Subregional workshop on the rapid exchange of information during food safety emergencies in the Western Balkans

Technical Report

Belgrade, Serbia 10–11 May 2022
Subregional workshop on the rapid exchange of information during food safety emergencies in the Western Balkans

Technical Report

Belgrade, Serbia 10–11 May 2022
Abstract
To strengthen the capacity within the Western Balkans to respond to food safety emergency situations, a two-day workshop was conducted in Belgrade, Serbia on 10-11 May 2022. The main aim of the workshop was to support countries and areas to rapidly exchange information during food safety emergencies. This report provides brief summaries of the workshop presentations and discussions.

Acknowledgement
This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of WHO and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Outcome</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Methods</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants and Observers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop sessions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop agenda</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of participants and observers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

The WHO Western Balkans Hub convened a two-day workshop in Belgrade, Serbia, aimed at strengthening capacity within the Western Balkans to rapidly exchange information during food safety emergencies. More specifically, the purpose of the workshop was to strengthen familiarity with and understanding of the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), and how it can be used to facilitate the exchange of food safety information; to provide hands-on guidance on the use of the INFOSAN Community Website as a platform for sharing food safety information; to test the effectiveness and efficiency of country/area response mechanisms to food safety emergencies, including their capacity to interact with INFOSAN; and to provide recommendations for strengthening the rapid exchange of information during food safety emergencies in the Western Balkans.

The workshop was attended by government officials from ministries of health, food safety authorities, and food and veterinary services, all of whom play an active role in the management of food safety incidents. The facilitation team included WHO staff from the Western Balkans Hub, the WHO Regional Office for Europe, WHO headquarters and the United Kingdom Food Standards Agency.

Activities included presentations, discussions and a simulation exercise. During the simulation exercise, participants and observers worked through a food safety event with international implications, which enhanced their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the different players connected through INFOSAN. It also helped them learn more about risk communication throughout the various stages of a food safety incident and the flow of information during a food safety event of international concern.

Participants and observers also provided recommendations on how to improve the rapid exchange of information across sectors and countries and areas during food safety emergencies. These recommendations were targeted at countries and areas as well as WHO and the INFOSAN Secretariat.
Background

Food safety incidents and emergencies are highly diverse and include foodborne disease outbreaks, food fraud and food adulteration, chemical contamination, and food labelling and other non-compliance issues. With the increasing globalization of the food chain and growing international trade in food and agricultural products, there is a greater risk that unsafe or contaminated food will spread across national borders.

Between 2011 and 2020, the value of imports and exports in crops and livestock products increased significantly in the Western Balkans, accounting for a significant share of the subregion’s external trade. With the exception of Serbia, the Western Balkan countries and areas are net importers of agri-food products and their trade deficit has increased continuously in recent years. Most agri-food exports go to other countries and areas in the Western Balkans, followed by the European Union (EU), while imports are divided more evenly between the Western Balkans and the EU.

Increasing international trade and globalization of the food chain have changed food safety risk management and intensified the need for countries to have effective mechanisms in place to respond to food safety incidents and emergencies. This includes the capacity to actively participate in food safety risk communication and the exchange of related information through international systems and networks such as the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN).

The capacity of countries to detect and respond to food safety events that may constitute an emergency due to the associated public health threat of international concern is a core capacity under the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005). It is therefore necessary to have established and functioning mechanisms for responding to and managing food safety emergencies.

Food safety incidents and emergencies may originate from multiple domestic and international sources. As such, a multidisciplinary approach engaging all relevant sectors and stakeholders, as well as effective communication among food safety authorities in importing and exporting countries and areas, is the key to a successful response. This requires well-established and tested traceability and recall systems, effective food safety communication – including active participation in INFOSAN – and systems for public health and food safety emergency preparedness, detection and response.

Joint external evaluations – a voluntary, collaborative, multisectoral process to assess country capacities as part of the IHR (2005) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework – conducted in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia have highlighted the need to strengthen food safety incident and emergency response systems, including participation in INFOSAN. This requires detailed understanding of the features of the Network and how it works, the roles and responsibilities of INFOSAN emergency contact points and INFOSAN focal points in various institutions, and the linkages between INFOSAN emergency contact points and national IHR focal points.
I. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES
The overall purpose of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity within the Western Balkans to rapidly exchange information during food safety emergencies. The specific objectives were:

a) to strengthen familiarity with and understanding of INFOSAN, and how it can be used to facilitate the exchange of food safety information;
b) to provide hands-on guidance on the use of the INFOSAN Community Website as a platform for sharing food safety information;
c) to test the effectiveness and efficiency of country/area response mechanisms to food safety emergencies, including their capacity to interact with INFOSAN;
d) to provide recommendations for strengthening the rapid exchange of information during food safety emergencies in the Western Balkans.

