats and an overview of EFSA's work on GMOs.
- 7.2. Anne-Laure Gassin informed the group that key country issues were received from Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway and Sweden. Among others, Elisabeth Publig mentioned a recent discussion on Bisphenol A in Austria and Carole Thomann from AFSSA noted that the French government has launched a debate on nanotechnologies. Terrence Collis informed the members that the FSA has set up an independent steering group (consisting of all interested parties) to shape and manage a consumer dialogue on genetic modification (GM) that it has been asked to lead on behalf of the UK Government. The "GM Dialogue" with consumers will provide an opportunity to discuss with members of the public their understanding of GM in food and what they think are its potential risks and benefits. It will also try to identify what information people need and want in order to make confident, informed choices about the food they eat.
- 7.3. Members agreed to keep each other and EFSA informed on ongoing debates in their MS on topical issues, such as nanotechnologies, H1N1 and GMOs. The Swedish



colleagues promised to share with the group their web monitoring on blogs at the next meeting in Parma on 25-26 Feb 2010.

DAY 2 – 22ND OCTOBER 2009 - 09H00 - 12H00

8. Key points arising from the Advisory Forum meeting (23-24 Sept in Stockholm) and Meeting of the EFSA Steering Group on Cooperation (16 October in Dublin)

- 8.1. Anne-Laure Gassin summarised the outcome of the AF meeting in Stockholm and the meeting of the Steering Group on Cooperation in Dublin.
- 8.2. Among the key topics discussed at the AF meeting she mentioned EFSA's work on nutrition. The Chair of the NDA Panel, Prof. Albert Flynn provided an overview of the scientific work of EFSA's NDA Panel. The focus was put on health claims and novel foods, where further strengthening of scientific cooperation between EFSA and MSs is envisaged. He also pointed out that the NDA Unit organised two meetings with national experts on nutrition – one on DRVs in September and the other one on health claims in October.
- 8.3. Regarding the harmonisation of risk assessment methodologies across Europe, the members were informed that data and information collection is a priority for not only EFSA but across the MS. Hence, EFSA plans to establish working groups that would deal with different aspects of data collection.
- 8.4. In addition, an update on existing networks between EFSA and MS was provided. Members were briefed that EFSA is currently working on a policy paper on the functioning of these networks. Also cooperation on import-related risks and an update on the crisis simulation exercise were discussed.
- 8.5. The members were informed that due to an increased workload of the Praper Unit, EFSA invited the AF members to disseminate to interested parties the Authority's call for seconded national experts for pesticides to support the work of the Unit.
- 8.6. Anne-Laure Gassin then updated the group on the main outcomes of the Steering Group on Cooperation meeting held in Dublin. The group welcomed the opportunity to review the Art 36 evaluation report (expected at the end of 2009) as well as the assessment of the IEP (due to be carried out in 2010).
- 8.7. Lastly, an overview of the progress of the ESCO Working Group on Isoflavones was presented. Due to the vast amount of information needed for assessing and



characterising the potential hazards and health benefits of isoflavone consumption, the group requested an extension until September 2010. Progress of the Working Group on Food Classification was also presented. It has been highlighted that this group aims to harmonise the existing systems of food classification rather than to create a new a new system.

9. Update on EFSA crisis simulation exercise

- 9.1. Anne-Laure Gassin introduced Andrea Gervelmeyer from EFSA's Emerging Risks Unit, who updated the group on EFSA's in-house training that took place on 7 July and planning of the crisis simulation exercise scheduled for 30 November 2009.
- 9.2. She pointed out that each exercise is designed to explore the functioning of different aspects of "crisis" response. The aim of the internal crisis exercise in July was to test the procedures outlined in the EFSA Emergency Manual. She also mentioned that the results of the exercise were positive.
- 9.3. Andrea Gervelmeyer then provided an update on the upcoming crisis simulation exercise whose objective is to practise EFSA's communication with MS and European Commission, in particular the risk assessment & communications aspects and the capacities of video- and teleconference facilities. She also pointed out that the exercise will be run by the contractor and will be observed by the WG members in Parma. The exercise will involve all MS for testing technical functionality of the conferencing facilities and some MS, such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Latvia, Sweden and the UK will play a more active role by contributing with more detailed exchanges on scientific matters. DG SANCO will participate to test EFSA's capacity to communicate with Commission. EFSA expects to receive a draft report evaluating the crisis simulation exercise and recommendations in December 2009.
- 9.4. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Andrea Gervelmeyer for the update. It was agreed that Monika Adamova will send the members, prior to the exercise, the EFSA crisis manual.

10. Update on publications and events

- 10.1. Christoph Buller then provided an update on EFSA's recently published and upcoming publications. Among others, he mentioned: EFSA in Focus 4 & 5 (newsletters on Plants, Animals and Food), EFSAnews 20 & 21, Moving Together 4 & 5, Work Plan 2010 as well as 2008 Annual Report and its Summary and EFSA's Strategic Plan for 2009-2013, highlighting that the last three publications are published in 23 EU languages on EFSA website and available upon request. He said



that members interested in receiving the publications should contact EFSA and encouraged them to distribute the publications further.

