

**TECHNICAL REPORT OF EFSA**

**Focal Point Activities 2010<sup>1</sup>**

**European Food Safety Authority<sup>2, 3</sup>**

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Parma, Italy

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<sup>1</sup> On request from EFSA, Question No EFSA-Q-2011-00074, issued on 23/3/2011

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## SUMMARY

As in the previous two years, following the positive evaluation of their work, renewals of the Focal Point Agreements were signed in 2010 with the 27 EU Member States and with Norway. Switzerland and the three EU Candidate Countries continued to participate in the activities and meetings of the Focal Points as observers.

Throughout 2010 Focal Points have collected and shared information amongst themselves and with EFSA and have disseminated specific information to their national networks. A total of 127 requests were sent to Focal Points, 32 of which were sent from individual Focal Points to the other Focal Points. The latter number has considerably increased, compared to the 8 requests in 2008 and 7 in 2009, demonstrating the consolidation of the network.

Focal Points have collected and uploaded documents onto the Information Exchange Platform, which contained over 830 documents by December 2010. The sharing of 2010 annual, strategic and multi-annual work plans as well as planned activities between countries and EFSA can contribute to a more coordinated planning of risk assessment activities and help avoid duplication of work.

Regarding Article 36 cooperation, the priorities for Focal Points in 2010 were to ensure that the list of competent organisations is up-to-date, to stimulate Article 36 organisations to apply for calls published by EFSA, and to foster the use of the newly developed IT tools. The basis for Focal Point activities with Article 36 organisations are their strong national networks.

With the support of Focal Points, the number of scientific experts applying to the Expert Database has continued to grow in 2010. Focal Points have presented, distributed or published information on EFSA's Expert Database. Member States are also using the Expert Database to find suitable expertise.

Focal Points, with strong collaboration of their Advisory Forum Communication Working Group (AFCWG) representatives, have continued to increase awareness, understanding and outreach of their own organisation's and EFSA's work, through an increasing number of communication channels and newly developed communication tools, to national networks. Furthermore, Focal Points have organised 50 events, which ranged from specific seminars to international conferences. Focal Points have also contributed to over 100 national and international events with presentations, posters and written contributions.

To further consolidate the scientific cooperation between Member States and EFSA, the following priorities are proposed for Focal Points in 2011:

- support their Advisory Forum members in initiating and organising discussions on medium-term planning at Member State level to identify capacities and core competences of competent authorities and scientific organisations in each Member State;
- support EFSA in promoting the call on the renewal of the Scientific Committee and Panels for 2012-2015;
- support EFSA and the Permanent Representations in their Member States in consolidating the Article 36 list of competent organisations, thereby improving its functionality,
- stimulate Article 36 organisations to apply for Article 36 calls and foster the networking between Article 36 organisations, particularly by promoting and using the newly developed IT tools (Article 36 Database, Article 36-NET);
- increase the outreach to Member States' target audiences by strengthening the cooperation with their AFCWG member; and
- continue the work on:
  - sharing information on risk assessment with a view to improve the harmonisation of risk assessment methodologies, by uploading all relevant risk assessment documents onto the Information Exchange Platform, including planned activities in the area of risk assessment;

- promoting the application of experts to EFSA's Expert Database, in particular in scientific and geographical areas currently underrepresented, and stimulating the use of the Expert Database by Member States for their own risk assessment activities; and
- using the Focal Point websites and national events as tools to disseminate information and to raise the visibility of Focal Points' and EFSA's work.

**KEYWORDS**

(Focal Points, Scientific Cooperation, Information Exchange)

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## BACKGROUND

The “Strategy for Cooperation and Networking between EU Member States and EFSA”<sup>4</sup>, from December 2006, called for the establishment of the Focal Points, which became operational in early 2008. In 2010 EFSA and its Member States continued for the third year their cooperation through Focal Point Agreements. Since the very beginning Norway and Switzerland actively participate in the Focal Point work as observers. The EU Candidate Countries (Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey) joined the Focal Points as observers in September 2009.

The main task of the Focal Points is to provide technical support to their Advisory Forum member. The Focal Point ensures the exchange of information amongst Member States, EEA/EFTA and pre-accession countries, and EFSA; provides advice and assistance to EFSA for the Article 36 network and EFSA’s Expert Database; and helps raising EFSA’s scientific visibility and outreach in the EU Member States and beyond. All strategic issues and decision-making remain the responsibility of the Advisory Forum.

In line with the Focal Point Agreements, all Member States have provided EFSA with detailed reports of their key activities performed in 2010, together with a justification of the financial resources used in the implementation of the tasks assigned to Focal Points. The current Report on “Focal Point Activities 2010” is based on these annual national Focal Point reports and gives an overview of the activities of the entire Focal Point network in 2010.

The activities of the Focal Points in their first two years of existence are summarised in the two reports on Focal Point Activities 2008<sup>5</sup> and 2009<sup>6</sup>.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Scientific Cooperation Unit of EFSA – based on request from the EFSA Management – compiles all annual national Focal Point reports in a yearly summary report to provide a comprehensive overview on the work of the Focal Point network.

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<sup>4</sup> Strategy for Cooperation and Networking, December 2006,  
[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/DocumentSet/mb\\_strategy\\_28thmee\\_en\\_6a.1.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/DocumentSet/mb_strategy_28thmee_en_6a.1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/fp/docs/fpactivities2008.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/fp/docs/fpactivities2009.pdf>

## OVERVIEW OF FOCAL POINT WORK IN 2010

### 1. Prolongation of Focal Point Agreements

Focal Point Agreements were signed with all EU Member States for the first time in 2008. In 2009, new Focal Point Agreements were signed. These extended until 31 December 2009 and allowed for the possibility of four annual renewals. The first renewals of the Agreements were concluded in 2010.

After entry into force of the EEA Joint Committee Decision No 134/2007, Iceland and Norway became full members of EFSA's Advisory Forum. Having been an active part of the Focal Point network as observer since 2008, Norway signed a Focal Point Agreement with EFSA in September 2010. Iceland has officially nominated its Focal Point and contact person and has indicated an interest in signing a first Focal Point Agreement in 2011.

Switzerland and the EU Candidate Countries Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey continued to participate in the work of the Focal Point network and its meetings as observers.

Within EFSA, the Scientific Cooperation Unit continues to be the main contact for Focal Points. The Unit coordinates all formal correspondence between Focal Points and EFSA, manages the Focal Point Agreements and national Focal Point reports, drafts the annual Focal Point Activities Reports, and provides the secretariat for the Focal Point meetings.

The Focal Point Agreements were formally renewed in 2010. Norway has signed its first Agreement with EFSA. All 27 EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland and the three EU Candidate Countries have continued to actively participate in the Focal Point work and its meetings. Iceland has nominated its Focal Point and is interested in signing its first Agreement in 2011.

