

EFSA Stakeholder Engagement Approach



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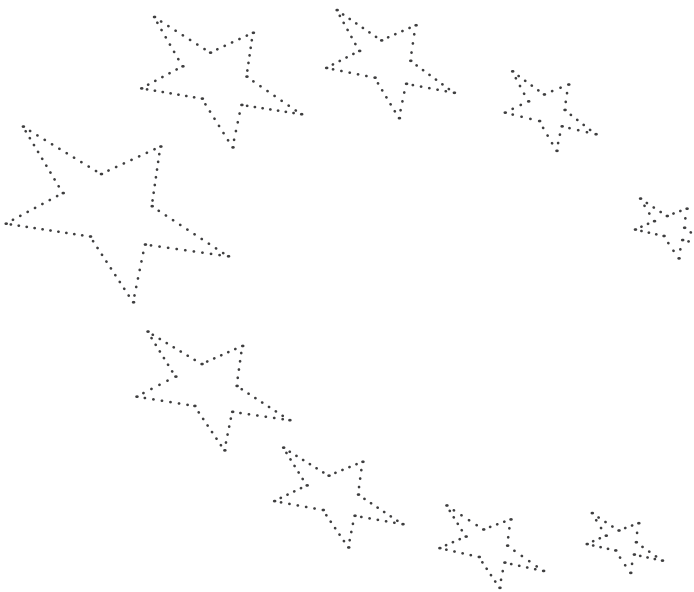




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Introduction

Stakeholders have contributed significantly to EFSA's activities in the 14 years since it was created. They have engaged with EFSA on the implications of its work for their own activities and also sought to ensure that the views of society at large are reflected in what it does.

In recent years, societal expectations in relation to the accountability of, and engagement with, public organisations have evolved to reflect developments in the area of technology which have questioned the way organisations can respond to it. For EFSA, this means a demand from a large number of interested parties and civil society stakeholders for more transparency and even closer involvement in the scientific process through the development of new modalities.

EFSA considers that a more meaningful engagement with a wider range of stakeholders will raise the quality of the Authority's work and help to define the organisation as a trusted partner and as an active guardian of food safety in the EU. This is reflected in the first strategic objective of the EFSA Strategy 2020, which states that the Authority aims to prioritise public and stakeholder engagement in the process of scientific assessment.

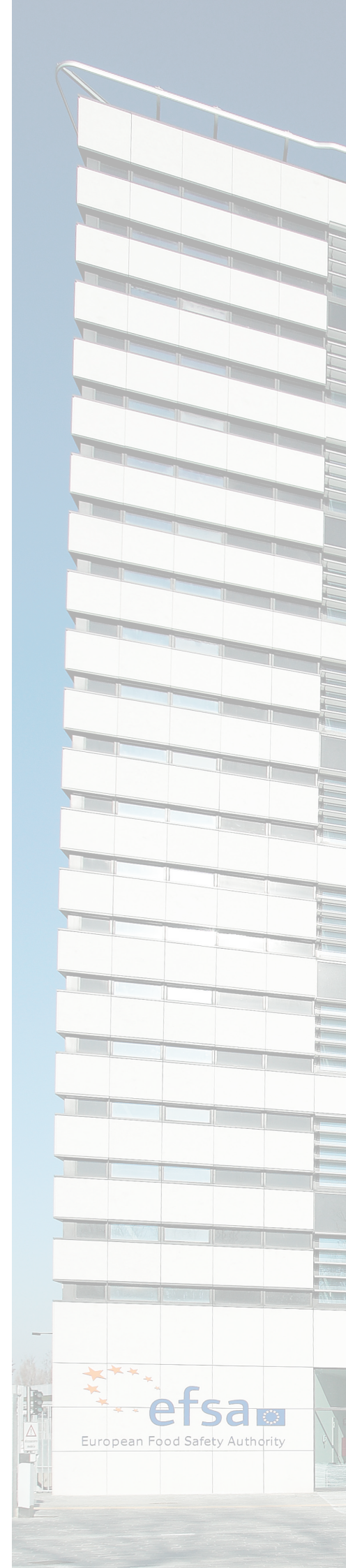
Up to this point, EFSA's engagement with stakeholders has occurred primarily through EFSA's Stakeholder Consultative Platform. In view of the changes and new demands from stakeholders mentioned above, EFSA carried out a review of the current system, under the supervision of EFSA's Management Board and in close consultation and cooperation with the Stakeholder Consultative Platform. To inform the review, in 2015 EFSA commissioned so called "target audience research" with a broad range of stakeholders and carried out a benchmarking with other organisations. The issue was also discussed extensively at EFSA's 2nd Scientific Conference held in 2015 at EXPO Milan.

