

Minutes of the Design Thinking Workshop to identify recommendations for EFSA: joint working session with all stakeholders to find solutions for some of EFSA`s challenges

Introduction

On the 21st of March 2017, SAFE held its annual conference “EU Food Safety Regulation: Putting Consumers First – An overview of current issues and how to increase consumers’ protection”.

Through the workshop organised during the conference participants achieved two objectives: first, they were able to better identify consumers’ concerns regarding food safety, and second they were able to reconcile consumers’ concerns with other stakeholders' values and interests. This knowledge was the basis on which recommendations to EFSA were elaborated.

In order to ensure a balanced outcome, participants of the workshop had very different professional profiles. Each group was composed of NGO members, industry representatives, EU officials, as well as journalists.

Workshop

Design Thinking Method

The workshop was facilitated by Arnoud Koning and Edoardo Costa, trainers and innovation facilitators for Design Thinkers Academy. The latter aims to resolve problems in a creative way by using a “learning by doing” methodology allowing constructive and inspiring conversations between participants from different sectors. Design Thinking Method helps “*organisations create new collaborations and translate values into meaningful services for people and the stakeholders involved*”. Workshop participants collect values and insights from different stakeholders (in the case of the conference consumers on the one side, and for example, food industry on the other) and write them down on differently colored post-its. Thanks to the use of visual maps, common values and insights were identified between different sectors, thus allowing to reach recommendations satisfying for all actors involved.

At the end of the workshop, while the different groups were presenting their results, Mister Costa proceeded to sketch the main concepts, turning the EFSA recommendations into visual ideas (see pictures in the Workshop Results section).

First Step: consumers' insights

Workshop participants were asked to watch a video collecting the insights of 15 consumers (with different backgrounds, of different nationalities and of different age groups) regarding food safety and the food industry in general. In the video, the consumers interviewed were asked several questions:

- Do you read and understand labels?
- Are you concerned about food safety?
- Do you trust the food safety system?
- Who should control food safety?

During the video, participants wrote down (individually) the main ideas, opinions and concerns of the interviewed consumers. This step allowed participants to identify the specific interests of consumers when it comes to food safety. The video



was made by the SAFE Team, following the indications of the Design Thinkers Academy. It is important to stress that people interviewed had no previous knowledge about the EU food safety system. The goal of the video was namely to capture the insights of average consumers.

Second Step: stakeholders & consumers

The second step consisted in a group discussion using a "Stakeholder Value Network Map". The participants were divided in 4 smaller groups to facilitate the discussions and encourage the participation of everyone. The goal of this step was to define the identity of the consumers, the most relevant stakeholders and the values that are relevant for them. Workshop participants were encouraged to share what they discovered during the first step. Recurring consumers' concerns and opinions were collected and connections between them were made.

Then, participants proceeded with the identification of stakeholders (NGOs, food industry, or public health authorities, for example) and the values that matter to consumers (transparency, good taste of food, safety or independent information, for example).

