European Food Safety Authority

EFSA Management Board
Minutes of the Private Session
28 January, 9.00h – 17.30 h
Milan, Italy

Members of the Management Board present

Diána Bánáti (Chair)	Paola Testori-Coggi
Bart Sangster (Vice-Chair)	Sinikka Turunen
Sue Davies	Jiri Ruprich
Peter Gaemelke	Roland Vaxelaire
Matthias Horst	Bernhard Url
Piergiuseppe Facelli	Kostantinos Yazitzoglou

Invited Members of the Scientific Committee, Advisory Forum and Stakeholder Platform present

Prof. Vittorio Silano (SC)	Gatis Ozolins (AF)
Andreas Hensel (AF)	Andreas Varlamos (SHP)
Valérie Baduel (AF)	Annette Toft (SHP)
Alan Reilly (AF)	Geoff Thomson (SHP)

Staff of the European Food Safety Authority present

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle	Djien Liem
Riitta Maijala	Olivier Ramsayer
Hubert Deluyker	Gisèle Gizzi

1. Agenda

The Chair welcomed the Board Members to this private session. She proposed to move agenda item 6 to the beginning of the discussion followed by a short introduction focussing on an administrative issue, which will be discussed later in an open session. She then proposed administrative topics for AOB.

The agenda was adopted.

The Chair also informed the Members that in order to have more efficient discussion B. Sangster and M. Horst will be rapporteurs for the Advisory Forum and Stakeholder Platform items respectively, and a summary, conclusions and a proposed way forward will be made available after the meeting.

2. Administrative Point

An administrative issue was discussed.

3. Interaction between EFSA and the National food Safety Agencies

The Chair welcomed the members of the Advisory Forum, V. Baduel (FR), G. Ozolins (LV), A. Reilly (IRL) and noted that A. Hensel (DE) had still not arrived. The Chair also welcomed V. Silano, Chair of Scientific Committee and EFSA's Directors of Risk Assessment and Scientific Cooperation and Assistance. The Chair briefly explained that this particular private session of the Management Board aimed at looking at ways in which the Management Board can facilitate the interaction between EFSA and the Advisory Forum. She explained this was an informal and very open discussion, not referring to the work of individual Member States (MSs) but focusing on strength and weaknesses of the existing cooperation. She then invited the Advisory Forum Members to make a short introduction of the interactions between their agency and EFSA and asked B. Sangster to act as rapporteur for this discussion.

FR thanked the Board for the invitation and as a preliminary remark stated the need to clarify the position of the French Agency (AFSSA) which was, contrary to what may have been heard, very positive towards EFSA: AFSSA and EFSA had done a lot of work together and carried out numerous successful initiatives. Further work needs to be developed in specific fields such as feed additives, novel food, nutritional claims, methodology and harmonisation to mention but a few.

A closer collaboration with the scientific units is desired in order to share and build on common rules for risk assessment as already demonstrated in a few important examples. EFSA is clearly the only body able to deal with problems at EU level as was recently illustrated by the important initiative of the Colloquium in imports or the meetings with DG Research for the identification and collation of risk assessment needs at EU level. FR concluded that much has been achieved and more work can be developed together in the future.

LV thanked the Board for the opportunity to talk about interactions with EFSA and confirmed that he found no particular weaknesses in the present system but that of course there is always room to increase cooperation and outputs. LV is a small country with only limited resources allowing coverage of only specific areas of risk assessment and it is crucial to be assisted in order to fill the gaps. EFSA shares this vision and has started important improvements in cooperation: the establishment of the Focal Points has been crucial as they play a major role in exchanging information and enhancing cohesion within MSs. Another great opportunity for cooperation offered by the Advisory Forum is sharing ideas and initiatives to make MSs work more successful - the Information Exchange Platform has proven very useful in this respect and should be further developed.