The new stakeholder engagement approach described in this paper outlines the results of this review. The new approach is linked to a broader set of transparency and engagement policies, which are currently subject to a major transformation process under the umbrella of EFSA's Transparency and Engagement in Risk Assessment Initiative (TERA). TERA includes a number of actions and measures to enhance transparency and engagement that are being implemented over time. The stakeholder engagement approach is intended to complement the effective implementation of TERA actions and measures.



In summary, the new approach will include:

- A registration process for stakeholders, allowing for a broader range of interests, perspectives and technical knowledge to be represented among EFSA stakeholders, while ensuring EFSA's primary duty as set out in its Founding Regulation is to contribute to a high level of protection of human life and health;
- A series of permanent and targeted mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, improving the opportunities stakeholders have to contribute to the different stages of scientific assessment and communications, while preserving the independence and transparency of these processes;
- Modern communication tools and information technology, innovating the way in which stakeholders are able to engage with EFSA.





Definition of stakeholders

EFSA defines its stakeholders as representative organisations that have an interest in its work or in the wider food and feed sector.

EFSA divides stakeholders into seven major groups:

- Consumers
- Environmental/health NGOs and advocacy groups
- Farmers and primary producers
- Business and food industry
- Distributors and HORECA (food service industry preparing and serving food and beverages)
- Practitioners' associations
- Academia



The groups have been outlined taking into account the results of the target audience research mentioned above. In particular, target audiences invited EFSA to broaden the range of sources of scientific input it relies on as well as to engage more widely with stakeholders who can bring experience from the field. EFSA was also invited to solicit more contributions from critical voices to help ensure scrutiny and continuous improvement of its scientific work. This justifies the inclusion of new categories of stakeholders, i.e. advocacy groups, practitioners, and academia, which up to now have not usually been involved in the activities of the Stakeholder Consultative Platform.






European Food Safety Authority



Purpose and objectives

Purpose

In line with the strategic objectives contained within EFSA's Strategy 2020, the overall purpose of the new framework for EFSA's stakeholder engagement is to provide stakeholders with a better understanding of its scientific decision-making processes and to improve the quality of EFSA's scientific outputs and the extent to which they meet stakeholders' needs.