## 2. Focal Point activities

Focal Points were established to support their Advisory Forum members, in particular with the following tasks:

- to facilitate the exchange of scientific information;
- to support activities under Article 36;
- to support the population of EFSA's Expert Database; and
- to raise the visibility of EFSA's scientific work and EFSA's outreach, at national level.

Following a proposal from the Focal Point network, the Advisory Forum, at its 35<sup>th</sup> meeting in Seville (11-12 February 2010), agreed upon the main priorities for Focal Points for 2010:

- to continue uploading relevant documents on the Information Exchange Platform and to ensure the exchange of information/data on hot topics;
- to maintain the Article 36 list of competent organisations, to stimulate Article 36 organisations to apply for calls published by EFSA and to foster them using the newly developed IT tools;
- to facilitate the cooperation between EFSA and national lists/databases of scientific experts;
- to extend Member States target audience networks in cooperation with the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group (AFCWG) member to disseminate information;
- to further develop Focal Point websites to function as one central communication tool on food safety in the Member State;
- to continue the organisation of national scientific events.

The Scientific Cooperation Unit organised three Focal Point meetings in 2010, to support Focal Points with their tasks by providing background information, guidance, training and a platform for networking. Priority was given to exchanging views and experiences in the practical implementation of Focal Point tasks, as well as to the exchange of information related to Focal Point activities. The meetings are characterised by constructive discussions with active contributions from all participants.

To evaluate the organisation and content of the Focal Point meetings, Focal Points provided feedback via a questionnaire and during discussion sessions. The respondents much appreciated the open and trustful atmosphere. The Focal Point meetings were seen as highly valuable, particularly regarding the possibility to have free discussions and exchange experiences, intensify personal contacts with other Focal Points, and get information about other countries' and EFSA's work.

The basis for all Focal Point activities is a strong national network. Nearly all Focal Points have further broadened and developed their networks in 2010. Moreover, all Focal Points have developed corporate e-mail addresses, which are published on EFSA's website and national Focal Point web pages. This enables experts and organisations to directly contact the Focal Point in their country.

## 2.1. Exchange of scientific information

Exchanging scientific information at EU-level is pivotal to effective scientific cooperation between Member States and EFSA and therefore remained a major task of Focal Points. As in previous years, Focal Points have continued to collect and share scientific data and information amongst themselves and with EFSA. Depending on the nature of the information, it was either disseminated by e-mail or uploaded directly onto the Information Exchange Platform.

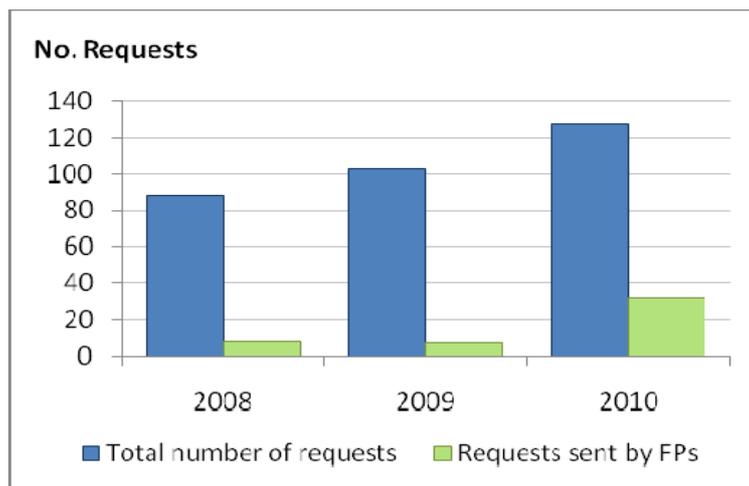
### 2.1.1. Requests for sharing information and data

EFSA and Member States have requested assistance and input on specific issues to mutually benefit from existing information and data. Focal Points have forwarded and disseminated specific information to their national networks. In addition, Focal Points have collected data and information, which they shared with EFSA and other countries.

A total of 127 requests for assistance and input have been sent to Focal Points in 2010, either from EFSA (via the Scientific Cooperation Unit), or from the Focal Points themselves. These included:

- requests to complete questionnaires, e.g. on total diet studies, foodborne viruses, and the use of the Information Exchange Platform;
- requests to disseminate and provide replies to EFSA calls for data and contributions;
- requests to disseminate information from EFSA on scientific colloquia, workshops, public consultations, calls for expressions of interest and tenders (including Article 36 calls);
- request to identify suitable individuals as members of the Information Exchange Platform Working Group;
- monthly requests to upload risk assessment outputs, requests, work plans and country specific information onto the Information Exchange Platform;
- information on the newly launched Article 36 Database and request to review the data in the database;
- request to support EFSA in promoting the Expert Database;
- request to disseminate the Eurobarometer findings;
- request to check, and if necessary update, the links on national Focal Point web pages, following the upgrade of EFSA's website;
- requests from Focal Points, e.g. information on Hepatitis A infection in semi-dried tomatoes, pine nuts and taste disturbances, volatile substances in horseradish, and growth factors in dairy products;
- request to check their respective part of the BfR EU Food Safety Almanac;
- information from Focal Points on national/international events, such as scientific events and colloquia.

The national Focal Point reports document that all Focal Points have actively disseminated information to their national networks and have responded to the various requests. The total number of requests has increased from 88 and 103 in 2008 and 2009, respectively, to 127 in 2010. The number of requests sent by Focal Points to all other Focal Points has increased more than four-fold compared to 2009 (Figure 1: ), reflecting the consolidation and growing importance of the Focal Point network over the past three years. The number of requests sent by EFSA to Focal Points in 2010 has remained similar to the previous years. This indicated that information and requests from EFSA are being channelled more efficiently to the relevant networks, which have partially been newly created over the past years.



**Figure 1:** Number of request sent to Focal Points (FPs) by EFSA and Focal Points

Throughout 2010 Focal Points have continued to collect and share information amongst themselves and with EFSA on a variety of topics and issues related to risk assessment. Specific requests and questionnaires (e.g. on the total diet studies, melamine migration into food, and food additives), supported the work of EFSA’s Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and Units. Moreover, the requested and compiled information was also essential for further cooperation activities between Member States and EFSA (e.g. the exchange of planned activities in the area of risk assessment of food and feed). In 2010, the number of requests for information, sent by Focal Points to the other Focal Points, has increased more than four-fold compared to 2009, demonstrating the consolidation of the network.

