

Minutes

28th MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS

BRUSSELS (BELGIUM), 6-7 OCTOBER 2010

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS:

Chair: GASSIN Anne-Laure, Communications Director

Members:

Austria	PUBLIG Elisabeth	Italy	TARANTO Mirella
Belgium	CASSART Pierre	Ireland	RYDER Jane
Belgium	BUSSCHOTS Lieve	Lithuania	NALIVAIKIENE Elena
Bulgaria	PCHELINSKA Mariela	Poland	WISNIEWSKA Iwona
Czech Republic	BALGA Josef	Portugal	SEABRA Maria João
Denmark	INSELMANN FRANSEN Gitte	Slovak Republic	HANZALIKOVA Martina
Finland	VIKMAR-ROSLIN Pia	Slovenia	VRDELJA Mitja
France	THOMANN Carole	Spain	GARRIDO GARCÍA Carmen
France	MARIE Alima	Sweden	GUSTAFSSON Karin
Germany	FIACK Suzan	The Netherlands	KRIKKEN Chris
Greece	TSIGARIDA Eirini	United Kingdom	HUMPHREYS Stephen

Observers:

European Commission	VANHOORDE Robert	Turkey	AYDIN Gokalp
Croatia	MIKRUT Sara	FYROM	JONOVSKA Katerina
TNS	Marco Pelucci		

European Food Safety Authority Staff:

ADAMOVA Monika	DE LUCA Lucia	NILSSON Torben
AVANZINI Francesca	GAMMING Yenny	TESTA Elena
BONDURI Gianluca	GASSIN Anne-Laure	SMILLIE Laura



Apologies:

Cyprus	PARTASSIDES Dora	Romania	MONEA Alina-Ioana
Estonia	PRIISALU Piret	Norway	BJERKÅS Astrid
Hungary	CSEH Júlia	European Commission	STYLYANOU George
Luxembourg	HAU Patrick		

DAY 1: 6TH OCTOBER 2010 - 14H00 - 17H00

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Anne-Laure Gassin opened the meeting by welcoming all participants and thanking the Belgian Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (AFSCA) for hosting the event. Then she gave the floor to Gilbert Houins, Chief Executive Officer of AFSCA, who in his welcome speech also briefly presented the work of the Belgian Agency and highlighted the important role of EFSA in the EU food safety system. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Gilbert Houins for the supportive words and for sharing AFSCA's vision on their work.
- 1.2 She then informed the group that Milan Kovac from Slovakia was elected a member of EFSA's Management Board and therefore is no longer a member of the AFCWG. She announced that Norway became a full member of the AFCWG (as well as Advisory Forum) and welcomed the new members from Denmark, Germany, Slovakia, the observer from Croatia and Alima Marie, the Director of Communications of ANSES (who attended the meeting as an observer). Anne-Laure Gassin also mentioned that apologies were received from Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Luxembourg, Romania and Norway. She then paused and referred to the passing away of Belgian colleague Pascal Houbart and extended her sympathy on behalf of the group to his colleagues, friends and family.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(Doc AF Comm WG 6 10 10 – 1)

- 2.1. 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 as soon as possible. As no additional items were indicated by the members, the agenda was adopted as proposed.



3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 26-27 MAY AND MATTERS ARISING

(Doc AF Comm WG 6 10 10 – 2)

- 3.1. Anne-Laure Gassin informed the members that the minutes of the meeting held on 26-27 May in Madrid were approved by written procedure and published on the Extranet and the EFSA website. She outlined the matters arising from the meeting in Madrid that would be discussed with the group during the day.