- 10.2. Then Christoph Buller provided an overview of past and upcoming corporate and scientific events and invited members to share ideas and provide suggestions for future joint events. Among others, he mentioned the Meeting of Heads of EU Agencies (Parma, 21-22 October), Scientific Colloquium Novel Foods (Amsterdam, 19-20 November), Joint event EFSA-Greece (Athens, 23-24 November) and a meeting of EU agencies and candidate countries (Lisbon, 25-27 November).
- 10.3. He concluded with an update on the upcoming International Risk Communications conference, scheduled to take place in December in Italy. The objective of the conference is to facilitate best practice/knowledge, exchange on risk communication and effective and efficient communication.
- 10.4. EFSA will shortly set up a project team to develop the programme and volunteers from AFCWG to participate are welcome as are ideas from the MS on the programme. He indicated that more detailed information will be sent to the members in the coming weeks.
- 10.5. Juan Julian Garcia Gomez from Spain asked whether his colleague dealing with web issues can still attend the web managers' workshop in Parma on 11-12 Nov. (EFSA has since confirmed that it is possible).

11. Focal points: Update on current activities and cooperation with AFCWG

- 11.1. Christoph Buller provided an update from the Focal Points meeting in Parma on 8-9 September, namely on the Focal Points reporting - the task 3 in the FP contract, i.e. "Networking and raising visibility of EFSA and its role in the EU food safety system". As agreed, Communications presented at the meeting a revised version of the reporting template on target audience and networks created. The FPs agreed on changes and promised to come up with format of how to best present the information.

12. New project for the AFCWG - Journalism Prize

- 12.1. Anne-Laure Gassin introduced the topic, highlighting that the aim was to run a common project of EFSA and AFCWG. One of the suggestions (already informally discussed with some members) would be establishing an award to stimulate high-quality journalism that raises awareness of issues related to food safety. The Prize would reward journalists who have contributed in a significant way to help citizens better understand food safety related issues, and through their work be better



informed about risks in the food chain. It would also help to raise visibility of EFSA and national food safety authorities (as those improving quality of food safety) and strengthen relations with media.

- 12.2. The subsequent debate addressed possible issues that might be encountered, e.g. competitive environment (i.e. existing programmes, what they offer etc...), appeal for journalists, funding issues and co-ordination across MS.
- 12.3. Anne-Laure Gassin also pointed out what would need to be set up, e.g. competition rules, assessment criteria, selection on national level (national juries to select national nominees), juries (food safety and communications experts), prizes, award ceremony among others.
- 12.4. She then went through a list of some existing journalism prizes, e.g. DG Sanco - EU Health Prize for Journalists, DG Research – Science Communication Prize, DG Environment – EU Ecolabel Communication Award, The Royal Society's Prizes for Science Books, UNESCO Kalinga Prize for the Popularization of Science, AAAS Science Journalism Award, etc.
- 12.5. Following the initial very interesting discussion, the members agreed to set up a small group to further develop the idea and present it at the next meeting in Parma on 25-26 February 2010. Members from the following MS volunteered to be a part of the group: Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, Italy, Sweden and Slovakia, coordinated by Monika Adamova.

13. Follow up of the debate on risk communication guidelines

- 13.1. Karen Talbot introduced the session on risk communication guidelines. She reiterated the objective of drafting the risk communications guidelines, highlighting that they should be accessible and practical. The guidelines would help to build coherence in our risk communications across the EU and reinforce the key principles of communications and also build appreciation of the role and value of communications. Then she updated the group on progress made to date and provided the feedback received on the latest proposals. She informed the group that objective of the discussion was to finalise the guidelines structure and decide on the way forward.
- 13.2. Then Karen Talbot opened up a discussion focused on the outline of the risk communications guidelines. The members agreed on the following structure of the guidelines:
 - Intro/background/principles



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- Levels of communications applicable to EFSA/MS risk assessment work and appropriate communications activity (low, medium, high)
 - Factors impacting on the level and type of communications required
 - Case histories
 - Communications tools and channels
 - Conclusions
- 13.3. Regarding the “factors impacting on the level and type of communications required”, members suggested adding how animals and plants are affected since the current section focused only on humans.
- 13.4. Then the group identified the case histories and eight members have agreed to write up draft case histories for inclusion in the guidelines:
- dioxins (Ireland)
 - food colours (UK)
 - animal health (Finland)
 - food supplements (Hungary + Austria + Bulgaria)
 - nanotechnology (Germany)
 - salt (UK)
 - zoonoses / foodborne disease (Norway)
- 13.5. Julia Cseh from Hungary proposed to include within the case histories an assessment of what worked and did not work well. It has been agreed that the case histories will be published on the extranet and members would be invited to comment. EFSA will prepare first drafts of the other sections of the guidelines. Regarding the length of the case histories, it has been suggested to draft a 1-page executive summary, 3-4 pages of the case history including the execution elements, followed by annexes.
- 13.6. In addition, the group discussed the communication tools and channels. Members were asked to share tools and channels they use when communicating with public/authorities/media. Julia Cseh from Hungary suggested adding an annex with a list of organisations/who to contact to avoid searching for information on the internet or other sources. Anne-Laure Gassin indicated that we should be careful not to duplicate any lists existing for use in times of emergency crisis.
- 13.7. Karen Talbot then wrapped up the discussion and said a revised outline and the retro-planner for development of the work will be prepared. EFSA will then start to prepare the main sections; relevant members will work on the case histories. A first draft of the work that has been completed by February on guidelines will be sent out to the members before the next meeting in Parma on 25-26 Feb 2010. The group will then review progress at the February meeting.



14. Any other business

- 14.1. Anne-Laure Gassin reminded the group that the next meeting will take place on 25-26 February 2010 in Parma and will be hosted by EFSA. She also outlined the dates and venues for meetings 2010 and indicated that venue for the December meeting still needed to be defined. (*Austrian colleagues have since then volunteered to host the meeting in Vienna on 1-2 December 2010*)
- 14.2. Members were invited to propose topics for the upcoming meetings. The Chair thanked them for their presence together with EFSA staff and the interpreters and as no other points were raised, she closed the meeting at 12h00.