### 2.1.2. Information Exchange Platform

The Information Exchange Platform continued to be a valuable tool for the two-way exchange of relevant scientific information, including documents which are otherwise not easily accessible. An evaluation of the Information Exchange Platform<sup>7</sup>, carried out in summer 2010, showed that for Focal Points the main use of the Information Exchange Platform was to:

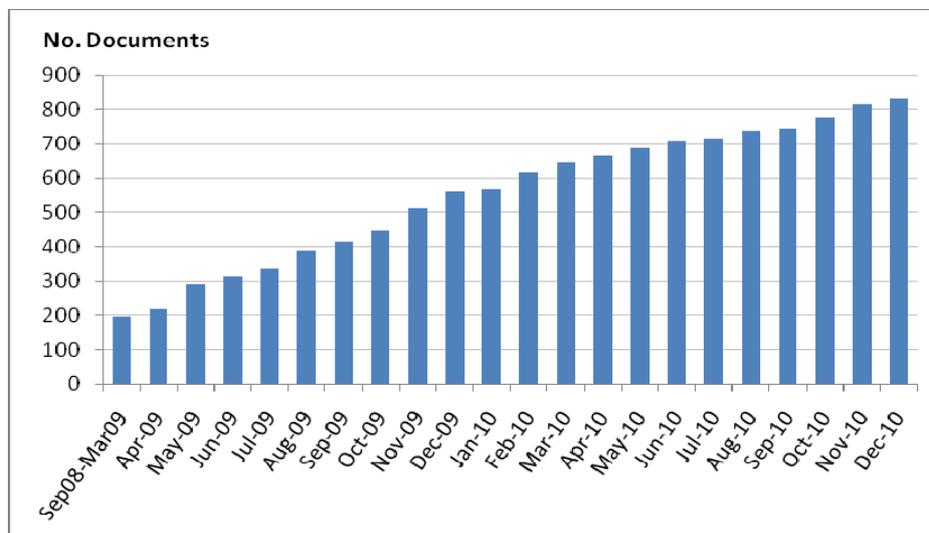
- help inform risk assessors in their organisation or country about risk assessment activities or outputs in other countries; and
- keep informed on risk assessment activities or outputs in a particular scientific area and/or other countries.

Another important aspect of using the Information Exchange Platform was to contribute to risk assessment harmonisation in the EU by sharing their risk assessments with other Member States.

At present, only members and observers of the Focal Point network and the Advisory Forum as well as EFSA’s Scientific Cooperation Unit can upload documents onto the platform. In order to broaden accessibility of information on the platform, read-only access has been extended, over the course of 2009 and 2010, to members of EFSA’s Scientific Committee and Panels, members of EFSA Networks, and to over 260 experts nominated by Advisory Forum members.

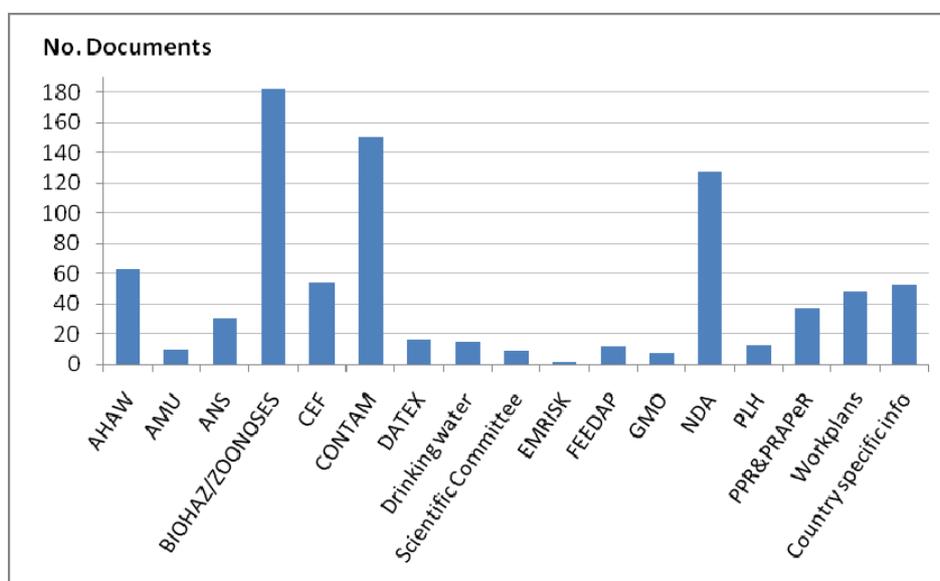
<sup>7</sup> Information Exchange Platform (IEP) Evaluation Report, under preparation

Thanks to the efforts of Focal Points, the platform contained more than 830 documents<sup>8</sup>. The number of documents uploaded in 2008<sup>9</sup>, 2009 and 2010 is 86, 465, and 280, respectively. Figure 2: shows the number of documents uploaded onto the Information Exchange Platform between September 2008 and December 2010.



**Figure 2:** Number of documents uploaded onto the Information Exchange Platform during the pilot phase (September 2008 – March 2009), and the launch of the revised version of the Platform (March 2009) up to December 2010

The majority are risk assessment documents, i.e. over 30 risk assessment mandates and almost 700 risk assessment outputs (including opinions, statements, guidance documents and technical reports). Figure 3: shows the distribution of the documents in the different sections and folders.



**Figure 3:** Distribution of documents on the Information Exchange Platform by section and folders (status: December 2010)

<sup>8</sup> Status: December 2010

<sup>9</sup> September 2008 – December 2008

In the section containing risk assessment documents, Member States can inform each other about started, ongoing and finalised risk assessment activities in relation to food and feed safety. It is the most visited site on the platform.

Despite the large number of documents uploaded, some barriers have hampered or even prevented Focal Points from uploading information onto the platform. A main difficulty identified by Focal Points is the availability of risk assessment requests or mandates: mostly this information does not exist in writing, or if it does exist, it is either published together with the scientific output or is considered confidential, thus not qualifying for upload. Focal Points have also faced challenges in acquiring documents from other institutions in their country. Further obstacles include technical complications, the time needed to collect and upload relevant documents, and the translation of summaries into English.

Focal Points have supported the revision of the BfR EU Food Safety Almanac by providing comments on the draft profile of their country. As a result of this joint effort between Focal Points and the German Federal Institute of Risk Assessment (BfR), it is planned to publish the second version of the Almanac at the beginning of 2011. The revised individual country profiles, describing the food safety system in the EU Member States as well as the EEA/EFTA and pre-accession countries, will also be available on the Information Exchange Platform, as in 2009, once the Almanac has been published. In addition to the country profiles, a number of quality and crisis manuals have also been uploaded onto the Information Exchange Platform.

