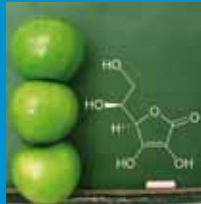


# Scientific Cooperation between EFSA and Member States



TAKING STOCK AND LOOKING AHEAD

Committed to ensuring that Europe's food is safe

Scientific cooperation between EFSA and Member States is crucial to help build risk assessment capacity across Europe and address effectively the needs of risk managers. This brochure aims to help raise awareness amongst the various organisations and potential partners in the EU Member States about the need to consolidate risk assessment resources and to further strengthen scientific cooperation with EFSA.

## Background

Established to help ensure a high level of consumer protection and contribute to restoring and maintaining confidence in the EU food supply, EFSA is committed to delivering independent scientific advice. The challenge EFSA is facing can only be met through cooperation and the intelligent use and sharing of resources, data and expertise. Scientific cooperation between EFSA and EU Member States is therefore crucial and a key priority for EFSA. It takes place at all levels: from national competent authorities to scientific organisations and individual experts.

Through its Strategic Plan 2009-2013, EFSA has put in place a multi-annual plan. To even better face the challenges ahead, the Strategic Plan was complemented by a medium-term plan on the scientific cooperation activities of EFSA's Scientific Committee, its Panels and Units in the area of food and feed safety, nutrition, animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection. The planned medium-term activities have been summarised in the report 'Scientific Cooperation between EFSA and Member States: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead' published on the EFSA website (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/97e.htm>). The report covers data collection, research and scientific evaluation activities which underpin EFSA's work.

# EFSA's scientific cooperation partners

The Advisory Forum, Focal Points and dedicated networks are key vehicles for data and information exchange, and consultation between EFSA and Member States. The importance of networks, both for supporting the risk assessment process and for data collection programmes, will further increase. These networks facilitate scientific cooperation through the coordination of activities, the exchange of information (e.g. on recent risk assessment activities or on data collection), the development and implementation of joint projects (e.g. scientific events and workshops), and the exchange of expertise and best practice in the fields within EFSA's mission. Under Article 36 of Regulation (EC) 178/2002, EFSA can award grants to organisations that have been officially nominated by Permanent Representations of Member States to assist EFSA in its tasks - a successful way to bring together expertise and resources at national and EU levels.

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## Advisory Forum

EFSA's Advisory Forum connects EFSA with the national food safety authorities of all 27 EU Member States, Iceland, and Norway. Its members represent each national body responsible for food safety risk assessment in the EU, Iceland and Norway, with observers from Switzerland and the European Commission. It is chaired by EFSA's Executive Director. Through the Forum, EFSA and the Member States can join forces in addressing European risk assessment and risk communication issues. Members use the Forum to advise EFSA on scientific matters, its work programme and priorities, and to raise emerging issues.

## Focal Points

Focal Points act as the interface between EFSA and national food safety authorities in the EU Member States. They support the Advisory Forum members in the implementation of joint projects between Member States and EFSA. Focal Points ensure the exchange of scientific information among competent authorities in Member States and between Member States and EFSA. They provide advice on joint projects, such as the Expert Database and cooperation with competent organisations under Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation. They also assist in raising EFSA's scientific visibility and outreach in Member States.

## Networks of scientific organisations

The aim of networks is to support EFSA and Member States in carrying out its mission. Members of networks represent the national competent organisation by which they are appointed. Representatives of the Commission and of other organisations, including those from outside the EU with specific expertise may also be invited to participate in the work of EFSA networks.



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In addition, the Authority commissions scientific projects through procurement. The total amount of EFSA funds dedicated to cooperation projects with organisations in Member States in order to support EFSA in its scientific tasks has considerably increased. From €2.9 million in 2007 to €7.8 million in 2010, EFSA has spent approximately €16 million in funds for grant and procurement activities (approximately €6.7 million on grants and €9.3 million on procurement projects, including agreements).