EFSA is crucial in representing all MSs, particularly as it can provide opinions that are representative of all geographical regions. Data collection and risk assessment harmonisation initiatives need to be developed: in EFSA's strategic plan the development of closer cooperation internationally and with third countries has been highlighted. Import and export play a huge role and improvements towards a harmonised approach is highly required. The EU needs to start developing relationships and share experiences and EFSA can play a unique coordination role in this respect. EFSA needs MSs and MSs need EFSA.

The vision of IRL on the role of EFSA is that of a "safety net" that operates at EU level and supports MSs. Small MSs have no critical mass of either scientists or data for their own risk assessments. EFSA's complements MS work and has no closed doors: an example is the work undertaken by EFSA in the area of data analysis and dissemination. The MSs are contributing to this joint effort in getting this information to EFSA.

IRL reported various examples of success of cooperation between MSs and EFSA: product authorisation for example, is something that could not be undertaken by small countries and the work on claims has many benefits for EU consumers. Risk communication is also critical with EFSA giving access to all relevant information, Q&As etc.

The establishment of the networks has brought numerous benefits. When a MS has a problem it can now communicate with other MSs through the networks. This tool did not exist until EFSA established it. IRL cited the examples of other countries like New Zealand that are lacking such networks and are really envious of the EU system. EFSA's doors are always open and if any MSs have problems the Executive Director and her Management Team can be contacted at all times.

IRL reported also on his experience as Chair of the ESCO WG on risk/benefit on folic acid and highlighted the fundamental support received both from the EFSA secretariat and in terms of finances that allowed scientists from around the world to be brought together: a small practical example of how cooperation is working. EFSA has demonstrated that it is greater than the sum of its parts.

In December 2008 the case of animal feed contaminated with dioxin was recorded. The feed was incorporated into various food and reached 44 MSs. This was a major crisis for IRL until EFSA stepped in and, by very rapidly assessing the health risk, managed to bring out an opinion after 48 hours. This fast track advice made a great difference compared with previous incidents, with science underpinning risk management decisions. He reminded that this work in addition was carried out 1 week before Christmas with EFSA staff devoting long hours to it.

He concluded that if it may be still difficult for EFSA to handle political pressure but the benefits for consumers, farmers, processors, exporters, and the food industry were invaluable.

The Rapporteur summarised the many positive aspects and examples of cooperation that were reported, and asked the Advisory Forum representatives to give briefly 3 examples where MSs were helped by EFSA and 3 where EFSA may have performed better.

As very positive experiences, IRL mentioned again the cases of dioxins, the work on folic acid and the authorisation of health claims, stating that of course improvements are always possible and different approaches can always be tested. Harmonisation of risk assessment for example has proven difficult but rather for the lack of agreement and cooperation at MSs level than depending from EFSA.

LV agreed with IRL adding: the example of heath claims where EFSA succeeded in delivering a great number of opinions; the speedy information exchange in emergency situations (dioxin); and the work on botanicals which has proven to be an important initiative although the botanicals list has not been legalised by the EC.

FR confirmed the many positive points of cooperation and in particular: the support received on bee mortality and its assessment at EU level; the benefit of having established the Focal Points; the great value of the Information Exchange Platform; and the important work carried out on animal health for example with the Blue Tongue opinion, where EFSA took into account the opinion of various MSs and in particular the one of AFSSA. Some difficulties may have been encountered on: the nitrate and uranium opinions where information could not be effectively exchanged; diverging opinions that can be difficult to explain; and opinions based on consumption data that are not relevant for France and that may result in different assessment for French consumers. Finally difficulties have been encountered for claims where the large amount of work carried out at national level could eventually not be used by EFSA. Therefore it is crucial to work in a more efficient way in the future: this was a typical regulatory constraint, with regulation not expressing clearly if and how EFSA needs to work in collaboration with MSs.

DE joined the meeting and reminded the complexity of cooperation and the diverse situations present in the various MSs, that only 3 bodies in the EU are presently responsible solely for risk assessment and that in some situations EFSA may compete for scientists..