The Information Exchange Platform monthly reports continued to be sent throughout 2010 to all users of the platform via e-mail and, in addition, were uploaded onto the site each month. These reports contain a summary of all documents which have been uploaded onto the platform, including EFSA mandates as well as outputs published in the EFSA Journal in a given month. Focal Points welcomed the monthly reports. They considered the reports helpful to keep themselves updated on risk assessment activities and outputs from other Member States. Focal Points also used the reports to inform their colleagues, as appropriate.

The Information Exchange Platform also stores annual and strategic work plans of national food authorities involved in risk assessment. Medium- and long-term planning of activities of national risk assessment bodies and EFSA can avoid duplication of work and help allocate limited resources according to priorities. To support such planning, EFSA's Advisory Forum formally agreed to share their national work programmes, amongst themselves and EFSA, by signing the Declaration of Intent<sup>10</sup>. This initiative was also highlighted in the Strategy for Cooperation and Networking. At the end of December 2010, 16 countries have uploaded a total number of 46 planning documents.

In general, Focal Points indicated that the Information Exchange Platform was a useful tool and other colleagues or groups of individuals would benefit from receiving access to the site.

At the end of December 2010, the Information Exchange Platform contained over 830 documents uploaded by Member States and EEA/EFTA countries. The main purposes for Focal Points to use the Information Exchange Platform are to be kept informed and to help inform risk assessors, in their organisation or country, about risk assessment activities or outputs in a particular scientific area and/or other countries.

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<sup>10</sup> Declaration of Intent, AF 29.09.2006 – 6a,

[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/PartnersNetworks/AdvisoryForum/efsa\\_locale-1178620753812\\_Declarationofintent.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/PartnersNetworks/AdvisoryForum/efsa_locale-1178620753812_Declarationofintent.htm)

### 2.1.3. Planned activities

To avoid duplication of work and help allocate limited resources according to priorities, Member States have two different possibilities to share information on work programmes and planned activities:

- (i) by uploading annual and strategic (or multi-annual) work plans onto the Information Exchange Platform (see section 2.1.2); and/or
- (ii) by filling in the standardised reporting table available on EFSA's Extranet site.

The standardised reporting table has been created to enable countries to share information on planned activities related to risk assessment, research and data collection in a concise format. It supplements the information on started, ongoing or concluded activities (shared through the Information Exchange Platform) by providing an overview on planned activities. Fourteen Member States have used the reporting table to share their planned activities with the other countries. The table contained 178 entries at the end of December 2010.

Looking at both possibilities to share information on planned work, i.e. sharing work plans via the Information Exchange Platform and planned activities via the Extranet, 19 countries have provided insight into their planned risk assessment work.

By sharing planned work and activities with other Member States and EFSA, more than two thirds of Focal Points have contributed to a more coordinated planning of risk assessment activities in the EU and avoiding the duplication of work.

## 2.2. Article 36 network

According to Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation<sup>11</sup>, EFSA "shall promote the European networking of organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission". Article 36 is thus an important pillar of the scientific cooperation between Member States and EFSA. In 2010, EFSA launched a total of 10 calls for proposals under the Article 36 grant scheme for a total value of 2.3 million Euros. This is complemented by 72 calls for tender and other procedures launched under the procurement scheme in the scientific area, bringing the total value of projects to be outsourced to 8.0 million Euros.

The priorities for Focal Points in 2010 were to ensure that the Article 36 list of competent organisations is up-to-date and functional, to stimulate Article 36 organisations to apply for calls published by EFSA, and to foster the use of the newly developed IT tools.

The basis for Focal Point activities with Article 36 organisations are their strong national networks. All Focal Points have developed and/or further strengthened these national networks with (potential) Article 36 organisations. Generally, Focal Points communicate with the Article 36 organisations via e-mail and telephone. In addition, Article 36 organisations are also informed via the national Focal Point web pages. Twenty two Focal Points reported to have organised meetings with Article 36 organisations in their respective countries. These meetings either had a broader objective of informing attendees (including participants from potential Article 36 organisations and stakeholders) about EFSA's work with Member States on Article 36 or had a very specific agenda geared only towards current Article 36 organisations. An important part of the latter meetings was the demonstration of the two Article 36 IT tools, namely the Article 36 Extranet workspace (Art36-NET) and Article 36 Database, which were launched in December 2009 and May 2010, respectively.

The aim of the Art36-NET is to foster active networking among Article 36 organisations, Focal Points and EFSA, as well as to facilitate project management. The Art36-NET home page functions as a reference page for three main pages on:

1. *networking*, providing a search tool to find an organisation's contact information and fields of competence;
2. *open calls*, giving information on currently open EFSA calls for proposals; and
3. *ongoing and finalised projects*, providing an overview of all expired EFSA calls for proposals (ongoing and finalised projects, calls under evaluation, as well as unsuccessful ones), and offering project partners the opportunity to have a project-specific workspace to facilitate project management through sharing of documents. Access is restricted to project participants and folders are administered by the project leader and the EFSA Unit involved.

Another important support to Article 36 organisations, was to encourage and assist the organisations in their country to submit proposals for Article 36 calls published on EFSA's website. Where applicable, Focal Points stated in their annual reports that they made numerous efforts to stimulate Article 36 organisations to submit proposals. Focal Point activities include sending information on the launch of calls for proposals and special reminders to the Article 36 organisations; publishing calls in newsletters; providing information on the IT tools and the application procedure at special events; and providing direct support in the application process. As the average application rate per call remained relatively low (approximately 1.6 applications per call), more efforts are needed, also from Focal Points, to stimulate Article 36 organisations to apply for such calls.

The second IT tool, the Article 36 Database, assists Member States and EFSA in managing (maintenance and updating) the Article 36 list. The database allows users to fill in questionnaires for new Article 36 organisation designations, to update questionnaires of existing Article 36

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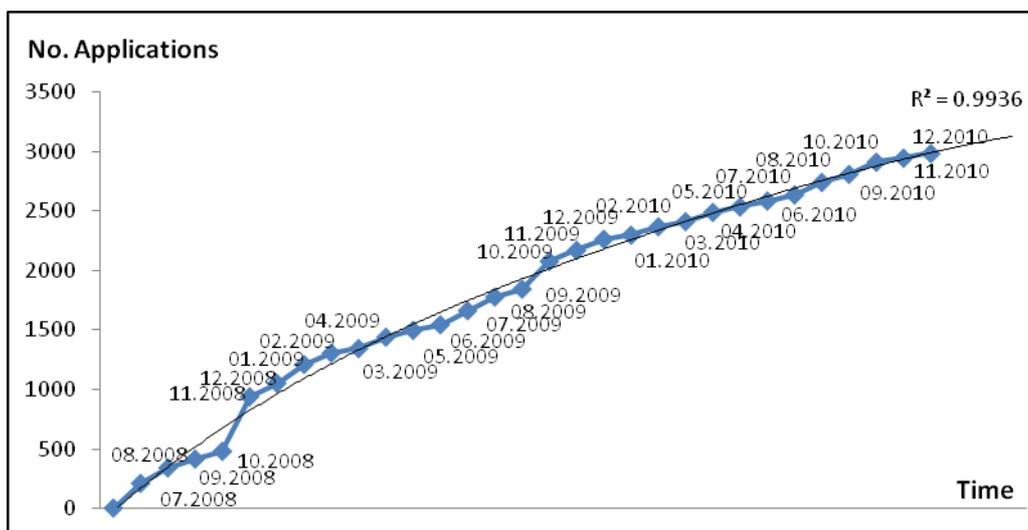
<sup>11</sup> Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety, OJ L 31, 1.2.2002, p. 1–24