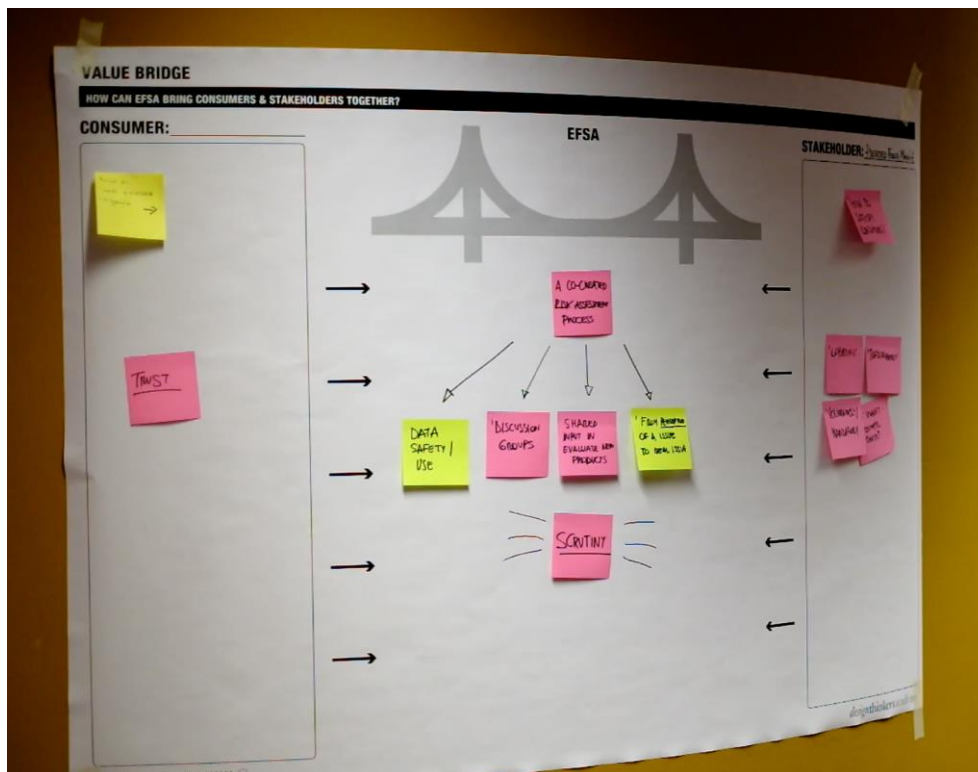


Stakeholder Value Network Map

Define the identity of the consumer, the most relevant stakeholders and the values that are relevant for them

Third Step: bridging values

The third step used the "Value Bridge". This step was based on one crucial question: "How can EFSA bring consumers and stakeholders together?". Workshop participants were asked to create a bridge between consumers' concerns and stakeholders' values, thus coming up with recommendations for EFSA, which would be satisfying for both stakeholders and consumers. At this stage, each group was asked to present its results to the whole assistance.



Value Bridge

How can EFSA bring consumers and stakeholders together?

Workshop Results

Group 1

Members: Patrick Ahern (EHPM), Stefanka Bratinova (EC), Laure Guillevic (SAFE), Nicholas Jacobs (IPEs Food), Antoine Lebessis (SAFE), Mario Monteiro (MEP Assistant), Miriam Schneider (BVLH)

Key Word: direct communication

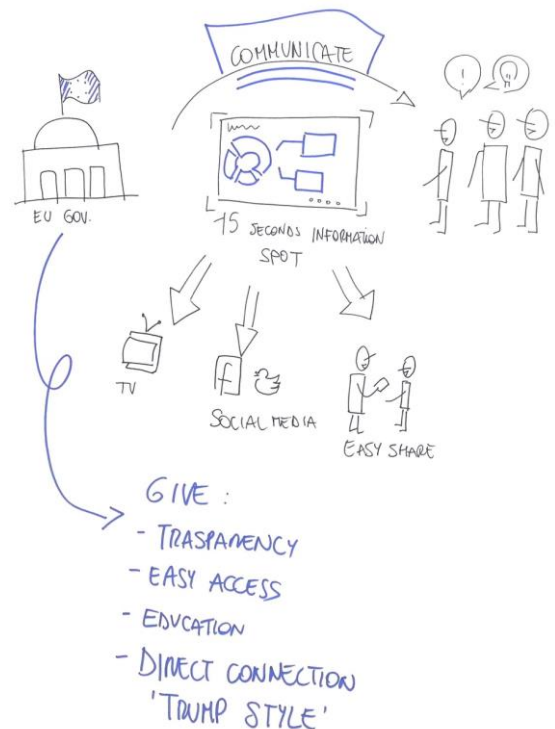
Objective: Establishment of a closer link between consumers and EFSA through direct communication.

Assessment: Faced with misleading information (on social networks, internet and media), consumers seem to find it difficult to figure out which ingredients – and in which amounts – they should/should not consume. It also seems difficult for consumers to trust the source of information.

Recommendations: A simple, straightforward, and easy access type of communication. This direct communication could for example take the form of 15-20 seconds commercials displayed on TV and social media.

Each commercial would focus on a particular food ingredient that can be problematic for human health, explaining what it is, what risks it can be linked to, and how much of it should be consumed. If consumers wished to learn more, they could consult a website containing all the commercials, as well as additional information.

Not only would direct communication facilitate education and raise awareness, it would also make EFSA's action more transparent.



Group 2

Members: Achterberg Franziska (Greenpeace), Inès Boursot (SAFE), Dejonghe Daisy (CAOBISCO), Raquel Izquierdo de Santiago (Europatat), Goran Kumric (EFSA), Rend Platings (Sugarwise), Nusa Urbancic (Changing Markets), Marta Stenz (EPHA)

Key Word: label literacy

Objective: Offer a better understanding of labels to consumers.