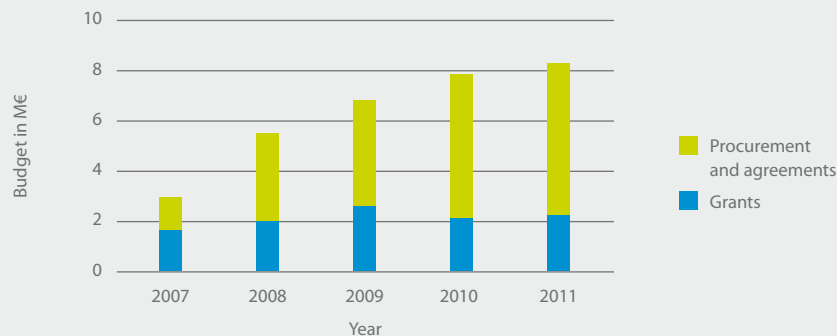


Figure 1: Total amounts (in €) spent (2007-2010) and planned (2011) for procurements/agreements and grants between 2007 and 2011

Effective pooling of excellence is also supported through EFSA's steadily growing Expert Database, which is accessible both to EFSA and to competent authorities in Member States allowing them to search and identify the most appropriate experts available.

## Scientific cooperation activities

Providing the best possible and most comprehensive scientific advice to risk managers requires a multidisciplinary and integrated approach. This is being achieved not only by the contribution of expertise from all around Europe, but also by cooperating closely with scientific organisations in Member States on issues related to risk assessment. Data collection programmes, organisation of scientific colloquia and workshops, public consultations on scientific outputs of EFSA as well as the regular exchange of information on risk assessment activities carried out in the Member States, have proved to be successful scientific cooperation activities in recent years and will therefore be continued in the future. Other mechanisms for cooperation have also been successfully established: the Expert Database, the Information Exchange Platform, and the network of Article 36 organisations.

## Risk communications

Alongside effective scientific cooperation, communications and dialogue on risk assessment is equally important. The promotion of coherence in risk communications was therefore identified as one of the four priority areas for strengthening the cooperation and networking between the Member States and EFSA. Cooperation and coherence in communications, implemented through the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group (AFCWG), has been strengthened through: continued pre-notification of public announcements on EFSA's scientific work; proactive exchanges on key issues such as GMOs, food colours, and nanotechnology; and the exchange of information on "emerging issues" in individual Member States, focusing on the implications for communications. Risk communications guidelines are currently under development.



## Advisory

Risk Assessment

EFSA Network

Risk Communication

Article 36

Information

EFSA Expert

Data Collection

## Focal

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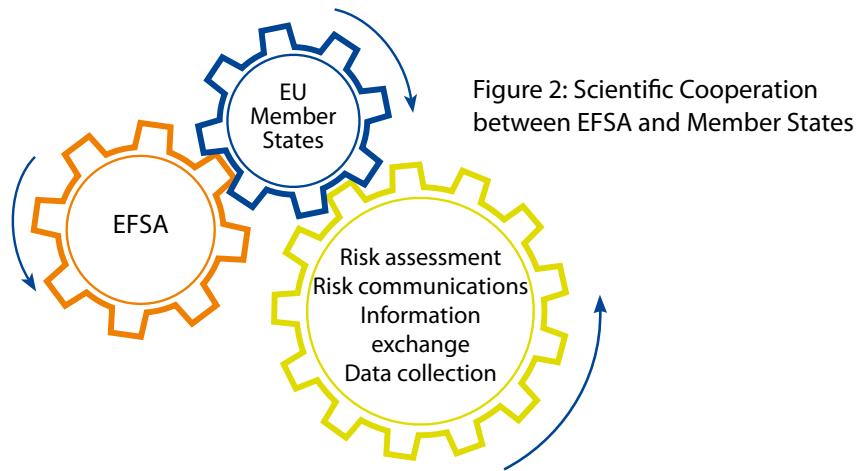
## ■ Future challenges in scientific cooperation between EFSA and Member States

EFSA will continue to see its workload increase, particularly concerning the safety assessment of regulated substances, products and claims submitted for authorisation in the EU. Increasing efficiency is therefore key. Boosting risk assessment capacity in Europe is important to meet this growing need for scientific advice. EFSA will therefore need to further build on its scientific cooperation with Member States, whose commitment to collaboration is crucial.

EFSA brings together the extensive scientific expertise available across Europe and seeks to foster its efficient use. The Advisory Forum, the Focal Points and the dedicated networks make sure that the data and information exchange, consultations, and work sharing between EFSA Member States' competent authorities take place.