organisations, and to search for contact persons and competences of Article 36 organisations. It is crucial that EFSA is informed of any changes in the contact details of Article 36 organisations to ensure that all these organisations can be contacted directly, particularly once a call is launched. Focal Points have supported the notifications to EFSA of almost 100 changes in the status or contact details of the Article 36 organisations on the list. In addition, Focal Points facilitated the nomination of new organisations for the list. Permanent Representations of seven countries have contacted EFSA in 2010, informing about the wish to nominate 25 new organisations. It is important to highlight that, despite the existence of the Article 36 Database, all organisational changes in the structure of Article 36 organisations and nominations of new organisations are still notified to EFSA via the Permanent Representations in Brussels to ensure that the provisions of Commission Regulation (EC) No. 2230/2004 are respected.

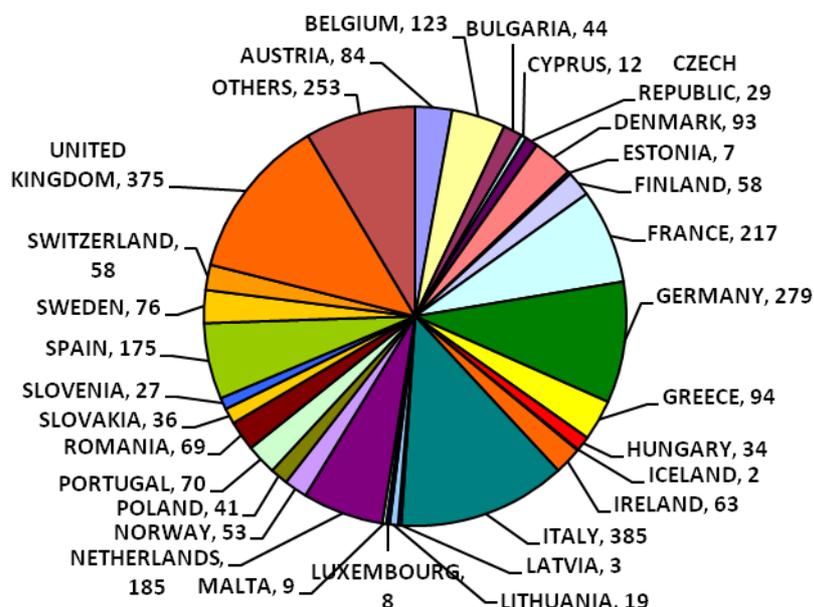
Focal Points have developed and/or further broadened their networks with (potential) Article 36 organisations, in a variety of ways, including direct communication by e-mail, telephone and dedicated meetings as well as via Focal Point web pages. Furthermore, they have encouraged Article 36 organisations to apply for published Article 36 calls and have facilitated the use of the two new Article 36 IT tools, thereby fostering active networking between and among Article 36 organisations, Focal Points and EFSA. Focal Points have also supported EFSA in ensuring that the Article 36 list is up-to-date and functional, in terms of contact details and structural changes in the Article 36 organisations.

### 2.3. EFSA's Expert Database

EFSA's Expert Database continued to be populated in 2010 with the help of Focal Points. Since its launch in June 2008, the database has grown steadily, reaching a total of 2985 applications by December 2010 (Figure 4: ). Figure 5: shows the number of experts, by country of origin, having submitted an application. Following a thorough assessment process, 2600 experts have been included in the Expert Database (status 31 December 2010).



**Figure 4:** Evolution of the number of Expert Database applications submitted between June 2008 and December 2010.



**Figure 5:** Number of experts, by country of origin, having submitted an Expert Database application by December 2010.

Focal Points have promoted the Expert Database through a variety of activities, including:

- giving over 30 presentations of the Expert Database at national events in more than 12 countries;
- publishing information about the Expert Database on 19 national Focal Point web pages;
- distributing EFSA leaflets on the Expert Database to members of the national Focal Point networks;
- disseminating information about the Expert Database through newsletters, newspapers or national scientific journals in ten countries; and
- sending e-mail messages and having personal contact with experts to give information on the Expert Database.

Through the national promotion activities twelve Focal Points have assisted experts in filling in the online application form on EFSA's website. The experts registered in the database are affiliated with a variety of institutes and organisations, and are essential contributors to assist EFSA and Member States' competent authorities in the conduct of risk assessments. More than 92% of experts included in the Expert Database have indicated their willingness to share their profile information with Member States. Focal Points stimulate the use of the Expert Database within their countries, while complying with data protection requirements. As shown by an evaluation of the Expert Database in 2009<sup>12</sup>, in addition to being extensively accessed by EFSA, the Expert Database is also being used by Member States, through the Advisory Forum members and Focal Points, to find suitable expertise.

With the support of Focal Points, the number of scientific experts applying to EFSA's Expert Database has continued to grow in 2010. Focal Points have presented, distributed or published information as well as directly encouraged scientists to apply to EFSA's Expert Database. Member States are also using the Expert Database to find suitable expertise.

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<sup>12</sup> Expert Database 2009 Evaluation Report  
(<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/expertdb/docs/edbevaluation2009.pdf>)

## **2.4. Raising visibility of EFSA's scientific work and Focal Points**

Focal Points have raised the visibility of their own and EFSA's scientific work, at national level, through a range of activities.

### **2.4.1. Communications materials and activities**

To raise the visibility of EFSA and its role in the EU food safety system, it is vital to have the support and cooperation of strong networks. Along with other important networks, the Focal Points are a key element of this, working both at national and regional level, assisting EFSA in the dissemination of data and information and providing advice on and supporting the diffusion of its communication materials. In 2010 the Focal Points have continued to increase awareness, understanding and outreach of both their own and EFSA's work, through the development and promotion of specific outreach materials as well as through the distribution of the readily available EFSA communication materials. Overall in 2010 the strong and solid communication activities of 2009 have been strengthened as outlined below.