4. KEY POINTS ARISING FROM THE ADVISORY FORUM MEETING (22-23 SEPT, MALTA)

- 4.1. Gian Luca Bonduri informed the members that John Dalli, the EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, attended the Advisory Forum (AF) meeting in Malta. He then summarised the outcome of the AF meeting, mentioning among other items the discussion on the medium-term planning for scientific cooperation between EFSA and MS.
- 4.1. Commissioner Dalli contributed to the discussion by highlighting the essential role of scientific cooperation within the EU food safety system and outlined the medium term challenges faced by DG Health and Consumers (SANCO).
- 4.2. The Chair of EFSA's ANS Panel provided the AF members with a comprehensive overview of the Panel's current and future activities, and suggested a closer scientific cooperation between EFSA and the MS to address the workload in the area of additives and nutrient sources added to food.
- 4.3. Following-up on the discussion raised at the previous AF meeting, EFSA's Emerging Risks Unit (EMRISK) shared information and data with Member States on pine nuts and energy drinks. The EMRISK Unit is following up on these issues and will share new information/studies with the MS via the Information Exchange Platform.
- 4.4. The AF endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the EFSA Endocrine Active Substances Task Force. As a follow-up, at the next AF meeting in November the Task Force will submit to the AF the mandate for a working group on endocrine active substances for possible endorsement. Laura Smilie informed the group that the Technical Report of the Endocrine Active Substances Task Force contains a chapter on Risk Communications. It suggests a cautionary approach to communications and the possible labelling of such a heterogeneous group of chemicals with one name.
- 4.5. Lastly, Gian Luca Bonduri reported on the ESCO on isoflavones which aims to assess and characterise the potential hazards and health benefits of isoflavone consumption. The final report of the ESCO working group is due by the end of 2010 and will provide

a basis for possible decisions on the need to perform a full risk assessment on isoflavones.

- 4.6. Torben Nilsson added some more information on the Emerging Risk Network highlighting that the Network will focus on new scientific issues for which more scientific information is needed and will report back to the AF. The AFCWG will continue to deal with the issues from the communications point of view and may consider how to provide input to the Network on issues emerging in the media. The first meeting of the Network will take place in November 2010. Laura Smillie pointed out that the AFCWG members will be briefly updated on the Networks' meeting at their next meeting in Vienna and further information will be provided in this area in March.

Action 1: EFSA will share with the group the Technical Report of the Endocrine Active Substances Task Force when available.

5. INDEPENDENCE IN RISK COMMUNICATIONS – UPDATE ON AF DISCUSSION

- 5.1. Anne-Laure Gassin briefly introduced the topic. She reminded the members that following the AF request, AFCWG set up a small task force comprising EFSA, France, Norway and the UK to reflect on a possible strategy to further promote/communicate on the independence of risk assessment advice. Then she gave the floor to Laura Smillie who informed the members that following a fruitful discussion, the group concluded that different countries experience different degrees of pressure on the topic of independence. They also noted that independence is crucial, i.e. national agencies were set-up with the purpose to provide independent scientific advice and listed initiatives taken at the national level. She also mentioned recent EFSA initiatives, that include the development of Independence Key Topic on the website; External examination of implementation of DOI process; External review /benchmarking of independence-related initiatives in other organisations (EU & beyond) and creation of an internal Openness & Transparency Task Force.
- 5.2. It has been suggested that Independence Key Topic on EFSA website may be used and adapted by MS accordingly and/or posted on the Focal Point websites. Laura Smillie encouraged the members to provide EFSA with insights if/when the Authority's independence is (or is not) questioned at a national level. Sweden and Greece pointed out that independence/transparency are more likely to be questioned when the food safety agency deals also with risk assessment rather than just risk management, i.e. scientists' independence and also whether all scientific evidence was taken into consideration. Members however agreed that independence must be ensured in any case.



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- 5.3. Anne-Laure Gassin then suggested that EFSA prepare a questionnaire on independence-related communications to be completed by the MS. The results of the questionnaire and the work carried out to date by the small task force will be presented at the next AF meeting.

Action 2: EFSA to prepare an online questionnaire on independence-related communications and send it to members. Members to complete the questionnaire and send it back to EFSA.