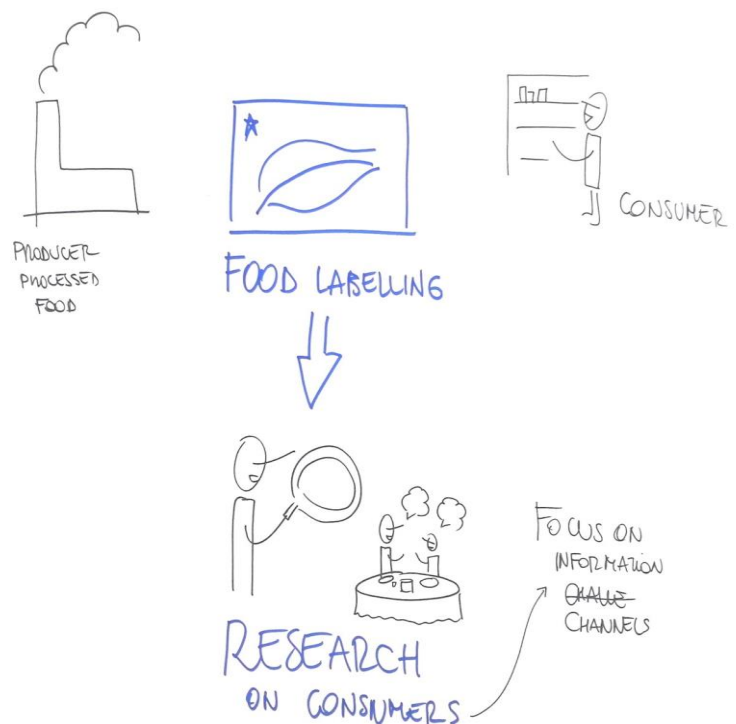
Assessment: Labels are too complicated and too technical for consumers to understand and thus they do not help them to make informed choices when purchasing food.

Recommendations: Even though labelling literacy was identified as a core issue for consumers during discussions, this field does not belong under EFSA's remit. It is therefore crucial to pinpoint what the public perception of labels actually is: what would consumers like to know? Which information is missing from the labels? Which types of label are misleading to consumers? Which labels help consumers make healthier choices?

In order to do so, the group suggests to launch a study or survey of public perception regarding food labels. Based on the results of this study/survey policy changes on food labelling could be proposed.

To go further on this topic, the group also suggested for events to be hosted in order to raise consumer awareness and increase knowledge about food labels.

In conclusion, consumers seem to be subject to an information overload and not all information seems to be considered as equally credible.



Group 3

Members: Neil Buck (GMI), Nina Holland (CEO), Alexis Waravka (HOTREC), Sara Lewis (EU Food Law), Stephen Pagani (EFSA), Camille Perrin (BEUC), Silvia Schmidt (Euro Coop), Ignacio Vasquez (Changing Markets)

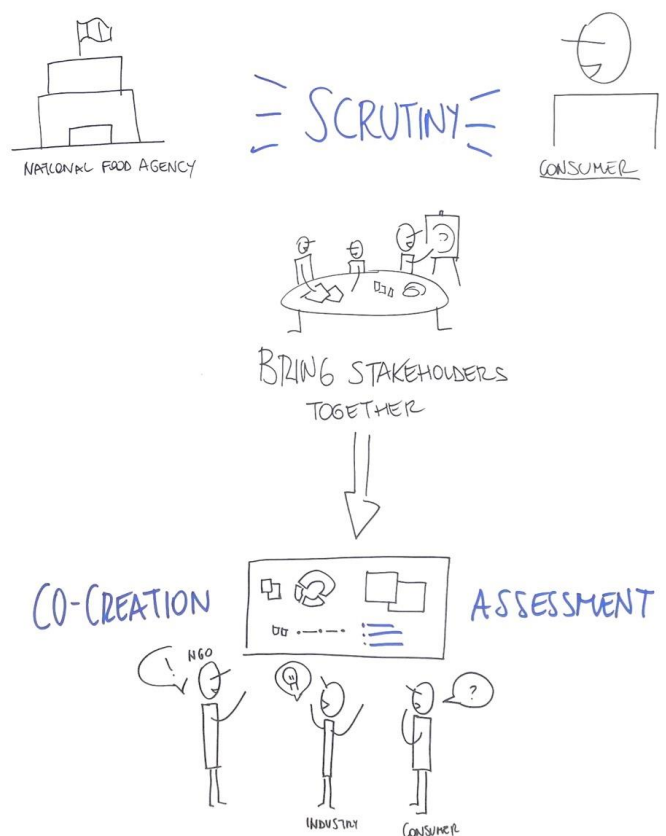
Key Word: scrutiny

Objective: Better scrutiny to reach independency of data and research on food safety.