DE explained that: BfR is in charge of risk assessment and communicates science and uncertainty; its stakeholders are different from EFSA stakeholders being any user of their assessments; only part of its work relates to routine substances, mainly chemicals; 50% of the work is received by government; its 16 panels mirror the model of EFSA but are differently structured; industry representatives may be included in the panels together with surveillance representatives and academic scientists.

DE also informed that 10-20 of the scientists on EFSA's panels originate from BfR. The role of BfR is also to communicate risk assessment and to speed up communication in crisis situations; however its communication role is different and not well defined with EFSA. EFSA in addition plays a role with EC as major customer.

DE considers that EFSA cannot play a key role in national assessment and communication during crises as MSs refer to their own agencies in situations of emergency. In the dioxin case, BfR made its own risk assessment which was communicated before the one of EFSA. The opinion of BfR was communicated to the national press after 48 hours and soon after the crisis was solved in Germany. EFSA and national agencies have different dynamics in communication that need to be clarified.

Regarding the scientists, MSs play an important role in their education and qualification. The high time commitment required of scientists has in addition an impact on the time left for them to do science. EFSA's workload is increasing and the existing panel system might not be sustainable.

DE added that the implementation of the health claim regulation could not be considered in his view a success story insofar: some MSs spent resources and time in the pre-selection procedure but eventually unscreened lists were forwarded to EFSA by the governments.

In concluding, DE stated his positive appreciation for the work of EFSA, in particular for the authorisations but added also that 3 questions remain open: i) the role of national agencies according to their size; ii) the large workload of EFSA that must be shared within the MSs; iii) EFSA's risk communication at national level and the need to define and balance it with other agencies.

The Rapporteur asked the Management Board members to address the questions they may have to the Advisory Forum members.

Members congratulated Forum Members on the interventions and: asked comments on the need for common rules and methodologies on risk assessment and how Advisory Forum would oversee their practical implementation; stressed the importance of data collection, the need to enhance this activity and asked how the Management Board could support this work in future.

Other Members recognised in the exercise by the Advisory Forum representatives part of a SWOT analysis. This could help to identify how EFSA can progress in cooperation between MSs and EFSA in future.

A Member agreed resources in science are limited but also stressed the EU market is globalised: this dictates the need to have an EU system for risk assessment and referred specifically to the recent BfR opinion on dioxin. The need for an overall EU assessment based on EU consumption data to respond also to questions related to export is to be addressed by the EFSA opinion. The role of Advisory Forum is precisely to ensure EFSA is building the system for scientific risk assessment at EU level and larger Agencies need to appreciate this and contribute to this objective.

FR replied that, with respect to risk assessment and quality assurance methodology, a specific Working Group has been established and is on the agenda of the Advisory Forum. On data collection, important work is being carried out together with EFSA, in particular to have harmonised procedures to collect consumption data at EU level. Regarding the SWOT analysis, concrete opportunities for the development of cooperation in the area of claims, feed additives and novel foods could be envisaged in the present regulation or ad hoc regulations could be developed to better support it. The Advisory Forum needs a common strategic reflection exercise to agree on the risk assessment model we want to achieve. The importance of EU level risk assessment is recognised although data collection and exposure at national level are also unavoidable. The different perception of consumers on nutrition and the need to adapt risk management decisions at national level finally needs to be taken into account.

LV agreed on the relevance of exports and the opportunity given by EFSA to collaborate with third countries and its scientists to ensure a common approach in risk assessment.

IRL stressed the responsibility MSs have in contributing to the development of harmonised risk assessment methodologies. He highlighted the Strategic Plan of EFSA is clearly addressing the importance of data collection and of methodology harmonisation. Finally, regarding the duplication of work, IRL has taken the strategic decision not to duplicate the work of EFSA but to support EFSA to accomplish its mandate.