Specific objectives

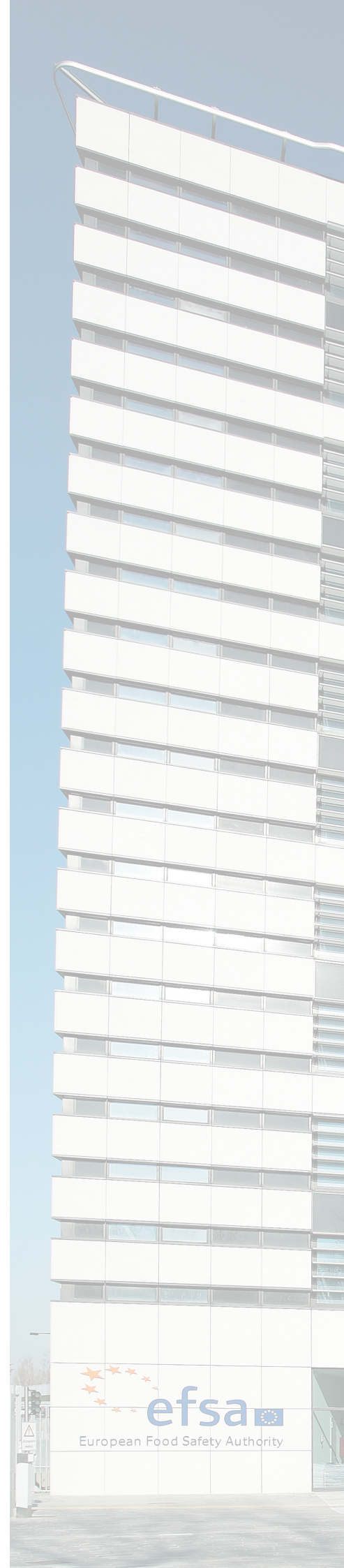
- Expand both EFSA and stakeholders' access to the evidence base and expertise needed for high quality scientific risk assessment
- Engage with stakeholders representing a broader range of interests in order to deliver effectively on EFSA's mission
- Gather knowledge, views and concerns from stakeholders as early as possible in the risk assessment process through transparent methods and using new engagement techniques
- Improve understanding among stakeholders and consumers of EFSA's scientific risk assessment process, thereby improving trust in, and creating a sense of ownership over decisions taken
- Improve accountability to stakeholders for the input they provide to EFSA



Expected outcomes and benefits

- Self-mandates will be more inclusive of societal needs
- The quality of EFSA's scientific assessments will be improved thanks to access to a wider evidence base and new knowledge or expertise
- Stakeholders will gain greater understanding of EFSA's working methods on areas of interest to them
- EFSA will gain greater understanding of stakeholders' expectations and concerns regarding its working methods, with a view to improving them where possible
- EFSA's capacity to anticipate emerging scientific or societal issues will be increased

- EFSA's capacity to identify priorities in which to invest will be increased
- EFSA's efficiency and productivity will increase through the transparent and structured processes in place to integrate technical contributions
- The predictability of EFSA's risk assessment process will be improved
- EFSA will be more responsive to the needs of its stakeholders while fiercely guarding its independence. As a result, trust in EFSA and the system for food safety risk assessment and communications will increase.





Engagement principles

The engagement principles are intended to guide EFSA's approach to stakeholder engagement and are aligned with EFSA's key values, including in particular those of independence and transparency.

Stakeholder engagement at EFSA is:

Authentic

Engagement is not an ad hoc public relations exercise but is deeply embedded in EFSA's scientific process – initiation, assessment and communication – as well as in the planning of EFSA's activities. Engagement is effective only if it takes place at a moment when it maximizes value for EFSA and stakeholders alike – in other words, when it can help to shape the final outcome of EFSA's work. Authentic engagement requires that EFSA identifies clearly when and how contributions from stakeholders are made, that it remains open to scrutiny throughout the process, and that it explains when and how stakeholder input is taken into account.



