

Minutes
NINETH MEETING BETWEEN FOCAL POINTS AND EFSA
BUDAPEST (HUNGARY), 6-7 OCTOBER 2010

Participants

Chair: Bernhard Berger

Austria	<i>Johann Steinwider</i>	Latvia	<i>Dace Santare</i>
Bulgaria	<i>Teri Vrabcheva</i>	Lithuania	<i>Snieguole Sceponaviciene</i>
Cyprus	<i>Popi Ziegler</i>	Luxembourg	<i>Nathalie Welschbillig</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Klara Bauerová</i>	Malta	<i>Mark Cassar</i>
Denmark	<i>Arne Büchert</i>	Netherlands	<i>Hub Noteborn</i>
Estonia	<i>Piret Priisalu</i>	Norway	<i>Danica Grahek-Ogden</i>
Finland	<i>Kirsi-Maarit Siekkinen</i>	Portugal	<i>Jorge Proença Reis</i>
France	<i>Philippe Prigent</i>	Romania	<i>Dida Cozachievi</i>
Germany	<i>Brigitte Graf</i>	Slovakia	<i>Marica Theiszová</i>
Greece	<i>Stamatina Louka</i>	Slovenia	<i>Urška Šubic Mavri</i>
Hungary	<i>Judit Sali</i>	Spain	<i>Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry</i>
Ireland	<i>Anne-Marie Boland</i>	Sweden	<i>Lars Jorhem</i>
Italy	<i>Laura Toti</i>	United Kingdom	<i>Alisdair Wotherspoon</i>
Italy	<i>Antonella Colucci</i>		

Observers and Invitees

Croatia	<i>Sandra Bašić</i>	Switzerland	<i>Judith Beck</i>
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	<i>Marina Popovska-Domazetova</i>		

Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

<i>Bernhard Berger</i>	<i>Ilias Papatryfon</i>
<i>Stef Bronzwaer</i>	<i>Sérgio Potier Rodeia</i>
<i>Christoph Buller</i>	<i>Andras Szoradi</i>
<i>Kerstin Gross-Helmert</i>	<i>Chiara Tinti</i>
<i>Jeff Moon</i>	

1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Mária Szeitzné Szabó, Director General of the Hungarian Food Safety Office (HFSO), opened the 9th Meeting between Focal Points (FPs) and EFSA. She welcomed the participants, expressed her appreciation of the productive and effective cooperation between and among FPs and EFSA, and highlighted the importance of the FP network. Finally she wished the participants a fruitful meeting.

Bernhard Berger from EFSA's Scientific Cooperation Unit (SCO) and Chair of the meeting thanked Mária Szeitzné Szabó for her words of welcome and for hosting the meeting. He also thanked the Hungarian FP for their support in organising this event.

The Chair expressed his appreciation that representatives from 25 Member States (MS), Norway, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) of Macedonia and Switzerland participated in this meeting. Last-minute apologies were received from Belgium and Poland. He welcomed those representatives who attended a FP Meeting for the first time and highlighted that Norway is now a member of the FP network.

2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

FPs raised four new items under "Any Other Business" (AOB), namely: i) National FP event in Greece; ii) promoting FP work in Finland; iii) Danish delegation visit to EFSA; and iv) publication of Norwegian opinion on coumarin intake. EFSA raised eight items under this point, namely: i) FP reporting 2010; ii) renewal of FP Agreements 2011; iii) medium-term planning; iv) possibilities of tele-meetings; v) working group on training activities on principles and methods or risk assessment in food safety; vi) Scientific Colloquia; vii) EFSA Journal; and viii) Meetings in 2011.

The draft minutes of the 8th FP Meeting were sent to FPs for comments on 14 June 2010. The minutes were approved without comments from participants and will shortly be placed on EFSA's website.

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Declarations of Interests, EFSA screened the Annual Declaration of interest (ADoI) filled in by the participants invited for the present meeting. No conflicts of interests related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process or at the beginning of this meeting.

Focal Points were reminded to immediately update their ADoIs whenever applicable. In addition, new participants were asked to fill in and sign the Declarations of Commitment and Confidentiality.