DE commented that EFSA has no central role for problems which are solved locally with local exposure data. EFSA's central role should be played in scientific coordination but with more clarity in responsibilities. DE urged the establishment of defined mechanisms to use and translate assessments between EFSA and the MSs.

The Members agreed on the importance of the collection and availability of data at national level and the need for a harmonised system to collect the data. They stressed the importance of trusting EFSA science, avoiding duplication of EFSA's work and confirmed its central role in EU risk assessment and in representing the EU position globally.

The Director of Scientific Cooperation and Assistance underlined the 3 main components in cooperation: the experts, the sister organisations and the networks. EFSA makes judicious use of the experts but needs to invest in science and training. EFSA works closely with MSs in relation to preparatory work with well defined processes: priorities are agreed with the Advisory Forum and the tools utilised to fund the work carried out by the MSs are grants and procurement. In addition, all data collection exercises are performed through the networks and clearly illustrated in the "EU menu" project proposal that the Management Board endorsed at its last meeting. Finally, training has a crucial role.

Other Members investigated the functioning of the Advisory Forum, whether it was an effective platform for discussion, whether the discussion covered the right subjects and whether the level of debate was appropriate.

IRL commented that the Advisory Forum gives an opportunity for all MSs to set the agenda with issues they wish to discuss, to avoid duplication and to set up various Working Groups (Communications, IT and others), giving further opportunity to discuss specific issues in detail. It is a collective responsibility to make this platform work efficiently. LV agreed on the present format of the Advisory Forum and added its crucial role in establishing the networks.

The Chair of the Scientific Committee stressed the fundamental role of the Advisory Forum for the future development of an EU system as indicated by most interventions. EFSA's founding regulation clearly describes its role but clearly the EU system is funded on national agencies and institutions. The question remains if we can accelerate or can be more efficient in promoting the establishment of the new European system. Agencies are national in nature, different from each other and dealing with national relevant issues. A more formal interaction between national authorities and EFSA needs to set up in order to establish a system where everyone's role is better recognised. This could represent the opportunity to clarify and structure the roles of the different partners in respect of the regulatory framework.

The Chair of the Scientific Committee referred o the development of risk assessment harmonisation and the 10 WGs established by the Scientific Committee to discuss RA procedures. He stated that only in some cases was there genuine interaction, as was the case for botanicals and emerging risk. For other topics revised guidelines were adopted but without major involvement of the MSs which later hesitate to accept the conclusions. He recognised the need to better structure the components of risk assessment harmonisation so that national agencies are more engaged.

He highlighted that emerging risks cover crisis situations but also data gathering and monitoring in peace time and for this the national agencies are a prerequisite for success. For data gathering, it is crucial to ensure monitoring of data production and the literature on a wide range of topics and on a regular basis: after opinions are adopted there is a very demanding system to monitor new emerging data and the structured involvement of MSs in this field could be substantial. Regarding the size of the MSs this is a reality, but areas of expertise from each national agency could be identified and built-in to a systematic cooperation model. This would also enhance expert recognition in their agencies.

A Member of the Board commented on emergency situations, where crises can become easily political crises. To avoid this, assessment needs to be as fast as possible and it is necessary to find a solution to bridge the gap

between national agency and EFSA communications. Another Member highlighted the need to distinguish risk assessment communication and risk management communication.

The Chair of the Management Board stressed the importance of EFSA's role as well as the role of national agencies. Differences among MSs, the input they can provide and some overlap in the work will always exist. Duplication however should be avoided and it is necessary to identify areas for improvements particularly in relation to diverging opinions between EFSA and agencies. The sharing of data should always be guaranteed as well as the reliance on MSs experts. The role and the representatives of the Advisory Forum and of the networks can be further clarified: the rules of the Networks will be discussed at the next Management Board meeting and comments are welcome from the Members. Further work and cooperation is anticipated for emergency situations but with better defined roles for the agencies and EFSA.