II. EXPECTED OUTCOMES
The workshop aimed to strengthen the capacity within the Western Balkans to exchange information during food safety emergencies, to foster close collaboration during food safety emergencies, and to identify gaps in understanding of the roles and responsibilities of INFOSAN members in relation to the IHR (2005).

III. WORKSHOP METHODS
The two-day face-to-face workshop was held at the Radisson Collection Hotel, Belgrade, on 10 and 11 May 2022.

The following methods were used to achieve the workshop’s objectives:

- plenary presentations
- country examples
- a plenary discussion
- a simulation exercise.

IV. PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS
The workshop was attended by fifteen participants and observers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia and Kosovo.1 The participants and observers included INFOSAN emergency contact points, INFOSAN focal points and representatives from relevant authorities involved in the food safety emergency response. The workshop was co-facilitated by WHO headquarters (INFOSAN Secretariat), the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) Western Balkans Hub, under the technical leadership of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, and with an invited temporary adviser from the United Kingdom Food Standards Agency.

---

1 All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
**V. WORKSHOP SESSIONS**

**Day 1: Opening**

Abebayehu Assefa Mengistu (Coordinator, WHE Western Balkans Hub, WHO Regional Office for Europe) welcomed the participants and observers to the workshop, which followed the subregional training held in November 2021 on the use of risk analysis in the response to food safety emergencies in the Western Balkans. Reflecting on the importance of food safety in the subregion, he drew attention to the increase in international trade and the globalization of the food chain, which had changed food safety risk management, making it necessary for countries and areas to have effective mechanisms in place. A number of joint external evaluations had been conducted in the Western Balkans, showing a clear need to improve capacities in certain countries and areas in relation to food safety surveillance and the response to food safety emergencies. Although some countries and areas could demonstrate good capacities, others were still developing in that respect, and there was a general need to build capacities across the Western Balkans. Those capacities should include active participation in food safety risk communication and the exchange of information through international systems and networks, such as INFOSAN.

Peter Sousa Hoejskov (Technical Officer, Food Safety and Zoonotic Diseases, WHO Regional Office for Europe) emphasized the importance of food safety authorities’ capacity to rapidly exchange information during food safety emergencies. He recalled that, during the subregional training on the use of risk analysis in the response to food safety emergencies in the Western Balkans, participants and observers had recommended strengthening communication and information sharing across countries and areas in the subregion. He highlighted WHO’s work with the European Union, other partners and Member States to address food safety and foodborne diseases in the subregion, and further stressed that rapid information exchange during food safety incidents and emergencies was an important component of food safety risk communication.

Verica Jovanović (Director of the Institute of Public Health of Serbia, National IHR Focal Point) delivered opening remarks on behalf of the host country. Drawing attention to challenges related to infectious diseases in Serbia, including those caused by unsafe food, she highlighted the close cooperation within the Western Balkans in addressing health emergencies. She also stressed the importance of strengthening food safety emergency response capacities as part of work to ensure compliance with the IHR (2005). She thanked WHO for choosing Serbia and Belgrade to host the subregional workshop.

**Technical sessions**

Anne Gravett (United Kingdom Food Standards Agency (FSA)) gave a presentation entitled “Emerging food safety issues in Europe and beyond”. She spoke about the complexity of accessing food safety information in the United Kingdom following its withdrawal from the European Union, comparing the situation to that in the Western Balkans; their position outside the European Union meant that the United Kingdom and the Western Balkans had many issues in common. She then explained how INFOSAN and the INFOSAN Community Website had helped the United Kingdom prepare for and respond to food safety incidents. The FSA had put in place a mechanism to mitigate food safety risks by identifying risk signals at an early stage through the horizon scanning of web sources and prioritization using an algorithm to extract and store key information from food safety alerts and articles, and by analysing trends. Information sharing and engagement with stakeholders, incident prevention and root cause analysis were highlighted as being of particular importance.