3 PRESENTATION OF HFSO

Mária Szeitzné Szabó, Director General of the Hungarian Food Safety Office (HFSO), presented the organisational structure of the food safety system in Hungary, the organisation, mission and tasks of the HFSO. She described the advantages and challenges of HFSO being a small office and stressed the importance of scientific cooperation, as in the FP network.

4 FOCAL POINT ACTIVITIES

4.1 EXPERT DATABASE

Current state-of-play

Sérgio Potier Rodeia from SCO updated FPs on the growth of the Expert Database (EDB) and the activities carried out to further increase the number of experts in the EDB. The EDB user survey carried out in 2009 showed that the EDB was in good use and the search tool was considered user-friendly by both EFSA staff and external users. FPs were encouraged to further promote the EDB at national level, namely the submission of new applications, as well as the use of the search tool by national organisations.

Use of the Expert Database in the Netherlands

Hub Noteborn of the Dutch Focal Point informed the FPs that the Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA) will be reorganised and merge with other authorities (by 2012) and showed the new structure and organisation. He explained the activities of the Dutch FP, including the FP website and networking. He then explained in more detail how the Dutch FP uses the EDB, particularly to find experts in a certain area, as well as to find colleagues.

Discussion

As the EDB is an entry tool to join EFSA's work, FPs and EFSA strongly promote the application of experts to the database. In the Netherlands, for example, experts are very interested in being included in the EDB. In its 2.5 years of existence, less than 1% of experts in the EDB asked to be removed. In order to keep the information in the EDB up-to-date, experts are yearly reminded to update their data or confirm that data remains up-to-date. The excellent progress of the EDB needs to continue to respond to the evolving scientific remit of EFSA, allowing EFSA and MS to quickly identify required expertise. The FPs and SCO play a crucial role in promoting the EDB.

In addition to being extensively accessed by EFSA, the EDB is also used by MS, through the Advisory Forum and FP members, to find suitable expertise. 92% of experts included in the EDB have indicated their willingness to share their profile information with MS. FPs may wish to stimulate the use of the EDB within their countries, while complying

with data protection requirements. The EDB will be reviewed five years after its launch, and the possibility of broadening its use will be carefully assessed.

4.2 ARTICLE 36

Article 36 List: the way forward

Ilias Papatryfon from SCO informed FPs about the progress and proposals on the way forward with regards to the recommendations of the 2009/2010 grants and procurement evaluation report. He also updated FPs on important issues, including the Article 36 Work Programme for 2011 and changes to the Article 36 List.

Article 36 Network meeting organised by Sweden

Lars Jorhem of the Swedish Focal Point gave an overview of the second meeting they organised, together with the AF member, for the Article 36 organisations in Sweden. The meeting included presentations on the Article 36 application procedure, the existing IT tools to support networking Article 36 organisations, and experiences from two Article 36 projects. An evaluation after the meeting gave insight into what participants expected from the FP in future, what was good and how the meetings could be improved in future.

Discussion

A number of proposals on the way forward, with regards to the recommendations of the 2009/2010 grants and procurement evaluation report, were presented to FPs to ensure that their feedback is taken on board, wherever possible. For example:

- the development of guidelines for the designation process and the maintenance and updating of the Article 36 List was much welcomed by FPs. The guidelines will be made available, once endorsed by EFSA's Management Board.
- the development of new workspaces on the Extranet (Art36-NET) for each organisation was suggested to facilitate the application process and the management of documentation. FPs indicated that information, which needs to be updated, should only be available at one place to avoid introducing errors or discrepancies.

SCO will upload the presentation on the proposals onto the Extranet, together with all other presentations given at the meeting. FPs were asked to send their comments on the proposals to the Scientific Cooperation mailbox by 31 October 2010.

FPs indicated that they would like to receive statistics on how many organisations on the Article 36 List have applied to the calls for proposals. Information is given on an annual basis, taking data protection issues into account. Data from the previous year is made available in the last evaluation report on EFSA's website¹. The list of Article 36 calls is also published on the website², showing who has successfully applied to calls. In addition, SCO will check with EFSA's Legal and Finance Units whether FPs can be informed about which organisations have never applied to calls.