6. RESULTS OF 2010 EUROBAROMETER: CONSUMER PERCEPTION ON FOOD-RELATED RISKS

- 6.1. Marco Pelucci, an Account Director from TNS was invited for this specific agenda item and presented preliminary results from the 2010 Eurobarometer (EB) survey on consumer perception on food-related risks carried out in all MS in June 2010. He informed the group about the methodology used and then presented some preliminary findings, namely consumers' concerns about food-related risks (he listed some top concerns in each MS); public confidence in sources of information on food safety; the role and effectiveness of public authorities and concluded with key findings.
- 6.2. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Marco Pelucci for his interesting presentation and opened up the floor for questions. Bulgaria asked whether confidence in media was analysed. Marco Pelucci replied the respondents were only "fairly" or "not very confident" in media. Germany asked whether there were significant differences between the 2005 and 2010 EBs' results. Marco Pelucci explained that there were only few differences on national level (not many differences on EU level). The UK asked whether different age and gender groups responded differently. Marco Pelucci confirmed that there were indeed differences; also educational level played an important role. Anne-Laure Gassin added several observations, e.g. as in 2005, consumers do not associate food with risks but rather taste, sharing and pleasure; spontaneous responses regarding possible risks associated with food were not very high (as for 2005), perception of public authorities has improved since 2005, and Europeans seems to be better informed then 5 years ago about the EU food safety system.
- 6.3. Anne-Laure Gassin then informed the members that the final EB report is currently being finalised and EFSA will inform them about the launch date of the EB survey as soon as this information will be available. The members will also receive a press release in 23 languages (which they can adapt) and factsheets when available (with a longer pre-notification period than usual). Furthermore, Anne-Laure Gassin pointed out that members will also receive the SPSS (raw) data of the survey.

7. CO-OPERATION IN COMMUNICATIONS

- 7.1. Following the Eurobarometer (EB) presentation, Christoph Buller provided further information on the EB reports, which will be available in both digital and printed versions. He explained that the full report and its summary will present EU average data, country results (via maps or tables) with analyses of the most extreme results, and socio-demographic results on both EU and MS level. The factsheets, on the other hand, will focus on key country results compared to the EU average. Then Christoph Buller provided a timeline for the reports and objectives of EFSA's roll-out and promotional plan of the EB results. He outlined some communications tools the MS can use to present the EB survey results. Anne-Laure Gassin pointed out that the initial date for publishing the EB results was postponed from 19 October (*the AFCWG will be kept informed on the final date that is still to be confirmed*).
- 7.2. Lastly, Christoph Buller informed the group that the preliminary EB results, its objectives and promotional plan will also be presented to the Focal Points (FP) and asked the members to coordinate the promotional activities on the national level with their FP counterparts. He also mentioned that EFSA currently foresees to launch of a questionnaire on the needs/opportunities of Focal Points with respect to communications in the first quarter of 2011. An update will be provided at the next meeting in Vienna.
- 7.3. During the subsequent discussion, members welcomed this initiative and the materials that would be made available to the MS. Ireland asked to receive the reports but mainly the factsheet with national data well in advance, so MS can analyse the national data and prepare their communication materials. Anne-Laure Gassin confirmed that EFSA will send the EB report and its summary as well as the factsheets and the press release under embargo and provide the exact publication date that will be the same for EFSA, MS and EC, therefore coordination is necessary. Christoph Buller added that the press release and factsheets will be available in 23 EU languages. Furthermore, he pointed out that the EB's full report, summary and factsheets will be published on EFSA and EC websites and invited the MS to upload the information also on their websites. Yenny Gammig reminded the members to link to the EFSA page on its website rather than re-publishing pdf files on their own website.
- 7.4. Bulgaria asked whether notes (further explanations) on certain findings can be added to the factsheets. Anne-Laure Gassin explained that templates are used for all EB surveys and cannot be changed but EFSA will try to find out whether a general note explaining that different perceptions relating to different food safety arrangements in MS can be added.



- 7.5. Members were asked whether they could identify senior experts who could provide comments on both national and EU data to be used for potential media requests. Laura Smillie asked if members could provide EFSA with the establishments dates of their agencies, which will be used for the analysis of the relation between national food safety bodies' effectiveness and longevity of their existence.