Abebayehu Assefa Mengistu (Coordinator, WHE Western Balkans Hub, WHO Regional Office for Europe) gave a presentation on the IHR (2005) core capacities for food safety in the Western Balkans. Noting that States Parties are required to have the capacity for timely detection, investigation and response in relation to food safety events involving foodborne diseases and food contamination through multisectoral collaboration, he presented the IHR (2005) core capacity scores for food safety achieved by four countries and the Western Balkans, as reported in the IHR State Party Self-Assessment Annual Report for 2018, 2019 and 2020. Examples of best practices and strengths in those four countries included their legislative framework, foodborne surveillance systems and laboratory capacity to isolate and confirm pathogens associated with food-related events. Some recommendations for priority action had also been identified during the assessments; those included finalizing and implementing a food safety emergency plan, risk assessments, simulation exercises, standard operating procedures and an electronic system to integrate information from the entire food chain, among others. Lastly, he highlighted activities supported by WHO through the EU Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations project to strengthen food safety capacities, including training.
Peter Sousa Hoejskov (Technical Officer, Food Safety and Zoonotic Diseases, WHO Regional Office for Europe) gave a presentation on food safety incidents and emergency response, entitled “Risk communication and how to share information”. The presentation covered the principles and key considerations for food safety risk communication, and how to communicate with different target groups, including food safety authorities, food businesses, the general public and international organizations, with a special focus on INFOSAN. He emphasized the importance of timely and effective risk communication throughout the emergency response process, stressing that trust, openness, transparency, timeliness and responsiveness were the key principles of risk communication. He also gave examples of how those principles applied to food safety emergencies. He concluded the presentation by detailing existing guidelines, networks and systems that could enhance the rapid exchange of information among food safety agencies.

Raul Garcia (INFOSAN Secretariat) updated the participants and observers on INFOSAN developments and initiatives that had taken place since the first food safety workshop for the Western Balkans had been held in November 2021. His presentation focused on the work of INFOSAN in the context of global health security and its relationship with the IHR (2005), as well as how it contributed to the strengthening of national infrastructures for food safety by connecting food safety authorities globally. He discussed the responsibilities of INFOSAN members (INFOSAN emergency contact points and focal points) and described the structure of INFOSAN at the national level. The connection between the INFOSAN emergency contact point and the national IHR focal point, and between WHO and FAO through the INFOSAN Secretariat at the international level was also covered. In addition, he described how the INFOSAN Community Website facilitated information exchange between national INFOSAN members and the international community during international food safety emergencies, as well as INFOSAN processes and procedures; examples were given of various international events to demonstrate communication during food safety emergencies and how INFOSAN had facilitated information exchange, with a particular focus on interactions between the INFOSAN emergency contact points and national IHR focal points. Lastly, he informed the participants and observers about the subregional INFOSAN and events for the Western Balkans, with a question-and-answer session providing further reflection on improving participation in the Network.
Albania
The team gave an overview of the current public health and food safety governance system. The National Food Authority is responsible for official controls, risk assessment and communication. The official controls include food hygiene inspections and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) certification. The Institute of Public Health, which is part of the Ministry of Health, monitors foodborne diseases. Strengths of the food safety system include the close collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, which facilitates the exchange of information at the national, regional and local levels. The food regulations have been updated to include the coordination of control activities and multisectoral collaboration. There is also laboratory capacity to test for foodborne pathogens and heavy metal residues, as well as good food safety and surveillance infrastructure. Another strength is the international cooperation between INFOSAN, WHO – including its Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (FERG) and Advisory Group on Integrated Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance (AGISAR) – and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Weaknesses of the system include a weak food recall system and the lack of a food safety emergency response plan.

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Food safety incidents are reported via notifications from official controls, including those from foreign authorities and networks, as well as via customer complaints, food laboratories and inspection services. Risk assessments are carried out by the competent authorities, including the public health authorities. In relation to response, the Food Safety Agency coordinates activities at the national level, in liaison with relevant line ministries and RASFF. Legal regulations stipulate the urgent measures to be taken to ensure the safety of both domestic and imported foods. There is also a general crisis management plan outlining protection and rescue actions during natural and other disasters. Rapid risk assessments are performed using the EFSA Pesticide Residue Intake Model (PRiMo), the deterministic exposure assessment model ImproRisk and the Rapid Assessment of Contaminant Exposure (RACE) tool. At the national level, multiple agencies and entities are involved in the food safety and security network, while international links are maintained through EFSA’s Communications Expert Network, RASFF and INFOSAN. As a result of relationships with key stakeholders, there is good international collaboration in the food safety system, although the food safety system itself is fragmented, with other weaknesses including an unclear division of roles and responsibilities and the lack of a functional IT communication platform.