¹ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/art36grants/docs/art36grantsprocurementschemes.pdf>

² <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/art36grants/docs/art36status.pdf>

Regarding the procedure of new nominations to the Article 36 List, Ilias Papatryfon stressed that FPs could inform SCO at any time when a MS wants to designate a new organisation to be included in the List. The request would then be processed at the earliest possibility within the EFSA secretariat and to the Management Board. It was emphasised that the selection and designation of Article 36 organisations (based on the formal criteria as stipulated in the legislation) is up to MS. The information on the designated organisations is transmitted to EFSA through the Permanent Representations in Brussels. SCO reminded FPs that, according to the legislation, MS are required to review the List at least every three years. FPs would appreciate more guidance on how to assess organisation against formal criteria.

Regarding the new IT tools, namely Article 36 NET and Article 36 Database, FPs are asked to contact SCO if any bugs are found in the systems.

Action 1: FPs to send their comments on the presented proposals to SCO (Scientific.Cooperation@efsa.europa.eu) until 31 October 2010.

Action 2: SCO to check with EFSA's Legal and Finance Units whether FPs can be informed about which organisations have never applied to calls.

Action 3: FPs to contact [Cooperation.Article36 mailbox](mailto:Cooperation.Article36@efsa.europa.eu) (Cooperation.Article36@efsa.europa.eu) if they find any bugs in the Article 36 tools.

5 STUDY TOURS FOR PRE-ACCESSION COUNTRIES

As part of the EFSA Pre-accession Programme 2009-2010, two study tours were organised for the EU Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries³. Representatives from different institutions involved in the food safety system from the FYR of Macedonia and Croatia took part in the study tour in France in October 2009 and representatives from FYR of Macedonia and Turkey participated in the study tour in Spain in March 2010. The study visit aimed to provide the participants with an overview on the role of the host institutions in the area of risk assessment and risk communication. In addition, it provided a starting point for networking and creation of information exchange systems as the first step in preparation of the beneficiaries for their future participation in the EU networks.

Philippe Prigent and Cristina Alonso-Andicoberry from the French and Spanish FPs, respectively, gave an overview of the study tours hosted by their countries, including the requests for the study tours, how the requests were answered, and what could have been done to improve the study tours even further. One recommendation was to organise follow-up visits from a more technical point of view.

Sandra Bašić from Croatia, Marina Popovska-Domazetova from FYR of Macedonia and Ermine Güher Çeltek from Turkey (in writing) gave feedback on the high value of these study tours, particularly with regard to the exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience, as well as opening the field for future cooperation between the countries.

³ Candidate Countries: Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey
Potential Candidate Countries: Albania, Bosnia&Herzegovina, Kosovo (under UNSCR1244), Montenegro, Serbia

FPs were encouraged to volunteer to host such visits and Norway already expressed an interest.

Action 4: FPs to inform SCO (Scientific.Cooperation.@efsa.europa.eu) in case they may be interested to host a similar study tour.

Action 5: SCO to inform EFSA's LPA Unit about FP interest to host a study tour.

6 RELEVANT ISSUES FROM THE AF MEETING

Jeff Moon from the Advisory Forum Secretariat informed participants on relevant issues from the AF Meeting held in Malta on 22-23 September 2010. The minutes of the meeting in Malta will be available on EFSA's website.

7 FOCAL POINT MEETINGS

Kerstin Gross-Helmert from SCO gave a summary of the feedback received from FPs, via questionnaire, on the organisation and content of FP Meetings. The majority of respondents was very satisfied with the overall organisation of the meetings, including the length of the meetings, the meeting days and location. The majority was also happy with the agenda. FP Meetings were seen as highly valuable, particularly regarding the possibility to have free discussions and exchange experiences (some respondents would appreciate some more time for this), have personal contacts with other FPs, and get information about MS' and EFSA's work. This feedback from FPs set the basis for a discussion on how FP Meetings should be organised in future.