Inclusive

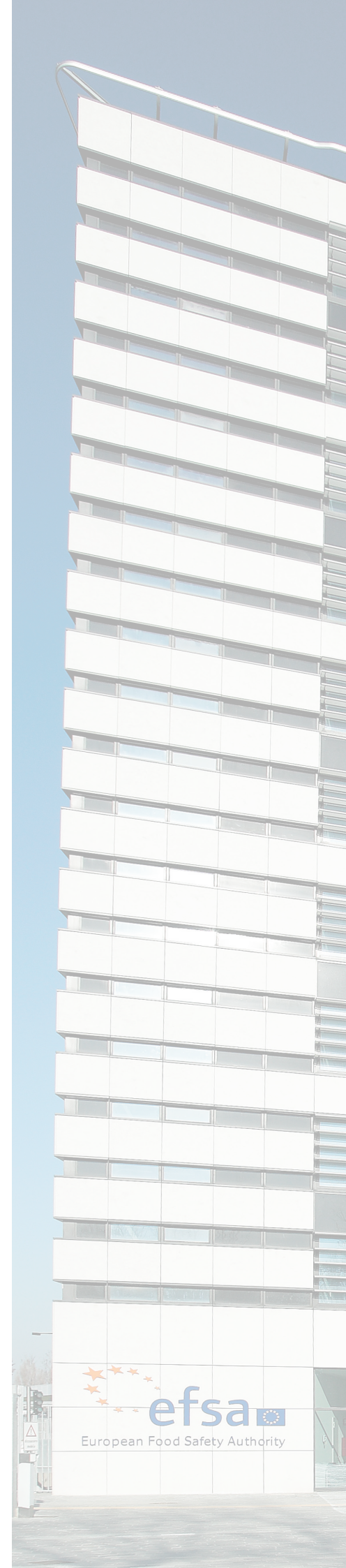
EFSA's broad mandate calls for engagement with the widest spectrum of civil society actors to ensure that different voices are heard and provided with the opportunity to contribute to EFSA's work. By gathering expressions of interest from stakeholders, EFSA draws up an exhaustive list of accredited stakeholder organisations with which to engage. To ensure that the objectivity of its scientific work is safeguarded, the Agency strives at all times to achieve a balanced representation of interests and to avoid the possibility that specific communities exert any undue influence through the various mechanisms it proposes for interaction.



Targeted

EFSA sees engagement as a targeted process that promotes the efficient use of the broad range of interests and knowledge of its various stakeholders, taking into account their limited resources. A targeted approach ensures that stakeholders can focus their interests on those activities where they can add and extract value from cooperating with EFSA. It also helps stakeholders to maintain a flexible approach, which is essential in a working environment

in which priorities may shift, for example in view of emerging issues and/or new demands placed on EFSA by risk managers. Transparency is central to the concept of a targeted approach. When EFSA seeks to engage with stakeholders in a targeted way, for example with industry associations or NGOs, it will do so in full transparency.





The engagement approach

Registration

The engagement approach is based on a continuous registration process that is open to all stakeholders with an interest in EFSA's work.

Accreditation will be granted to stakeholders meeting the following criteria:

- They are a legally established organisation in the EU/EEA and have activities at an EU level
- They have a track record and /or a legitimate interest in EFSA's work or in the food and feed sector
- They are a representative organisation in their field of competence
- They are non-profit making and do not exclusively represent an individual company
- They are registered in the EU Transparency Register

Stakeholders will be identified and listed based on their interests and expertise in order to allow EFSA to target engagement to their specific needs.

Registration is not an absolute requirement for participation in the implementation of specific projects, programmes or partnerships. EFSA may invite a non-registered organisation or individual, on the basis of their competency, expertise and experience, to participate in panels or thematic discussions on topics of relevance, as appropriate. Such participation will be in line with EFSA's core principles of openness and transparency.

EFSA will strive to ensure all registered stakeholders, regardless of their size or nature, have equal access and opportunity to engage with the Authority. This includes making every effort to facilitate the engagement of organisations that cannot afford to participate in physical meetings.

Engagement Platforms

Depending on their interests and expertise, registered stakeholders will be able to engage with EFSA through a combination of **permanent** and **targeted** platforms, representing the different stages of the risk assessment process. The relations and the work carried out through all these interactions will be guided by EFSA's core values of transparency and independence.

a. Permanent platforms

The **Stakeholder Forum** will provide an opportunity for all registered stakeholders to provide strategic input to EFSA's work plans and future priorities on an annual basis. The themes and topics of each annual forum will be determined by demands from its registered stakeholders and by the priority areas identified by EFSA in line with its Strategy 2020. The forum will produce recommendations for EFSA in particular regarding strategic planning and activity implementation, the development of horizontal policies and processes, and the review of how the various engagement platforms function.