The Executive Director reminded that in the founding regulation, clear definition of roles, responsibilities and remit of EFSA can be found. The founding regulation outlines also that MSs have to cooperate with EFSA and it could be worthwhile to reflect with the Advisory Forum on the role of national food safety agencies in the EU food safety system. EFSA has already initiated a number of cooperation activities and we need to strengthen them in particular in relation with harmonisation of risk assessment methodologies and data collection. Further consideration could be given on how the national agencies can help to face the increasing routine work (applications).

DE said that: divergent scientific opinions are only a minority; the critical mass presently is the experts; and panels should avoid doing preparatory work.

FR specified the objective should not be to subcontract to individual agencies, but to make use of a collective expertise at EU level. Procedures for cooperation with MSs need to be developed to organise work like for instance in the pesticides area.

LV recommended further discussions focusing on specialisation and the role of the small countries and proposed that EFSA could start some coordination work on this.

IRL stressed the response provided by EFSA within 48 hours was remarkable and allowed EU to be back in business in 6 days. The sustainability of relying on volunteer scientists in future needs to be carefully looked at. Independence is critical, and if a fees system were introduced, these should not be addressed directly to EFSA but to the EC.

The Rapporteur summarised that interactions are part of an ongoing process and time may impact on their characteristics. EFSA and the MSs have to look at ways of working and procedures that allow them to move in the right direction. MSs are different as well as their agencies and their local roles: this needs to be accepted and furthermore should be encouraged. EFSA has a well defined EU role but an EU role for the national organisations is clearly missing. Without the existence of a specific regulation covering this aspect, the Management Board can help to clarify this situation. The crisis aspects are very interesting and illustrative: the different timing and dynamics and potential gaps in communication caused most of the difficulties between BfR and EFSA. Divergences do not occur often but could be solved.

4. Interactions between EFSA and its Stakeholders

The Chair of the Management Board welcomed the Chair (Mr A. Varlamos, AV) and the two vice-Chairs (Mrs A. Toft, AT and Mr G. Thompson, GT) of the Stakeholder Platform and thanked them for accepting the invitation of the Management Board. The aim of this meeting was to listen to views and experiences from the Stakeholder Platform members. At the last Management Board meeting a decision was taken to re-discuss after an interim period of 1 year the adoption of the new terms of references of the Stakeholder Platform. The Management Board wanted to have an opportunity to discuss with the Stakeholder Platform before the end of the interim period.

The Management Board Chair asked the Stakeholder Platform members to first share their views with the Management Board and asked M. Horst to be the Rapporteur for this item on the agenda.

AV thanked the Board and the Chair for the invitation and for the opportunity to share their views also on behalf of other Stakeholder Platform members. He informed the Board that the members of the Stakeholder Platform are satisfied with their interactions and activities with EFSA. The improved interactions with EFSA and the present planning and structuring of the meetings are providing a good opportunity for the Stakeholder Platform to meet between them and with EFSA and exchange views.

He explained the Stakeholder Platform consists of very different organisations and interests which would not often have the opportunity to meet and discuss together. The guiding principles for the Stakeholder Platform are transparency, the balanced representativeness of the partners and the dialogue. He informed the Board that recently the platform has moved towards a more organised format and type of interaction which is a significant improvement.

With regards to more operational aspects, the Stakeholder Platform would like to see earlier notification of meeting dates, circulation of agenda and of the documents to be discussed in order to be well prepared and have a more efficient discussion. He then acknowledged EFSA's efforts to enhance all of these aspects.

AV mentioned a few areas for improvement. Some specific rules would be useful on the participation of associate members and observers. He added that the role of the Stakeholder Platform should be central to EFSA's stakeholder activities through a possible coordination role. Regarding the composition, further discussion is necessary on the definition of stakeholder: this differs very much from one MSs to another. Further needs would be to define and structure the WGs so that they can operate effectively. Finally, the decision process and the actors involved in the decision process should also be better defined.