Action 3: EFSA to provide members with the launch date of the Eurobarometer survey; send the press release (in 23 languages) and fact sheets under embargo. Action 4: EFSA to provide members with the SPSS (raw) data.

Action 5: Members to identify senior experts to comment on national and EU data for potential media queries.

DAY 2 – 7TH OCTOBER 2010 – 09H00 - 12H30

8. “KEY TOPICS” – DISCUSSION ABOUT FOOD SAFETY TOPICS IN EUROPE

- 8.1. Anne-Laure Gassin informed the group that Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Slovakia and the UK sent their key country issues and then gave the floor to Stephen Humphreys from the UK who presented a case study on cloned animals. He reported on the immense media interest in the topic and how the FSA handled the communications. Following the media reports that there were 8 offspring of cloned animals on UK farms, FSA started investigation and confirmed that indeed meat from offspring of a clone had entered the UK's food chain. The topic was covered by all national media, and as the story became the lead item for the day on all broadcast news channels, the FSA's Chief Executive was made available for interviews.
- 8.2. He pointed out some challenges FSA faced, such as the fact that the FSA's view on the offspring of cloned animals as novel food differed from that of EC; lack of traceability created major challenges; and the fact that FSA view had not been refreshed since 2008 also played a role. Among the key learnings, he mentioned: food safety message “there is no risk” was key; referring to the EFSA opinion was helpful; interests of broadcast media and 24hr news agenda placed a huge strain on the communications team (they received 250 press queries in one week); interaction with stakeholders was important; having previous consumer research was helpful.
- 8.3. Sweden was interested in what was the EC position was on the issue. Anne-Laure Gassin said that the EC considers that meat and milk from offspring of clones are not novel food as such. The EP will discuss the topic in November. She also pointed out that at present the public perception regarding cloned animals or their offspring is the same. FSA's view is that offspring are also deemed to be novel food. Bulgaria asked whether,



following the incident, public's trust in FSA had changed. Stephen Humphreys replied that it was not affected but FSA does regular surveys and the next one is due in December.

- 8.4. Pierre Cassart from Belgium presented results of two recent AFSCA surveys on the image of AFSCA and food safety perception, targeting companies and consumers. The main outcome of the surveys suggest that AFSCA needs to invest more in communications, improve the procedures for filing complaints, better promote the smiley symbol/concept (awarded by AFSCA to restaurants that implement good hygiene control; it is valid for three years) and improve perception of the food safety among providers of services and goods.
- 8.5. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Pierre Cassart for a very interesting presentation and asked him whether he could share the survey questionnaire with the group. Members were interested in the smiley concept. Pierre Cassart informed them that it comes from Denmark and is also used in France; AFSCA organised a media campaign to promote the smiley that is under their authority.
- 8.6. Laura Smilie then briefed the members on Medysis – a media monitoring service used by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) to which the MS can subscribe to receive good quality media monitoring. She pointed out that the JRC is currently reviewing their activities to map the situation in the MS and asked the members if they could fill in the questionnaire distributed to them during the meeting.

Action 6: AFSCA survey targeting operators and consumers: Pierre Cassart to provide EFSA with the questionnaire used for the survey.

9. DG RESEARCH PRIORITIES

- 9.1. Laura Smillie introduced the topic by providing background information on the DG Research priorities. She then highlighted some trends in research activities and listed examples of a Risk Communications DG RTD-funded project.
- 9.2. Members were then informed that EFSA has recently streamlined the process for collecting and reviewing research proposals from EFSA's Scientific Committee, Panels and units as well as from the AF and AFCWG members in order for EFSA to highlight the research priority areas identified and share them with DG Research and other potential funding organisations. These could address risk assessment as well as risk communications aspects. As part of this process, she explained that EFSA was seeking input from AFCWG members. Thereafter a consolidated proposal on key research priorities will be submitted to DG Research for consideration.