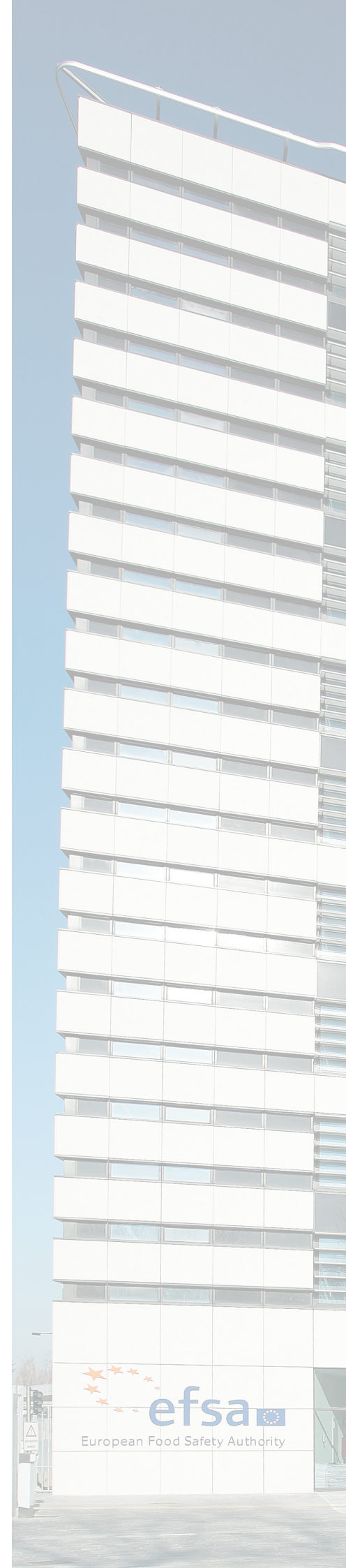
The **Stakeholder Bureau** will act as EFSA's advisor on stakeholder engagement and will provide input to EFSA at a high level with regards to civil society's concerns on health, environment, food production and other issues in the Authority's remit. It will also help shape the agenda of the annual Stakeholder Forum. It will comprise seven representatives of the stakeholder groups identified above. The members of the Bureau will be nominated by the registered stakeholders themselves that belong to these respective groups. Members of the Bureau will remain in place for a period of at least three years. The Bureau will be chaired by EFSA's Executive Director and is expected to meet at least once a year.

b. Targeted platforms

Stakeholders will engage with EFSA at a technical level through targeted (including ad-hoc or on-going) platforms defined by the set of interests and the specific knowledge stakeholder communities bring to the various phases of EFSA's work.

These targeted platforms are likely to include:

Mandate Working Groups: they will ensure that EFSA is able to capture societal needs and expectations at an early stage of the development of





EFSA's self-mandates and Guidance Documents, in particular those which are sensitive or technically complex.

Scientific Colloquia: they will ensure EFSA taps into the expertise of the wider scientific community to jointly prepare for future risk assessment challenges. The creation of an online community for academia is designed to forge strong links with the wider scientific community in between colloquia.

Discussion Groups: they will act as "learning systems" that allow EFSA to capitalise on stakeholders' specialist knowledge in specific areas, e.g. developing efficient and harmonised data collection systems, methodological approaches, and identification of new or emerging issues.

Roundtables: they will address issues raised by NGOs and industry stakeholders on aspects of EFSA's work, further understanding of EFSA's risk assessment processes, and facilitate stakeholders' submission of information and responses to EFSA's calls and consultations.

Communicators Labs: they will elicit feedback and input from communications practitioners working for different stakeholders to increase the accessibility, visibility and use of EFSA communications.

Information Sessions: they will be opportunities to increase knowledge of EFSA's work among different groups of stakeholders, encourage dialogue, and share real-world experiences, ultimately enhancing the understanding of EFSA's scientific work.