SCO's objective of FP Meetings is to support FPs with their tasks by providing background information, guidance, training and opportunities to network. FPs much appreciated the opportunity to exchange experiences as well as getting more information on EFSA's work and on specific subjects of current interest. Some topics were suggested for future meetings, including EFSA's stakeholder platform, collection of data and the use of social science for risk assessment. FPs further proposed to include more items on future FP meeting agendas to help prepare Advisory Forum members for discussions at upcoming Advisory Forum meetings. FPs were reminded that they can contact SCO to add items on FP meeting agendas. To better prepare discussions in advance, especially during break-out sessions and specific topics, as well as training sessions, FPs would like to receive more information about upcoming items on the agenda. FPs agreed to current practices and organisation of the meetings, in particular the frequency, length, timing and location of meetings, as well as agenda length, set-up and balance.

Action 6: FPs to send items for FP Meeting agendas, if applicable, to SCO (Scientific.Cooperation.@efsa.europa.eu) up to two weeks before the meeting.

8 EUROBAROMETER

Christoph Buller from EFSA's Public Information & Events Unit (PI&E) gave an overview of the 2010 Eurobarometer (EB) on food related risks regarding timeline and related promotion plan. He highlighted the importance of the data for each MS and that the FPs, in collaboration with the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group (AFCWG) members, will be instrumental in the distribution of the information within their MS. EFSA will provide to FPs: a) a web-banner to directly link from the national FP web pages to the EB reports; and b) country specific data summary factsheets in the local language of the MS. He encouraged the FPs further to establish contact with their AFCWG member to discuss how to best grow awareness for these important data.

Christoph Buller also presented the recent and future communication activities, including events and publications. A video on the risk assessment workflow of EFSA will be available on EFSA's website soon. FPs will receive information on how to link to the video from their national FP web pages.

Action 7: PI&E Unit of EFSA to send FPs the Eurobarometer factsheets and web-banner for the national FP web pages to link to the Eurobarometer reports.

Action 8: PI&E Unit of EFSA to inform FPs when EFSA's risk assessment workflow video is available and how to link to it from the national FP web pages.

9 SUBJECT(S) RAISED BY FOCAL POINTS

Confidentiality of data collected by EFSA

Judith Beck from Switzerland raised the issue on ensuring confidentiality of data submitted to EFSA for its data collection activities, and asked the other FPs how they deal with this issue. A number of measures are implemented at EFSA to ensure confidentiality of data and information, e.g. the Declaration of Confidentiality which needs to be signed by everyone involved with EFSA. It was proposed to have a session with DATEX in 2011 to discuss data collection at EFSA.

EU Food Safety Almanac

Brigitte Graf from the German FP gave an overview of the EU Food Safety Almanac, its aim and evolution. She highlighted the changes in the 2nd edition, the ongoing work, for which further cooperation with FPs is necessary, and gave examples on how the text is being edited to have clear language and message.

In the following discussion FPs agreed that the date of publication could be 2011. However it would be important to note in the introduction that the data and information was collected in 2010.

10 AOB

Focal Point Reporting 2010

Kerstin Gross-Helmert reminded FPs of the deadline for the annual FP reports, as well as the reporting periods. The reporting template and guideline will be uploaded in the reporting folder on Extranet. A MS Word document or printed PDF should be sent to the SCO mailbox and the original, signed document needs to be sent to SCO by courier. A separate session on FP reporting was offered to participants after the FP Meeting to clarify any open points.

Action 9: FPs to send their FP Report 2010 and all financial supporting documents to SCO mailbox (Scientific.Cooperation.@efsa.europa.eu) by 15 November 2010 at the latest.

Renewal of FP Agreements

Kerstin Gross-Helmert asked FPs to inform SCO who will sign the FP Agreement renewal for 2011. Provided availability of budget and agreement of EFSA management, the renewal documents will be sent to FPs at the beginning of January 2011 for signature.

Action 10: FPs to inform SCO (Scientific.Cooperation.@efsa.europa.eu) as soon as possible who will sign the Renewal of the Focal Point Agreement for 2011.

Medium-term planning

As previously mentioned by Jeff Moon, medium-term planning activities of EFSA and MS was discussed at the last Advisory Forum meeting in Malta. Bernhard Berger informed FPs that, at the next FP Meeting in February 2011, it is planned to discuss how to take forward the medium-term planning on scientific cooperation activities in MS. The report is under final review and will be shared with FPs once finalised. FPs were asked to prepare for the discussion at the next meeting, possibly bringing in their own medium-term planning.

