

**REPORT OF THE NINETEENTH MEETING
OF THE FLEP-FORUM
HELD IN INNSBRUCK ON 11 AND 12 NOVEMBER 2002**

1. Participants

Organisations from the following nations (see list of participants)
Austria, Czech republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany,
Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain,
Switzerland, United Kingdom

Observers: European Commission (Ispra)

Special guest: EWFC

2. Introduction

The Chairman, Mr. Wolfs welcomed delegates and observers. He remembered the passing away of John Race who was a very active and esteemed colleague since the start of FLEP in 1990. The Agenda was fixed.

3. Welcome by Mr. Peter Karner,

Mr. Kranner welcomed the FLEP Forum in Innsbruck. He noted that during the start of FLEP that it was very useful to co-operate with FLEP, because at that time Austria was not a member of European Union. For this reason he was very glad that also the accessing countries are invited to the FLEP meetings.

Since the membership of Austria in the EU it is recognised that Food control is not anymore national, but had got a European basis. The new (draft) regulations General Food Law, Food Hygiene and Feed and Food control will have an impact on Food control organisations and an active co-operation as is realised through FLEP helps very much to receive the aim of a European wide harmonised Food Control system.

He wished FLEP a very useful and fruitful meeting and a very nice stay in Innsbruck.

4. Minutes of the last meetings

The report of FLEP Forum meeting on 4 and 5 March 2002 in Cork and the Steering Group meeting on 31 May in Bruges were endorsed.

5. Any other business

The next points were announced to be addressed on the second day:

- UK (Statham) heavy metals in calabash
- NL (Verburg): zero-tolerance for contaminants in veterinary products

6. Changes in Food Control

Mr. Goebbels gave a presentation about the new Food and Feed control structure in the Netherlands. He informed the Forum about the creation of the Dutch Food and Consumer Products Authority. This authority managed by a Director-General is responsible for Food, Feed, Animal diseases, product safety control and the selling of alcoholic drinks and tobacco.

The organisation includes 2 inspection services (the inspectorate for Health protection, including 5 laboratories and the Inspection service for livestock and meat, including 1 laboratory) and 3 central departments (communication, research and risk assessment and control).

This ownership of this authority is the Ministry of Health, who has the final responsibility. The authority has two clients (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture).

The total organisation is staffed with 3000 people and has to check 250.000 premises.

The main duties of the Authority are:

- enforcement (feed, food and consumer products)
- meat inspection
- risk assessment
- risk communication
- animal health

Norway informed the Forum that a new Food Control Authority would be formed, starting from 1 January 2004. Until now the fish control was excluded from the present authority. The new Food Control Authority will take up this control.

Denmark informed the Forum that after the last reorganisation in 1997 and 11 microbiological and 3 chemical laboratories were established the number of microbiological laboratories would be diminished to 6. Further discussions are going on to reduce the number of regions from 11 to 5 or 6.

Spain informed the Forum that a new central Food Agency, under the responsibility of the Minister of Health was created. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture finance the Agency. This Agency may be an important organisation for FLEP. One of the main tasks is the liaison function between the EU and the 17 Regions in Spain. The total number of staff for this new organisation is still unknown, but it will include about 300 people from the central laboratory of the Ministry of Health.

Austria explained the Forum that an Austrian Authority for Food was created, falling under two Ministries. The 4 main functions of this authority are:

- laboratory
- co-ordinating of Food control (Food Enforcement is still a responsibility for the regions)
- risk assessment
- judgement of laboratory analysis of samples and expert reports in case of infringements.

7. Co-operation with EU-joint Research centre (Geel/Ispra)

Ms. Anklam said that FLEP was an excellent group, which whom JRC wants to co-operate. The JRC centre is located on 8 different places from which the locations in Geel and in Ispra may be the most interesting centres for FLEP. The main task of the Centre in Geel is to produce reference materials and a help desk function in case of urgencies.

The main issues on which they are working are:

- to identify the state of the art on methods of analyses for acrylamide
- preparing standards for Food allergy detection (peanuts)
- developing methods to differ between organic and conventional Food
- support to accessing countries

Concerning the co-operation with FLEP Ms. Anklam has identified the next items:

- compilation of methods of analyses of official control laboratories
- organisation of workshops for EU accessing countries
- European Accreditation of official control laboratories
- Participation in validation of methods and reference laboratories
- Developing a harmonised level of action in case of infringement after laboratory analysis.

Mr. Jenewein said that there exist reference laboratories for veterinary products, but no such laboratories exist for pesticides or mycotoxins. Ms. Anklam noted that mostly no money is available for reference laboratories (only for GNO), but that for most methods of analyses validated methods are present and participation in proficiency testing fulfils the quality criteria for laboratories. She stimulated to create an active network of Food Enforcement laboratories, which could be an important role for FLEP in co-operation with JRC.

Denmark noted that Codex is often looking after the AOAC methods, which should be compared with EU (CEN) methods. At the end UK suggested to create a task force to come to an action programme for co-operation between FLEP and JRC. It was agreed that Germany (Mr. Binnemann) the Netherlands

(Mr. Beljaars) and JRC (Ms. Anklam) will prepare a proposal for the co-operation between FLEP and JRC. Ms. Anklam informed the Forum that in January 2003 a workshop would be held concerning the compilation of methods of analyses and accreditation of laboratories.

Spain noted that through the SCOOP programme a document on accreditation is being prepared, which could be very useful for this workshop.