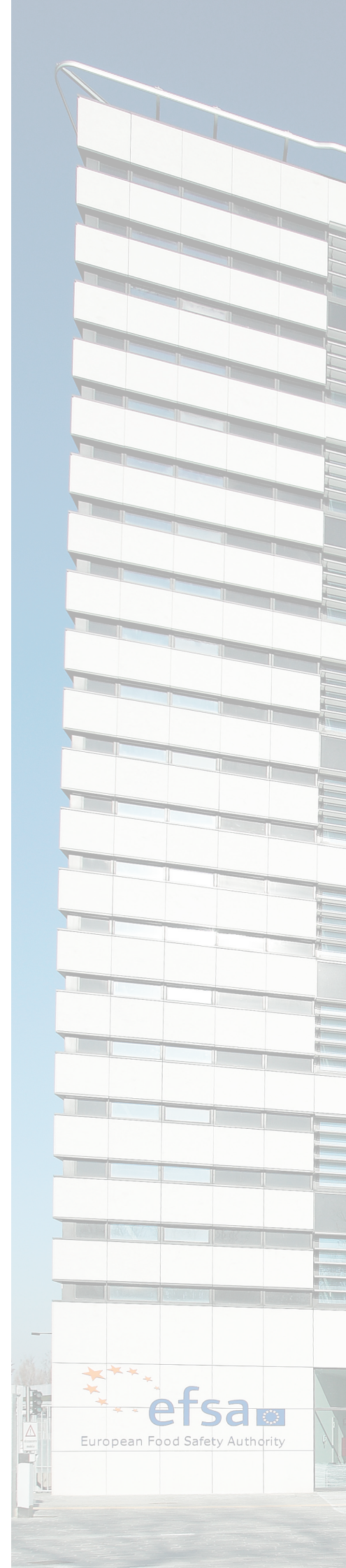
Permanent and targeted channels will serve three main level of interaction with stakeholders and society at large: from information provision to consultation and engagement.



Innovative tools and communications technology

The new approach will include traditional channels of engagement such as conferences, meetings and communication activities, as well as the use of integrated digital tools and social networks as a mechanism for continuous, multidirectional communication. In the future, these tools may also enable even more innovative forms of engagement such as crowdsourcing or the outsourcing of micro-tasks. A digital working environment for engagement also strengthens the traceability and visibility of the EFSA's interaction with stakeholders. Both EFSA staff and stakeholders will be encouraged to act as facilitators of these platforms.

In line with EFSA's strategic objective to create an open corporate environment, efforts will be made to increase the opportunities EFSA staff have to interact with stakeholders and to foster a culture in the organisation that recognises the importance and benefits of stakeholder engagement.