Action 11: SCO to send the medium-term planning report to FPs once finalised and to give information to FPs to prepare discussion on medium-term planning in MS on scientific cooperation activities.

Action 12: FPs to prepare for discussion on medium-term planning on scientific cooperation activities in MS at the next Focal Point Meeting in 2011.

National FP event in Greece

Stamatina Louka from the Greek FP invited participants to their national FP event on nutrition in Athens in October 2010.

Promoting FP work in Finland

Kirsi-Maarit Siekkinen from the Finnish FP informed participants about a poster on their FP work, as an example of promoting FP work at national level. The poster is available on the national FP web pages.

Danish delegation visit to EFSA

Arne Büchert from the Danish FP informed the participants about the visit of a Danish delegation to EFSA, which was accompanied by the Danish Advisory Forum Member and FP. This visit highlighted the importance of EFSA and helped explain to the delegation the work carried out at national level to cooperate with EFSA. He recommended such a visit to EFSA to national authorities in other MS.

Publication of Norwegian opinion on coumarin intake

Danica Grahek-Ogden from the Norwegian FP informed participants that the opinion on coumarin intake by the Norwegian population will be published in due course.

Possibilities of tele-meetings

Kerstin Gross-Helmert presented to FPs the possibility of holding tele-meetings, and described the advantages and limitations of conference calls, web conferences and video conferences. Tele-meetings can be very useful for smaller groups, such as the IEP working group, for which a web conference had already been organised in April 2010.

Working Group on training activities on principles and methods of risk assessment in food safety

Andras Szoradi from SCO informed FPs that one of the recommendations of the report on training activities on food safety risk assessment⁴ was to investigate how risk assessment training courses could be strengthened in Europe. The first meeting of the Working Group was held in September 2010 in Parma. Its objective is to develop specifications for training on general principles and methods of risk assessment. The participants agreed on the terms of reference and discussed technicalities, including the target audience, EFSA's role, certification and fees, as well as the format and frequency of such training courses. The next meeting will be held in December 2010 to draft the technical specification.

Scientific Colloquia

Stef Bronzwaer from SCO informed FPs that the report of the 13th Scientific Colloquium on novel foods is available on EFSA's website⁵. EFSA's 15th Scientific Colloquium on emerging risks will be held on 12-13 October 2010 in Parma.

⁴ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/aboutsco/docs/scoratraining.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/colloquiareports/colloquianovelfoods.htm>

EFSA Journal

Stef Bronzwaer informed participants that the EFSA Journal is now being indexed by FSTA and hopefully soon also by CABI. This means that EFSA output is becoming searchable by bibliographical databases, which will, amongst others, increase EFSA's scientific visibility.

Future FP Meetings

For 2011, the preliminary dates are as follows:

- 10th FP meeting: 2-3 February 2011, Vienna, Austria;
- 11th FP meeting: 11-12 May 2011, Copenhagen, Denmark;
- 12th FP meeting: 5-6 October 2011, Warsaw, Poland;

FPs were reminded not to make any travel arrangements until receiving the formal invitation from EFSA. Thereafter, FPs need to book their tickets or request pre-paid tickets within five days after receiving the invitation, as indicated in EFSA mission guide. FPs were also reminded that they need an approved ADoI before registering for a meeting.

11 CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting. He again thanked the HFSO and the Hungarian FP for hosting the meeting and for their invaluable support in organising it. He also thanked the participants for attending the meeting and for their active contribution in the various discussions. He stressed the continued commitment of the SCO Unit in supporting the work of FPs.

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

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Action 9	FPs	to send their FP Report 2010 and all financial supporting documents to SCO mailbox (Scientific.Cooperation.@efsa.europa.eu) by 15 November 2010 at the latest
Action 10	FPs	to inform SCO (Scientific.Cooperation.@efsa.europa.eu) as soon as possible who will sign the Renewal of the Focal Point Agreement for 2011
Action 11	SCO	to send the medium-term planning report to FPs once finalised and to give information to FPs to prepare discussion on medium-term planning in MS on scientific cooperation activities
Action 12	FPs	to prepare for discussion on medium-term planning on scientific cooperation activities in MS at the next Focal Point Meeting in 2011