All Focal Points have continued to create and expand their networks to which they disseminate EFSA information and communication materials. Numbers of individuals reached via the Focal Point network varied between around 100 and > 6500 (in 2009 between around 100 and > 6000). One Focal Point reported the dissemination of their newsletter, featuring articles of interest on EFSA, to over 6000 contacts at both national and regional level. Certain Focal Points did not provide precise figures on numbers of individuals reached but provided nevertheless an indication of the target audiences approached. Some Focal Points also mentioned that they have tried to tailor the distribution of information and material to relevant target audiences.

The majority of Focal Points reported close collaboration and regular contact with the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group (AFCWG) representative, very often liaising and collaborating on the development and adaptation of their own as well as EFSA's communication and outreach material, primarily disseminated via the Focal Point websites but also through tools such as dedicated events. Alongside the AFCWG representative, one Focal Point defined a strategy for Focal Point communication to promote EFSA and their collaboration.

All Focal Points have now established and maintained dedicated institutional web pages and some are already in the process of redesigning them. The web pages provide information about their collaboration with EFSA, links to key EFSA news and announcements, as well as covering other topics. Many Focal Point web pages promote the EFSA newsletters, Expert Database, calls for Scientific Committee and Panel members as well as important EFSA public announcements such as press releases and opinions, either by directly reporting these topics in the dedicated areas of their web pages or through hyperlinks to the relevant EFSA source. One Focal Point reported that their webpage received 60,000 visits.

A total of 16 Focal Points (15 in 2009) produced printed brochures, leaflets and articles on their role, activities and cooperation with EFSA. Five Focal Points focused instead on distributing EFSA communication materials such as the newsletters, while others chose to disseminate this type of information electronically either directly via their website or through e-mails. From the 28 Focal Points a total of 300 electronic newsletters highlighting important EFSA issues were developed with the number of issues varying from 2 to 200 issues per year (in 2009 numbers ranged from 3 to 150 issues) highlighting important EFSA topics and two electronic scientific articles were published. One Focal Point chose more traditional channels of communication participating in TV and radio broadcasts focusing on EFSA and Focal Point activities.

With the strong collaboration between the majority of Focal Points and AFCWG representatives, the Focal Points have continued to increase awareness, understanding and outreach of EFSA's and their work by disseminating information through an increasing number of communication channels, newly developed communication tools and to extended and often targeted networks within Member States.

#### **2.4.2. National Focal Point meetings and scientific events**

A well-functioning network between Member States and EFSA is important to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of risk assessment in the EU, as stressed in the Strategy for Cooperation and Networking. This implies having strong networks at national level. In 2010, 21 Focal Points have organised a total of 50 events, ranging from small targeted seminars to broader conferences, to consolidate their national networks and to keep them fully informed about ongoing activities at national, EFSA, and international level.

Representatives from EFSA's Scientific Cooperation Unit were invited to 15 events in 2010 to present EFSA's work. Besides highlighting the importance of scientific cooperation within Europe and updating the national Focal Point networks on EFSA's Work Programme and strategy for the coming years, they also received information on specific topics, including the Expert Database and the Article 36 IT tools. Furthermore, EFSA scientific experts participated in meetings organised by Focal Points on very specific subjects, e.g. animal health and welfare and genetically modified organisms. More than six Focal Points have invited other Focal Points to such events, thus strengthening the cooperation between Member States.

In addition to organising national events, Focal Points have also presented their own and/or EFSA's work at national or international events. Overall, 24 Focal Points indicated in their annual reports that they gave such presentations, with over 100 presentations/posters in total. Focal Points have therefore raised the visibility of their own work, various scientific cooperation activities between EFSA and European countries (e.g. Expert Database, Article 36 network, Information Exchange Platform) as well as EFSA at large.

In 2010, 21 Focal Points have organised 50 events in their countries, which ranged from specific seminars to international conferences. Representatives from EFSA's Scientific Cooperation Unit, scientific experts and Focal Points have presented their work and cooperation activities. Furthermore, 24 Focal Points have contributed to over 100 national and international events with presentations, posters and written contributions. All of these activities have raised the visibility of the Focal Points' and EFSA's work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2011

The main task of Focal Points is, and will remain, to provide technical support to their Advisory Forum members in implementing the Strategy for Cooperation and Networking. Taking into account the work carried out by Focal Points and the experience gathered over the past three years, the following priorities are proposed for Focal Points in 2011:

- support their Advisory Forum members in initiating and organising discussions on medium-term planning at Member State level to identify capacities and core competences of competent authorities and scientific organisations in each Member State;
- support EFSA in promoting the call on the renewal of the Scientific Committee and Panels for 2012-2015;
- support EFSA and the Permanent Representations in their Member States in consolidating the Article 36 list of competent organisations, thereby improving its functionality,
- stimulate Article 36 organisations to apply for Article 36 calls and foster the networking between Article 36 organisations, particularly by promoting and using the newly developed IT tools (Article 36 Database, Article 36-NET);
- increase the outreach to Member States' target audiences by strengthening the cooperation with their AFCWG member; and
- continue the work on:
  - sharing information on risk assessment with a view to improve the harmonisation of risk assessment methodologies, by uploading all relevant risk assessment documents onto the Information Exchange Platform, including planned activities in the area of risk assessment;
  - promoting the application of experts to EFSA's Expert Database, in particular in scientific and geographical areas currently underrepresented, and stimulating the use of the Expert Database by Member States for their own risk assessment activities; and
  - using the Focal Point websites and national events as tools to disseminate information and to raise the visibility of Focal Points' and EFSA's work.

APPENDIX

A. MESSAGES SENT TO FOCAL POINTS (FPs) IN 2010<sup>13</sup>

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
<b>Requests for data and contributions</b>		
Call for data on <b>Brominated Flame Retardants</b> levels in foodstuffs (DATEX)	11/01/2010	-
Extension of deadline on three calls for data in the area of <b>food additives</b> (ANS)	10/02/2010	
<b>Melamine</b> migration - need for data (sent by SC&AF to AF, copy FPs, from CEF)	15/02/2010	01/03/2010
Collection of national lists of <b>plants / plant preparations used in food</b> (SCAF)	18/03/2010	-
Request for urgent scientific and technical assistance on the possible <b>risks</b> for public and animal health of the contamination of the feed and food chain due to possible <b>ash fall</b> (SCO)	20/04/2010	21/04/2010
Request for data on <b>small ruminants slaughtered</b> by MS to the EFSA Focal Points (BIOHAZ)	10/05/2010	25/05/2010
<b>Deadline extension:</b> Request for data on <b>small ruminants slaughtered</b> by MS to the EFSA Focal Points (BIOHAZ)	26/05/2010	01/06/2010
EFSA call for data on <b>biogenic amines</b> (DATEX)	09/06/2010	-
EFSA call for data on <b>miscellaneous food additives</b> (ANS)	09/06/2010	-
EFSA call for data on <b>animal cloning</b> (SCAF)	10/06/2010	-
Call for data on <b>Patent Blue V</b> (E131) (ANS)	23/07/2010	-
Call for data on <b>T-2 toxin, HT-2 toxin and Nivalenol</b> in food and feed (DATEX)	30/07/2010	-
Call for data on <b>Mineral Oil hydrocarbons</b> in food (DATEX)	09/08/2010	-
Calls for data - mycotoxins and phytotoxins, alkaloids in poppy seeds (DATEX)	20/10/2010	-
Call for data on <b>calcium carbonate</b> (ANS)	10/12/2010	-

<sup>13</sup> Not included in this list: messages and feedback regarding agendas, minutes, working documents, DoIs. etc.