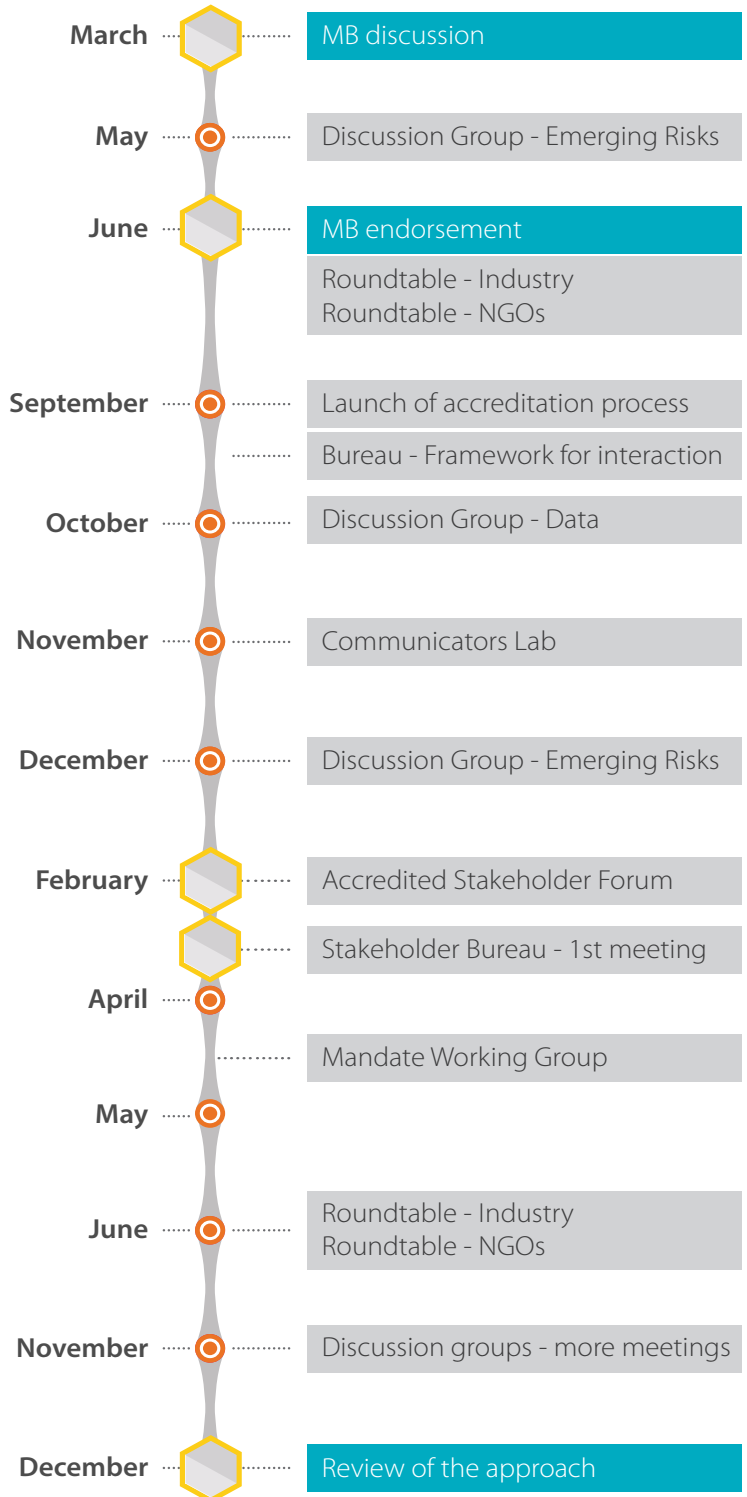
Implementation

The implementation of the new approach will start with the launch of the registration process in September 2016. EFSA will report back to the Management Board with an update on the list of stakeholders. In February 2017, EFSA intends to hold its first Stakeholder Forum, followed by the first meeting of the Stakeholder Bureau.

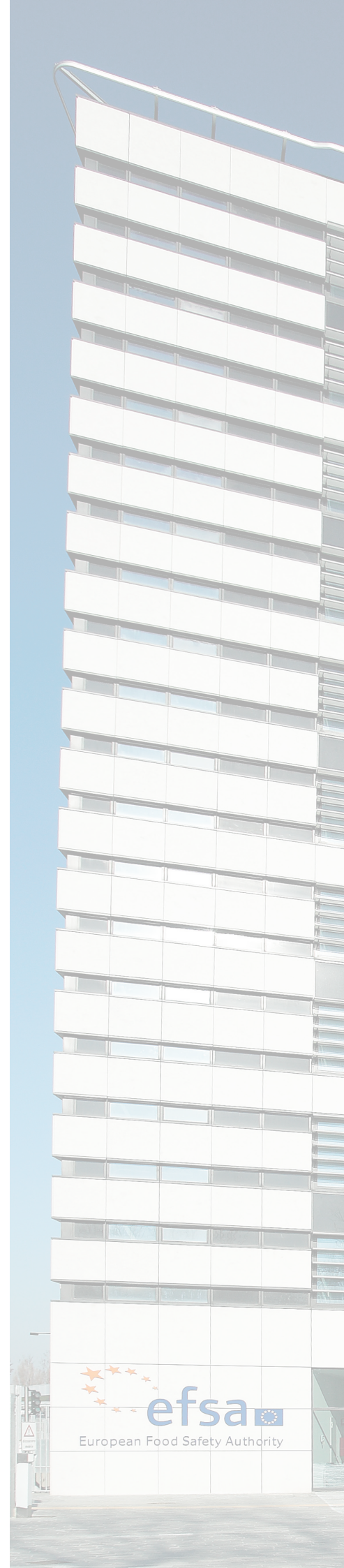
In parallel, the various on-going stakeholder initiatives EFSA is involved with will continue as planned. These include, for example, discussion groups on emerging risks and on data in the area of food additives and contaminants.