For AT, representing COPA-COGECA and therefore all primary producers of the EU, it is crucial that risk assessment is sound and scientific above all. For stakeholders, world trade is crucial and in particular for emerging issues and new technologies the interest of the stakeholders focuses on the need to have scientific information available before political solutions intervene.

Transparency and the way decisions are taken are fundamental and the split between risk assessment and risk management is now clear among all stakeholders. Looking at the scientific topics, nutrition and claims are clearly important but EFSA should also look at other issues that could be far more critical to safety: EFSA should not just look at what EC asks but focus on risks to human and animal health. Cost effectiveness is another important aspect and in particular stakeholders are interested in the timelines with which new products are risk assessed. She suggested the use of the national Focal Points to act as ambassadors and to communicate EFSA's work in the MSs. Finally, consumer perception of risk is different in all MSs and should also be addressed.

GT representing the CIAA stakeholder group congratulated EFSA on the significant improvements achieved by the Stakeholder Platform in the last period: in particular the last meeting was the best meeting ever and extremely

successful. The Stakeholder Platform has clearly moved away from the previous format, with successive presentations of EFSA, to an open discussion on key issues, processes, objectives and essential steps involved in achieving them. This allows Platform members to accurately report back to the stakeholder groups on how their concerns were addressed, demonstrating that the Stakeholder Platform is fulfilling its role. The establishment of specific WGs to discuss some issues in more depth could be effective in supporting the Stakeholder Platform which meets only three times per year.

The Rapporteur summarised the many valuable aspects reported so far by the Stakeholder Platform representatives and asked to structure the discussion on 3 major questions:

1) are the expectations of the stakeholders met by the Stakeholder Platform?

2) is the Stakeholder Platform composition appropriate?

3) is the Stakeholder Platform satisfied with the working conditions and methods

AV reported that the members are satisfied and aim at moving to an even more interactive approach. The EFSA secretariat can be satisfied with the level of dialogue achieved with the Stakeholder Platform.

In terms of improvements, GT asked for an annual discussion on the expectations of the Stakeholder Platform, looking at deliverables for the year so as to better prioritize topics. The achievement of the goals would help in answering the question on satisfaction.

A Board Member highlighted the need to clearly define what the expectations of the Stakeholder Platform are: EFSA can better explain the scientific process and the Stakeholder Platform can better explain its concerns but the scientific processes can not be influenced. Regarding the observer she asked the Stakeholder Platform view on the possibility of involving all group of stakeholders in the discussion: associate and observers.

Other Members commented that expectations and impacts are different between the different stakeholders. The definition of the role of the platform needs also to be taken into account as this is not a body that can endorse decisions.

AT confirmed the role of the Stakeholder Platform is clearly stated in the Terms of Reference and AV added that what the Stakeholder Platform expects from EFSA is regular communication and information on latest news. The stakeholders are not aiming at influencing risk assessment processes, but want to listen and be listened to.

A Member commented that the Stakeholder Platform certainly has improved its role but that adopting a central position for stakeholder engagement could become impractical and dangerous in relation to balance of interests. There are other important mechanisms to engage with stakeholders that should be maintained. She then asked what are the views of consumers on this as they have various concerns about the balance and would lack resources to attend WGs and meetings.

A Member reflected that the Stakeholder Platform is complex, with very different representatives each of them playing an individual role within its group. Often the various organisations are represented by different people: is this a matter of concern or is this aiming at giving voice to the complexity of each member?

GT explained that the representatives of the Stakeholder Platform have to take views and express the positions of the majority of their membership..

AT added that, when approached by small organisations, their views and points have always been taken up at the Stakeholder Platform. The 24 members cannot represent the whole of EU activity but are the channel to help EFSA in getting in touch with them.