Assessment: According to some members of the group, there is a lack of independence from EFSA's risk assessment, first of all because some of EFSA's stakeholders are only consultative but also because data used by EFSA is industry-based.

Recommendations: All stakeholders should be involved in the risk assessment process, and not just as consultative elements. A new approach should include a forum for discussion groups where stakeholders from various sectors could come together and discuss different issues. For instance it could be achieved by having a stakeholder representative on an EFSA Panel or by having a section for stakeholder views in a separate chapter in scientific opinion.

Furthermore, those who generate food safety data should not be the same paying for the analysis of such data, in order to ensure the independence of data. It should be kept in mind however that applicants submitting dossiers to EFSA are obliged by legislation to provide such studies to support their application. However, those studies have to be carried out in reference laboratories which are subject to EU-monitoring. Another perception within the group was that EFSA has a tendency to withhold information rather than publishing it, thus generating mistrust. Making information available would facilitate scrutiny.



Group 4

Members: Sandra Fernandez (EHPM), Lukas Kovacs (MEP Assistant), Bruno Menne (SAFE), Martin Pigeon (CEO), Kate Trollope (EU Food Policy), Bart Vandewaetere (Nestlé)

Key Word: economic independence

Objective: increased economic resources in order to produce independent data and research on food safety.

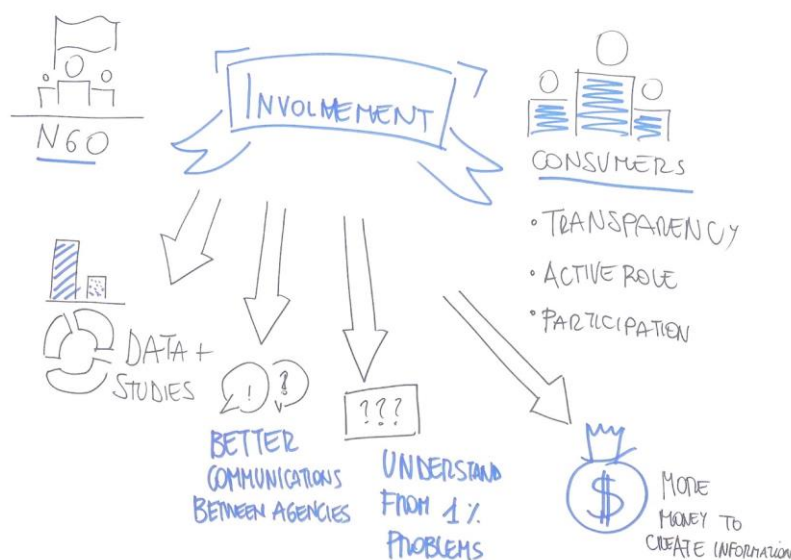
Assessment: Some of EFSA's data is not available to the public, leading to consumers' and stakeholders' mistrust. This problem is also directly linked to the fact that due to lack of economic resources, EFSA's risk assessment is based on data made available by the agro-food industry.

Recommendations:

By publishing all of its data, EFSA would bridge stakeholders' and consumers' expectations and concerns. Stakeholders would obtain the scientific validity they want, they would trust EFSA's risk assessment more, and would consider EFSA as more transparent.

It also resulted that EFSA needs more money in order for its research to be truly independent. It is clear that it is not easy to achieve, but one way to raise money to finance independent research from EFSA could be to establish a fixed tax rate that industry would pay.

Another point addressed was the credibility of EFSA's opinions. Group members agreed upon that though, in most cases, EFSA opinions are well accepted and not contested, there remain portions that are subject to controversy. It would be therefore useful to see what makes EFSA's assessment less controversial in most cases, in order to achieve a complete success rate.



Conclusions – 5 recommendations from different stakeholders to tackle EFSA’s challenges

1. Inform consumers and raise awareness about food components: enhance direct communication via short commercials on social media and television;
2. Offer independent information to consumers: industry-free information;
3. Organise forums to involve all stakeholders (not just consultative) in the risk assessment process;
4. Transparency of data: publish all researches from EFSA;
5. Independence of research thanks to economic independence of EFSA: through industry tax.