2016



2017



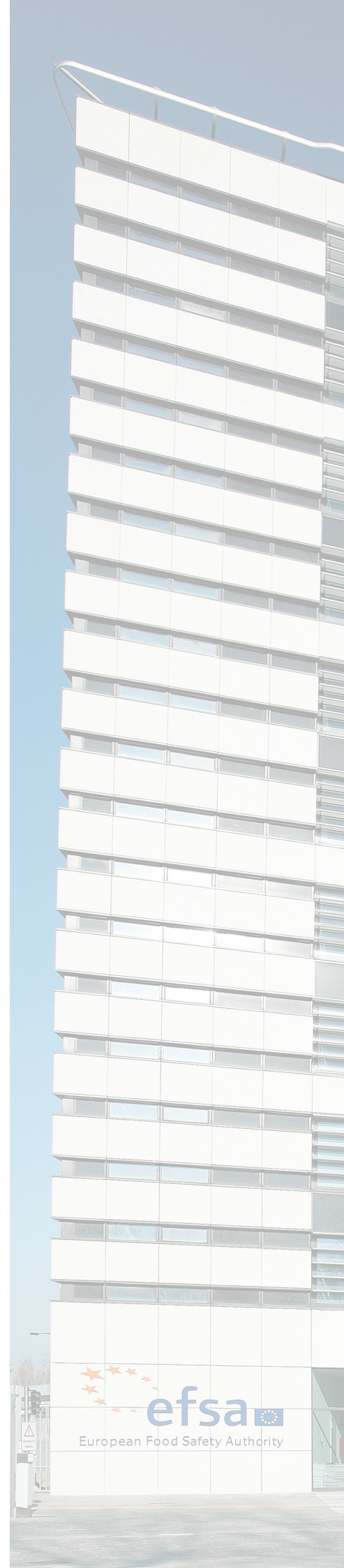


Annexes

I Definitions of stakeholders

II The approach at a glance







Annex I: Definitions of stakeholders

1. Consumers

This category covers organisations representing the interests of consumers in various aspects of EFSA's work.

2. Environmental/Health NGOs and advocacy groups

This category covers those organisations that have an interest in public health, safe food and environmental sustainability. The organisations are normally NGOs covering one specialist aspect of EFSA's work, such as food safety, health protection, animal welfare and the environment.

3. Farmers and primary producers

This category comprises those at the very beginning of the supply chain who provide agricultural and forestry raw materials, such as farmers and primary producers. It also includes small-scale farmers, fishermen folk, pastoralists, foresters, breeders, beekeepers and horticulturists.

4. Business and food industry

This group refers to business associations which represent groups of companies belonging to an industry sector that is of relevance to the work of EFSA and ad-hoc coalitions of industry associations. Individual companies cannot be accredited under this category.

5. Distributors and Horeca

This category comprises the stakeholders trading or selling the final food products, such as wholesalers, retailers, supermarkets, as well as hotels, restaurants and caterers (Horeca).

6. Associations of Practitioners

This category comprises associations representing professionals working in fields relevant to EFSA's food safety and public health remit, such as medical doctors, dieticians, veterinarians, etc.

7. Academia

This group is made of organisations representing the scientific and technological communities and covers academia, scientific societies, universities and research institutes.



Annex II: The approach at a glance