A Board Member reported his experience as an expert of an EFSA panel, the problem of terminology and the complexity of the scientific decisions process. His expectation from the Stakeholder Platform is that it will help reflecting on the process of scientific evaluation.

AV confirmed that the Stakeholder Platform understands EFSA processes and work, the effect of its outputs and that it may have a more proactive role in the future.

The Director of Risk Assessment reminded the Board of the many targeted stakeholder meetings and events organised in different MSs at which EFSA staff and experts participate and explain specific scientific issues to a targeted stakeholder audience. This was the case for example of the recent meeting on claims. Many activities are undertaken outside the Stakeholder Platform umbrella and she asked how these activities should be linked with the platform and what is the relationship between the audiences involved and the Stakeholder Platform. She suggested including these aspects into the Stakeholder Platform definition. She concluded by highlighting the important of the role of the platform during public consultations and in alerting EFSA on issues in the pipeline and asked how stakeholder involvement could be enhanced.

GT agreed on the relevance of the other consultation processes and how effectively they respond to specific needs. The Stakeholder Platform could reflect and review with EFSA staff the extent to which the specific activities and the technical consultations are meeting or not the expectations and needs of the stakeholders. These two types of consultation seem to go on in parallel without coming together in the Stakeholder Platform, so this is certainly something to look at in the future.

AT mentioned the excellent work EFSA is carrying out when presenting specific items, both in terms of scientific and legal aspects, to meetings involving small stakeholders. She suggested that very technical items should not be discussed in the Stakeholder Platform which should focus on strategic aspects. Stakeholders have information on many items and could help in flagging emerging risks to EFSA.

The Rapporteur invited EFSA to also share its views on the work of the Stakeholder Platform and to comment on the previous intervention.

The Executive Director thanked the Stakeholder Platform representatives for the very encouraging comments regarding the latest progress and promised further enhancements. EFSA is very satisfied with the Stakeholder Platform contribution and confirmed the activity is growing and the discussions are interesting and lively. Discussions are always constructive and add value to EFSA's work.

The Stakeholder Platform has matured and it is now time to move further. She then outlined the 3 main areas to be developed with the support of the Stakeholder Platform: i) transparency and openness, through a better understanding and engagement in the RA processes ii) sharing of annual programmes: many activities are already developed together and a more formal consultation of the annual work programme with the Stakeholder Platform could be envisaged iii) on emerging risks and new technologies, an new initiative will be shortly launched: EFSA is aware of the amount of information the Stakeholder Platform have access to in this area and will involve stakeholders through a network constituted by the platform, the MSs and their national agencies, the EC, risk managers and other EU agencies.

AV thanked the Executive Director for the suggestions and agreed that the Stakeholder Platform would take these into account and see how to work on them. GT agree on supporting EFSA on transparency.

The Rapporteur summarised the overall satisfaction expressed by the Stakeholder Platform regarding expectations and interactions. This Stakeholder Platform has achieved much and has already led to a better understanding of EFSA as a risk assessor. EFSA is also satisfied with the Stakeholder Platform and has put forward some proposals for improvement to be developed in the future. He then moved to the second question and asked the Stakeholder Platform representatives to comment on the composition of Stakeholder Platform, the adequacy of its size, and the different type of membership.

AV commented the present size of 24 members is sufficient, satisfactory and balanced. After defining what stakeholders are, it is important to recognise the categories of stakeholders and check if they have adequate representation in the platform.

GT stated that the presence of small interest groups would not be practical and therefore he would not recommend enlarging the Stakeholder Platform further.

AT commented that the many requests for joining the Stakeholder Platform are indicative of its success. A necessary criterion should be that the stakeholder represents an EU interest. For the involvement of very large companies new ways may be found but single companies or national interests should not be represented at the Stakeholder Platform level.