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
<b>Calls for expressions of interest</b>		
EFSA has launched 2 calls for <b>Scientific Committee and Panels</b>	16/06/2010	-
<b>Focal Point support</b> - EFSA has launched 2 calls for <b>Scientific Committee and Panels</b>	16/06/2010	-
<b>new web banner</b> - FOR YOUR ATTENTION - EFSA has launched 2 calls for <b>Scientific Committee and Panels</b>	16/06/2010	-
EXTENSION OF <b>DEADLINE</b> - EFSA 2 calls for <b>Scientific Committee and Panels</b>	13/09/2010	-
<b>new web banner</b> - FOR YOUR ATTENTION - EFSA has launched 2 calls for Scientific Committee and Panels	13/09/2010	-
EFSA has launched a call for the <b>External Review Working Group</b>	22/10/2010	-
<b>In-service training</b> at EFSA - call for application	03/11/2010	-
<b>Calls for tender</b>		
Estimation/calculation of <b>emissions of plant protection products</b> (PPR)	12/03/2010	19/04/2010
<b>Information on public consultations</b>		
<b>Modelling dietary exposure</b> to pesticide residues (PPR)	10/03/2010	-
Public Consultation on the EFSA <b>Communications Strategy 2010-2013</b> (COMM)	13/05/2010	05/07/2010
Public Consultation on EFSA Actions on <b>COPHS Guideline</b> (PLH)	01/07/2010	-
Public consultation on the draft Guidance Document on the <b>Use of Field Persistence Studies</b> (PPR)	22/07/2010	-
Public consultation regarding <b>dermal absorption</b> (PPR)	27/10/2010	-
Extension of deadline: Public consultation - <b>dermal absorption</b> - PPR Unit	09/12/2010	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
<b>Questionnaires</b>		
Questions on <b>Foodborne viruses</b> (BIOHAZ)	11/05/2010	18/06/2010
Questionnaire from the joint EFSA/FAO/WHO Working Group on <b>Total Diet Studies</b> (DATEX)	22/07/2010	28/08/2010
<b>Extention of deadline</b> - questionnaire from the joint EFSA/FAO/WHO Working Group on <b>Total Diet Studies</b> (DATEX)	26/08/2010	24/09/2010
New questions on <b>contamination of fresh produce</b> to Focal points (BIOHAZ)	08/10/2010	08/11/2010
<b>Article 36 and other scientific cooperation projects</b>		
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/CONTAM/2010/01: Survey on ergot alkaloids in cereals intended for human consumption and animal feeding	05/03/2010	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/DATEX2010/01: Survey on electronic transmission of chemical occurrence data	07/04/2010	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - <b>Corrigendum</b> - Ref: CFP/EFSA/DATEX2010/01: Survey on electronic transmission of chemical occurrence data	08/04/2010	-
<b>EFSA launching the Art36-Database</b>	21/05/2010	-
<b>EFSA's ART36-Database – information</b> on use for new designations by Member States and FPs access	26/05/2010	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/CONTAM/2010/02: Experimental study: uptake of coccidiostats in vegetables	16/06/2010	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/PLH/2010/01 “Plant health pest surveys for the EU territory”	01/07/2010	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/PPR/2010/01: Collection and assessment of data relevant for non-dietary cumulative exposure to pesticides and proposal for conceptual approaches for non-dietary cumulative exposure assessment	06/07/2010	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/AWAW/2010/01 “Specification of data collection on animal diseases to increase the preparedness of the AHAW Panel to answer future mandates”	12/07/2010	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/AMU/2010/01 “Commodity based hazard identification protocol for emerging diseases in plants and animals”	16/07/2010	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref : CFP/EFSA/DATEX/2010/03 “Electronic Transmission of Chemical Occurrence Data”	16/07/2010	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/DATEX/2010/02: “Pilot study in the view of a Pan-European dietary survey - Adolescents, adults and elderly”	21/07/2010	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/AHAW/2010/02 “Contribution of meat inspection to animal health surveillance”	22/07/2010	-
extended deadline / EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - Ref: CFP/EFSA/PLH/2010/01 “Plant health pest surveys for the EU territory”	08/09/2010	-
<b>Expert Database</b>		
EFSA's database of scientific experts - <b>2 years of existence</b>	07/06/2010	-
<b>Information Exchange Platform</b>		
IEP report for <b>December</b>	18/01/2010	-
<b>Reminder</b> for IEP uploads for <b>January</b>	25/01/2010	-
New <b>working group</b> on the Information Exchange Platform – identification of experts	18/02/2010	26/02/2010
IEP - <b>January</b> 2010 report	16/02/2010	-
<b>Follow-up Advisory Forum Meeting</b> and <b>upload reminder</b> for <b>February</b>	22/02/2010	-
IEP - <b>February</b> 2010 report	15/03/2010	-
IEP - <b>New functional mailbox</b>	30/03/2010	-
IEP - <b>March</b> 2010 report	21/04/2010	-
<b>Reminder</b> for IEP uploads for <b>April</b>	27/04/2010	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
IEP - <b>April</b> 2010 report - new format	14/05/2010	-
<b>Reminder</b> for IEP uploads - <b>May</b> 2010	25/05/2010	-
IEP - <b>May</b> 2010 report	16/06/2010	-
Pre-notification <b>IEP survey</b>	18/06/2010	-
Information Exchange Platform (IEP) <b>Survey</b> - FPs	23/06/2010	-
<b>Reminder</b> for IEP uploads - <b>June</b> 2010	25/07/2010	-
IEP - <b>June</b> 2010 report	16/07/2010	-
<b>Reminder</b> for IEP uploads - <b>July</b> 2010	28/07/2010	-
IEP - <b>July</b> 2010 report	13/08/2010	-
IEP <b>reminder</b> - <b>August</b> 2010	25/08/2010	-
IEP - <b>August</b> 2010 report	16/09/2010	-
IEP <b>reminder</b> - <b>September</b> 2010	22/09/2010	-
IEP - <b>September</b> 2010 report	15/10/2010	-
IEP <b>reminder</b> - <b>October</b> 2010	25/10/2010	-