8. Discussion on the Draft EU-Regulation on "Official Food and Feed Control"

The Forum was split up in 5 discussion groups. After the discussion the different groups presented their remarks to the Forum. Mr. Statham was willing to make a report of the outcome of the discussions, which will be sent to the European Commission. (Annex 2).

As a result of the discussions it was agreed that the next activities should be undertaken:

- To inventarize what official tasks are presently delegated private organisations in the different countries.
- To re-establish the Working Party on "Import"
- To create a working party on "Template for official control plans"

9. Working party "Co-ordinated Programme"

Ms. Lecourt informed the Forum that 2 issues were chosen of part of the Co-ordinated Programme for 2003:

- labelling of olive oil
- bacteriological safety of fish (histamine)

To prepare the Co-ordinated Programme 2004 a questionnaire will be sent to the contact points to give suggestions for that programme.

14. Working Party "Measurement of compliance"

Mr. Statham informed the Forum that the report presented in Cork could be considered as the definite report.

The Forum agreed to stop the Working Party.

15. Management on effects

Mr. Colijn introduced a Dutch approach for Inspection, based on "Managing on Effects". This approach just started last year and is still in the developing phase.

He explained the principle approach about how effects could be measured and because of this measurements management on effects should be possible. It is still a theoretical approach and will be tested in the coming year in the Netherlands.

Estonia
United Kingdom
Germany (will ask colleagues)
France (will ask colleagues)

Important for the success of this Working Party is the participation of France and Germany.

Working Party: "Horizontal scanning of Food health issues"

Aim: to inventories new issues in relation to Food born illness

Members: Austria Chair: Mr. Jenewein
Denmark
Lithuania
The Netherlands
United Kingdom

Working party "Management on effects"

Aim: "to inventarize possibilities to develop methods for managing on effects"

Members: Ireland Chair Mr. R. Ellard
The Netherlands
Czech republic
United Kingdom
Norway
Spain (possibly)

Mr. Verburg will make a questionnaire to explore the present situation in the EU on official delegated control tasks to private organisations.

18. Working party: "Quality Management of Food Inspection"

The Working Party had no meeting in between the FLEP-Forum meetings. The issues, which will be taken up are: Auditing and checking of premises. Because of the fact that the new regulation on Food and Feed control is coming, issues formulated concerning the quality of inspections will be taken up. At the next meeting a follow up report will be presented.

19. Working Party "E-commerce"

Mr. Jeuring presented the document of the Working Party.

Members of the Working Party performed an internet sweep and specially in "foodsupplements" products were found who could be considered as a risk for health for he consumer.

The Forum endorsed the recommendations of the Working Party and it was Web sweeps.

20. Working party "Smuggled drugs"

Mr. Statham informed the Forum that no new activities were undertaken. The suggestion to bring this issue under the new formed Working Party "Import" was endorsed by the Forum

21. Template for the educational level of Food inspectors

Mr. Ellard presented a discussion paper on a template for the educational level of Food inspectors. He noted that the draft regulation on Food and feed control give more condition in relation of the expertise of staff of the competent authorities. This may have a further impact for those authorities. More the less it seemed that private inspection systems are better regulated than public inspection systems, because private inspection organisations have to fulfil the requirements laid down in the European Standard EN 45004.

The suggestion to create a Working Party "Template for inspection organisations" was endorsed by the Forum.

Aim: Describe a template for public inspection organisations, taking into account the draft regulation on "Feed and Food Control".

Members:

United Kingdom	Chair
Austria	
Czech republic	
Malta	
Ireland	
EWFC	

22. Acrylamide in Food

Mr. van Kooij presented the findings of the Dutch examination on acrylamide in foodstuffs. High levels of acrylamide were found in chips, French fries, gingerbread, and sweets like pepernuts, cafe noir.

Further studies are going which will be reported next year.

Mr. Binnemann informed the Forum about the results in Germany. The findings were more or less the same as from results from the Netherlands. Furthermore he told that examination on the mechanism of the forming of acrylamide was found. Important factors are the presence of reducing sugars, asparagine and high frying temperatures. Mr. Binnemann suggested to gather all information on research done by the FLEP members and to make a report to present to the European Commission. It was agreed that Mr. Binnemann would be preparing such a report. A questionnaire will be sent to the FLEP members. Because of the discussions in the EU it is necessary to make this report within a few months.

23. Round table

Mr. Verburg asked the members of the Forum how they deal with the "0-tolerance" as is formulated for not allowed substances in Annex 2277. The reason is that detection levels for those substances are reaching the real absence level and that very low levels are found who as such doesn't have any health risks. The Forum members could not give a reaction to this question. The Netherlands are going to sent a letter to the European Commission with the suggestion to set limits in the legislation below with the substance is considered as absent.

Mr. Statham informed the Forum that "calabash chalk" with is widely used in West African communities to prevent morning sickness for pregnant women contains high levels of lead. Germany and the Netherlands had found the same results and actions are taken.

Mr. Beljaars informed the Forum that after the Rapid Alert about high levels of PAC's in primrose oil the Netherlands had done further research. The outcome of this research was that more products based on herb oils contained high levels of PAC's. Further research is still going on.

23. Chairman's closing remarks

The Chairman informed the Forum that Germany had invited the FLEP Forum to Freiburg. The meeting will be held on 16/17 June 2003 or 23/23 June 2003. (The definite dates are 23 and 24 June 2003). Spain and Swiss informed the Forum that they have interest in organising the following meetings.

The Chairman thanked Austria for the very good organisation of the meeting and the social activities with the wonderful help of Petra Hakkenbrak.

Jan van Kooij
2 December 2002