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- 9.3. Laure Smillie thanked in advance the members for sending EFSA their research project proposals, which will help shape DG Research's future activities in the area of risk communications. She pointed out that EFSA would be pleased to assist the MS with the formulation of possible research concepts. It has been agreed that members will provide EFSA with comments and suggestions for research project proposals by 20 October 2010 at the latest.
- 9.4. Torben Nilsson highlighted that there are different ways MS can submit their requests to DG Research. EFSA collected last year some 80 project proposals from MS, which were highlighted in 4 priority areas, 2 of these ideas were taken up by DG Research. He reminded the MS that their proposals can be within the FP7 or broader and in this regard mentioned that so far no ideas were received from the field of social sciences. Lastly, he clarified that EFSA will merge the priorities received from different groups but will also submit all individual proposals. Anne-Laure Gassin concluded that in the future the proposed priorities can be strengthened.

Action 7: DG Research Priorities: members to provide EFSA with their medium-term risk communications research needs for possible integration into DG Research priorities.

10. COMMUNICATIONS: INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND FORWARD PLANNING

- 10.1. Lucia de Luca provided an overview of upcoming scientific issues for which future communications may be foreseen. These included: a third series of Art. 13 health claims; EFSA's technical meeting with stakeholders on welfare aspects of animal transport (13 October, Parma); review of BSE risk in meat and bone meal derived from mammals; evaluation of possible health risks for children related to the presence of nitrates in vegetables; and report on emerging risks. Furthermore, she reported on a number of EFSA guidelines currently being finalised: guidance for environmental risk assessment and assessment of potential impact of GM plants on non-target organisms; guidance on selection of comparators for GM plants; as well as guidance for environmental and human health risk assessment of GM animals; and guidance on risk assessment of potential risks arising from applications on nanoscience to food and feed. Other topics for which communication is planned include: harvesting feathers from live geese for down production; increased mortality events in pacific oysters; evaluation of risk factors that contribute to spreading Salmonella in broilers and launch of INEX call for external scientific experts to review the quality of EFSA's scientific outputs.
- 10.2. Laure Smillie then updated the group on the forward planning calendar now available on the Extranet, as agreed at the last meeting. Its purpose is to share information on EFSA's and MS' upcoming scientific issues/events and related communication activities.



Monika Adamova ran a live demonstration on how to upload the events in the Extranet's calendar and informed the members that they will also receive instructions via e-mail. It has been agreed that EFSA will organise an Extranet training during the meeting in Parma on 23-24 March 2011.

- 10.3. Monika Adamova provided an overview of recent and upcoming corporate and scientific events and invited members to share ideas and provide suggestions for future joint events. Among others, she mentioned: Scientific Colloquium XV on Emerging Risks (Parma, 12-13 October); ESCAIDE (Lisbon, 11-13 November) and Nanotechnology in the food chain (Brussels, 24 November).
- 10.4. Monika Adamova then updated the group on EFSA's recently published and upcoming publications. Among others, she mentioned: Corporate brochure in Dutch; Scientific Community Summary Report on microbial resistance, EFSA in Focus 8, EFSAnews 23, Moving Together 7, 2009 Annual Report and its Summary - published in 23 EU languages on EFSA website and available upon request. She also informed the group about the Expert compensation guide and Risk assessment workflow video.
- 10.5. Yenny Gammig then presented the results of the AFCWG online communications benchmarking survey. She thanked members for taking their time and completing the online survey. Via the survey, EFSA was able to identify some common challenges faced by both EFSA and MS: coherent national message across departments, ministries and agencies; communicating effectively with diverse target audiences, keeping information up-to date. She also mentioned that the most common online subscription products are the e-mail newsletters and a vast majority of members does not have a social media strategy, nor social media guidelines for staff. She informed the group that EFSA is currently drafting EFSA's social media guidelines and social media strategy.
- 10.6. Sweden informed the group that their social media strategy is being finalised and will be presented to the group at the next meeting in Vienna in December. Norway will present their social media strategy at the meeting in Parma in March 2011. Anne-Laure Gassin informed the members that a revised version of EFSA communications strategy will be presented to the Management Board in October; AFCWG members will be updated at the next meeting in Vienna.