IEP - <b>October</b> 2010 report	17/11/2010	-
IEP <b>reminder</b> - <b>November</b> 2010	25/11/2010	-
IEP - <b>November</b> 2010 report	16/12/2010	-
IEP <b>reminder</b> - <b>December</b> 2010	22/12/2010	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
<b>Requests/information from FPs</b>		
Information about 14th International <b>Biotechnology Symposium</b> and Exhibition (sent by IT)	24/02/2010	-
<b>P2O5 in meat</b> (from HR, sent by SCO)	25/02/2010	-
<b>Food Standards Agency Science and Evidence Strategy and Forward Evidence Plan</b> published (sent by UK)	25/02/2010	-
<b>EU Food Safety Almanac</b> - Changes 2nd Edition (sent by DE)	25/02/2010	01/05/2010
Request for information on plants used as <b>herbal tea</b> in the EU (sent by CH)	02/03/2010	-
<b>Extension of deadline for Abstract Submission</b> -14th International Biotechnology Symposium and Exhibition (14th IBS) - IBS 2010 (Rimini, 14-18 September 2010) (sent by IT)	10/03/2010	-
Risk to public health due to <b>HAV infection</b> of semi-dried tomatoes (sent by GR)	15/03/2010	-
<b>Invitation</b> to 8th <b>BfR Forum</b> on Consumer Protection (sent by DE)	23/03/2010	-
Request on information related to change of volatile substances content in <b>horseradish</b> (sent by SK)	26/03/2010	-
<b>Fincopa seminar</b> - Combination effects in risk assessment and endocrine disruptors, 26-27th April 2010_for your information (sent by FI)	07/04/2010	-
8th <b>BfR Forum</b> on Consumer Protection – information on <b>translation</b> (sent by DE)	08/04/2010	-
Info on GutMicroEcology 2010 - <b>scientific conference</b> on Gastro-inestinal Microbial Ecology (sent by SK)	26/04/2010	-
<b>sheep milk cheese in nut leaves</b> (from HR, sent by SCO)	27/04/2010	-
<b>5th Anniversary</b> of Croatian Food Agency (sent by HR)	15/05/2010	-
Summaries - <b>P2O5 in meat products</b> and <b>Stevia</b> in MS on Extranet (from HR, sent by SCO)	18/05/2010	-
<b>Draft Concept Paper</b> - Assessment of Substances with Endocrine Disrupting Properties - Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (sent by DE)	20/05/2010	-
Summaries available - <b>HAV in semi-dried tomatoes</b> (GR) and <b>volatile substances in horseradish</b> (SK)	27/05/2010	-
<b>Honey bees</b> - specific toxicity levels of hydroxymethylfurfural in syrup (sent by BE)	03/06/2010	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Conference in Denmark, co-organised by the Environment Agency Austria: <b>“Prudent Precaution? Experiences with the Precautionary Principle, 2000-2010”</b> (sent by AT)	22/06/2010	-
"EFSA Focal Point: Contribution by Maltese Experts" - <b>Invitation</b> and Draft Agenda - 24th September 2010 (Malta) (from MT, sent by SCO)	08/07/2010	-
<b>Pine nuts</b> and taste disturbances - Letter to EFSA from the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (from NO, sent by SCO)	09/07/2010	-
Birth of <b>ANSES</b> (from FR, sent by SCO)	14/07/2010	-
summary available - <b>sheep cheese wrapped with nut leaves</b> (from HR, sent by SCO)	03/09/2010	-
<b>Journal of reference</b> - release n°3 (from FR)	03/09/2010	-
Information on <b>growth factors in dairy products</b> and risks of cancers (from FR)	09/09/2010	End October
<b>Allergic reactions</b> caused by 'easy to bake' products with <b>hydrolysed wheat protein</b> (from DK, sent by SCO)	13/10/2010	-
Request on information related to the <b>types of food</b> that are allowed <b>in school</b> (from GR)	05/11/2010	-
<b>changes in domain</b> - message from Spanish FP (from ES, sent by SCO)	05/11/2010	-
<b>monosodium glutamate</b> in food (from LT)	24/11/2010	-
Request for comments - fishes treated with <b>carbon monoxide</b> (from PL)	06/12/2010	-
Definition of <b>Food Quality</b> ??? (sent by DK)	16/12/2010	-
Request for information on analyses on <b>teats and soothers</b> – summary (from GR, sent by SCO)	20/12/2010	-
<b>Requests/information from EFSA’s Communications Department</b>		
Invitation - <b>AESAN/EFSA Workshop</b> (Seville, 10 February)	25/01/2010	26/01/2010
<b>EFSA website upgrade</b>	13/04/2010	-
<b>RSS feeds</b> available on EFSA website	02/09/2010	-
EFSA <b>Eurobarometer</b> on food-related risks published	22/11/2010	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
<b>Requests/information from SCO</b>		
<b>14th EFSA Scientific Colloquium</b> on "Unambiguous ambiguity - the challenge of describing food" - 20-21 April 2010	24/02/2010	-
Extension of deadline for registration - <b>14th EFSA Scientific Colloquium</b> on "Unambiguous ambiguity - the challenge of describing food" - 20-21 April 2010	04/03/2010	-
<b>Volcanic ash-fall</b> - information on EFSA's website	26/04/2010	-
Permission to <b>share corporate e-mail addresses</b>	11/05/2010	-
<b>15th EFSA Scientific Colloquium</b> on "Emerging risks in food: from identification to communication" - 12-13 October 2010	13/07/2010	-
Sharing <b>medium-term plans</b>	26/07/2010	-
Follow-up 9th FP Meeting - <b>FP Reporting 2010</b>	12/10/2010	15/11/2010
<b>FP Reporting 2010</b>	03/11/2010	15/11/2010
<b>Renewal</b> of FP Agreement 2011 - signature details needed	24/11/2010	30/11/2010
<b>Requests/information from other EFSA Units and Panels</b>		
Scientific <b>report</b> published - Quantitative Structure-Activity Relationship ( <b>QSAR</b> ) (PPR)	18/05/2010	-
Request for experts in the field of <b>enzymes</b> (CEF)	22/06/2010	-
Use of <b>hemp as animal feed</b> - information request (FEEDAP)	06/07/2010	-
Scientific event with stakeholders on " <b>Non plastic food contact materials</b> "	09/12/2010	-
<b>Others</b>		
Note from <b>EFSA's administration - travel to meetings in Parma</b>	04/02/2010	-
<b>EFSA Networks</b>	04/05/2010	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Overview: <b>meetings of EFSA networks</b>	12/05/2010	-