In addition, cooperation tools, such as targeted and public consultations, the cooperation via workshops and scientific colloquia, have further evolved. Furthermore, seminars have been organised in Member States to raise awareness of EFSA's work.





All these activities, which have been started or solidified in recent years, have resulted in clear benefits:

- > ability to deal with an increasing workload, while increasing quality and efficiency;
- > building on existing work and reduction of duplication of efforts;
- > increased consistency and quality of data;
- > harmonisation of risk assessment requirements and convergence in the interpretation of scientific information.

The information provided in the report is meant to inform the Advisory Forum, competent authorities and organisations included in the Article 36 list on EFSA's activities planned for the coming years. It provides the basis for a broader discussion and prioritisation in Member States. The members of the Advisory Forum, supported by their respective Focal Point, have a crucial role in initiating and steering this discussion which will help identify the capacity and core competencies of each Member State. These will be used to ensure that EFSA can cope with the increasing workload and fulfil its mission.

In addition to discussions between EFSA and competent authorities in Member States on medium-term planning, EFSA will work together with the European Commission to anticipate the tasks allocated to EFSA in the coming years and optimise cooperation to meet expectations.



# Examples of efficient scientific cooperation

## 1. Contaminants in the food chain

Member States cooperate with EFSA by submitting occurrence data for various contaminants in food and/or feed (e.g. heavy metals, persistent organic pollutants, and marine biotoxins). Dietary habits can vary considerably between Member States. Hence, it is important to assess exposure in the Member States. A good example is a series of risk assessments related to marine biotoxins carried out by the Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM). The unit dealing with Data Collection and Exposure (DATEX) collected data from EU Member States on both toxin occurrence and shellfish portions consumed in single meals. The CONTAM Panel identified 400 g of shellfish meat as an appropriate estimate of a large portion size consumed in Europe. The data was then used in risk assessment with the aim of helping to protect consumers with a high consumption of shellfish against acute effects of marine biotoxins.

## 2. Genetically modified organisms

Since 2005, EFSA also ensures a close collaboration with competent authorities in Member States in the framework of applications in the area of genetically modified organisms (GMO) for cultivation (submitted under Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003). In this context, EFSA collaborates with competent authorities of Member States that have volunteered to take charge of the initial Environmental Risk Assessment (ERA) of GMO applications for cultivation. In 2010 the dialogue with competent authorities in Member States has further been strengthened through the creation of a network, where scientific experts from competent authorities and EFSA work together.

## 3. Biological hazards

With regard to biological hazards (covered by the BIOHAZ Panel) cooperation with Member States takes place through the networks on spongiform encephalopathies (BSE-TSE) and Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA). These networks have identified emerging issues and triggered several self-tasking mandates with the aim of better protecting European consumers.

# between EFSA and Member States

## 4. Zoonoses

In close cooperation with the Member State network on zoonoses, EFSA's Zoonoses Data Collection Unit (ZOOSE) collects, analyses, and reports data on zoonoses, antimicrobial resistance, microbiological contaminants and food-borne outbreaks. These reports are key tools for risk managers, for example to monitor progress in the achievement of targets in disease occurrence with the aim of protecting human health. The unit further extracts specific datasets to support the preparation of scientific opinions requested by the European Commission to the Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ) and the Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW). Datasets have been provided on for example:

- > opinions on *Salmonella* targets in breeding poultry flocks and flocks of laying hens;
- > quantitative Microbiological Risk Assessments (QMRA) on *Salmonella* in pigs and *Campylobacter* in broiler meat;
- > opinions on the assessment of the risk of echinococcosis and porcine brucellosis (*Brucella suis*).

## 5. Pesticides

EFSA is responsible for the EU peer review of active substances used in plant protection products to evaluate their safety for consumers, animals and the environment. This task is carried out in line with procedures and deadlines set out in European legislation. It involves applicants, Member States' competent authorities and the European Commission. The Regulation on Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) of pesticides foresees the coordination of several data collection activities by EFSA. This work is done in collaboration with Member States and is coordinated by the Pesticide Risk Assessment Peer Review (PRAPeR) Unit, whilst the Plant Protection Products and their Residues (PPR) Panel is responsible for the establishment of risk assessment guidance of these compounds on which Member States' competent authorities are consulted.