Action 8: *Forward planning calendar: EFSA and members to regularly upload information on their comms activities relevant for the group.*

Action 9: *EFSA to send members specific instructions how to upload events in the Extranet's calendar.*

Action 10: *Extranet training - to be organised during the meeting in Parma in March 2011.*



***Action 11:** Social media strategy is currently being finalised by Norway and Sweden: both MS agreed to share their strategy with the group at the next AFCWG meetings (1-2 Dec 2010 and 23-24 March 2011 respectively)*

11. COMMON PROJECT TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH MEDIA

11.1. Monika Adamova presented the main objectives of the project and some new and elaborated ideas:

- Creating a Lexicon of food safety-related terms that would help media to better report on food safety-related issues
- Creating a regular column for target magazines / publications on “What’s new in EFSA/ food safety”
- Organising “get to know sessions” with general as well as specialised media
- Media lists

11.2. During the subsequent debate, Greece informed the members that they were currently developing a lexicon of food safety terms and it has been agreed that they will share it with the group. Members liked the idea of sharing/updating MS’ and EFSA’s media lists and Germany also asked if EFSA could keep the MS informed when organising interviews with their national media. Anne-Laure Gassin suggested that regarding the media lists, EFSA will send to members for their review a list of their national publications and concerning the interviews, she proposed that EFSA’s press office will come up with a proposal how to share this information.

11.3. Also the idea of developing a lexicon of food safety related terms that would help members to communicate in a consistent way was welcomed by the group. It has been agreed that a small group will draft term of reference that will be presented at the next meeting in December. Members from Portugal, Greece and Germany volunteered to take part in the small group.

11.4. Torben Nilsson pointed out that EFSA’s Scientific Committee was currently working with other organisations on harmonising food safety related terminology. The Scientific Committee will provide an update on this work to the AF for discussion at the next meeting in November. Laura Smillie mentioned that she was a part of the group working with Scientific Committee and as these two initiatives are complementary we need to ensure that they are streamlined.

***Action 12:** Lexicon of food safety terms – a small group consisting of EFSA and members from Portugal, Greece and Germany to prepare draft Terms of Reference to be presented at the next meeting in Vienna.*

***Action 13:** Greece to share their lexicon on food safety with the group.*

***Action 14:** Media lists – EFSA to send to members a list of their national publications.*



***Action 15:** Members to comment on the media list – delete or add new publications (not to provide the names of the journalists due to privacy policy).*

12. FOLLOW UP OF THE DEBATE ON RISK COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

- 12.1. Laura Smillie updated the group on progress made to date. She thanked Chris Krikken (Dutch member) for providing a case study on Q Fever that was, as agreed, included in the current seven case histories. She pointed out that the aim of the session was to assess the extent to which the on-going work on the guidelines will benefit AFCWG members in their daily work, particularly when there is a need for risk communications and how can they be further enhanced. She proposed to include in the guidelines a check-list should the group find it useful. The members liked the proposal but also pointed out that the new content should not be too academic in nature and the guidelines should remain a practical tool.
- 12.2. It has been agreed that EFSA will present a revised version of the guidelines document and an elaborated proposal of the decision-tree at the next meeting in December. The guidelines will be sent to the members before the next meeting in order to support an active discussion at the meeting.

***Action 16:** EFSA to present a revised version of the Risk comms guidelines at the next meeting. Members to receive the revised version before the next meeting.*

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 13.1. Anne-Laure Gassin reminded the group that the next meeting will take place on 1-2 December 2010 in Vienna and will be hosted by the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES). Then she thanked Hungary and Poland for hosting the meeting in June 2011 and in December 2011 (respectively), reminded the members that the first meeting in 2011 will take place in Parma on 23-24 March and kindly asked for a volunteer to host the meeting in October 2011.
- 13.2. Members were invited to propose agenda topics for the upcoming meetings. The Chair thanked the members for their presence as well as the EFSA staff and the interpreters and the Belgian colleagues for hosting the meeting. As no other points were raised, Anne-Laure Gassin closed the meeting at 12h30.