A Member reported that from the last call, 43 eligible candidates for the Stakeholder Platform were found. To respect proportionality and representativeness, many of these 43 candidates should not be sitting in the platform. He suggested maintaining the 24 full members, to have no associate members but open to observers. He suggested the definition of 4-5 general interest groups (i.e. consumers, farmers, NGOs etc.), decide on the allocation of a number of members to each group and select within each group the 3-4 most representative organisations.

The Board asked: if there were gaps in the representativeness or duplication of interests; if the present terms of reference of the Stakeholder Platform clearly distinguish associate members from observers; and if it is necessary to clarify how the associate members can be involved.

AT informed the audience that presently there are associate members on the list linked to very specific political interests and that these may be relevant for only a relatively short length of time. She agreed that the presence of the observers is not a problem.

AV asked whether the organisations representing manufacturers could be rationalised. The criteria of group categorisation could help in achieving the right balance and GT added that attendance should also be taken into account.

The Rapporteur confirmed that, in the terms of reference the permanent members, the associate members and the observers are cited but it is necessary to clarify each role better, e.g. who can participate, who can take the floor or who is sitting at the table on a specific invitation. AV agreed that the definition and role of the associate member is a grey area and need to be clarified.

Some Board members considered that the associate member status was no longer necessary. Rules would be required also to decide which topic can be discussed at the Stakeholder Platform and what goes to specific consultation. Finally, discussion and agreement on criteria is necessary.

The rapporteur introduced the last point covering working methods. The Stakeholder Platform representatives confirmed the frequency of meetings is adequate and regarding the preparation of meetings the circulation of information and documents in advance could be improved to allow better preparation of the meetings. The Board confirmed that WGs may be appropriate when there are topics of particular interests. The Executive Director added that the establishment of WGs should be agreed with the Stakeholder Platform in relation to topics, mandate and composition.

The Rapporteur concluded that this Platofrm is very positively perceived by all parties and should continue. There is room for improvement and agreement was rapidly reached on the size and the need for clear criteria for the membership. The terms of references will be revised and the issue of WGs will be further investigated.

The Chair thanked everyone for participating in this discussion which will helped the Board to make the best decision regarding the adoption of the revised terms of references of the Stakeholder Platform. Agreement has been reached on a few points and further points for discussion have been identified. This open discussion has proven very useful and regular feedback from Stakeholder Platform would support the Management Board in this area of responsibility. She then concluded that criteria will be established, terms of reference will be re-drafted and a decision will be taken on the membership. She thanked the representatives for their participation and for reporting back to the whole Stakeholder Platform.

5. AOB

Conclusions

All Members recognised the usefulness of the discussion with the Advisory Forum and Stakeholder Platform. The Chair suggested that the presentation of the revised Terms of Reference of the Stakeholder Platform will be done during the June meeting.

The Executive Director informed the Board that she will give feedback on the outcome of the discussion to the Advisory Forum at the February meeting and suggested to present the final report at the April meeting so to get feedback from all the Advisory Forum members, identify the key questions and come back to the Management Board.

The Chair and the Board discussed the possibility of organising a common meeting involving all Management Board and Advisory Forum members and the possibility of establishing a Working Group. It was agreed to organise a meeting between Advisory Forum and Management Board in 2011 and to circulate first the summary of the discussion to the Advisory Forum members and to re-discuss the possibility of establishing a WG at the March Management Board meeting.

The Executive Director and Members stressed the importance of having a clear vision on the expected outcome of a common meeting and clear terms of references. The Executive Director suggested also that the Advisory Forum should be empowered to provide suggestions to the Management Board on new initiatives.

A Member stressed the importance of the MSs in helping EFSA in its workload, acknowledged the several tools already existing for cooperation and asked EFSA to further streamline these tools. She added that, with respect to the feasibility of establishing fees for applications, the EC is working on the report that should be available at the June meeting of the Board. Another Member encouraged the Board to seek for different scenarios and approaches to improve cooperation with MSs

Other administrative points (ways of working of the MB – Indemnities)

Other administrative issues were discussed.