Kosovo
The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD), which is responsible for the Food and Veterinary Agency (FVA), develops and enacts policies regarding food safety, while FVA performs risk assessments of crises. Food safety incidents are detected and reported to FVA through a variety of channels, including a risk analysis unit, business operators, consumer organizations and complaints, media sources, schools and health care facilities. FVA serves as the official contact point for RASFF in accordance with the Law on Food. There is also a public communication unit on food safety that communicates with stakeholders regarding any food safety issues. Key strengths in relation to food safety include the legal framework, the structure of the food safety system and the information technology system, which make it possible to implement a comprehensive integrated approach to food safety. However, there are areas of improvement that require attention, including a need for training on food safety and information sharing. Other challenges include the lack of standard operating procedures governing institutional responsibilities regarding food safety, an inadequate budget and excessively bureaucratic processes for sharing information on food safety.

---

1 All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
Montenegro

The team described the legal framework governing food safety, veterinary services, plant protection products, plant nutrients and the protection of the population against communicable diseases, covering the general principles, guidelines and regulations related to food and feed safety. Under this legal framework, multidisciplinary and multisectoral coordination is required between the various government ministries and agencies responsible for food and feed safety, including in relation to administration, approval, rapid response and laboratory investigations. In addition to the framework, there is a general crisis plan outlining direct and indirect risks to human health, measures to eliminate food safety hazards, and how organizations can collaborate to implement these measures. It also specifies the system for disseminating information to the public and managing these measures. The Government receives notification of events through the rapid alert systems from a variety of channels; early warning systems are operated by various stakeholders, consumer associations, food and feed business entities and the media, while the assigned crisis unit performs an assessment. Further details were provided regarding the strengths of the food safety system, notably the integrated surveillance and monitoring system, which covers priority foodborne diseases and food safety hazards, as well as the daily reporting of communicable diseases and the designation of national focal points. A major challenge is full implementation of the programme and training on protocols, instructions, procedures and plans; a simulation exercise in food and feed crisis management should also be held. In addition, partnerships with national and international organizations, as well as competent institutions in other countries, need to be strengthened.

North Macedonia

Details were provided regarding how a food safety incident or emergency is detected and confirmed, and how multiple partners work together on information sharing with the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), INFOSAN and in-country entities such as laboratories, consumer and private sector stakeholders and government agencies. The main stakeholders were described, together with their responsibilities: detection, risk assessment, investigation, response and risk communication. The main strengths within the country include the capacity to conduct risk assessments and risk communication, although an integrated surveillance system is needed to syneritize information from the entire food chain, and allow timely and systematic information exchange in order to better understand risks and the possibilities for mitigation.

Serbia

In Serbia, there is a legal framework governing food safety and an organized structure for the communication and exchange of food safety information. This structure is multisectoral, involving the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (incorporating the Veterinary Directorate, the Plant Protection Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency) and the Ministry of Health (incorporating the Institute of Public Health). The Serbian Food Safety Authority has a designated national focal point for information about incidents and emerging risks; it is also responsible for processing notifications and obtaining opinions from the Expert Council for Risk Assessment in Food Safety when necessary. A food safety emergency may be detected through official controls, laboratories or the media. Any reports of an incident are investigated by the relevant experts, who are tasked with identifying the source and extent of contamination. Risk communication forms part of the crisis management strategy and involves the relevant public relations services within ministries and other relevant stakeholders. Key national strengths include the existing food safety legislation, multisectoral working groups and close collaboration with RASFF, INFOSAN, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), which provide information on food safety risks to the country. Uncoordinated responses, a lack of written procedures for communication between veterinary and health services, and separate databases for public health and veterinary services were mentioned as weaknesses of the national food safety system.
Plenary discussion

Barriers to information sharing and how to overcome them

A plenary discussion was conducted to identify barriers and potential ways to strengthen information sharing between different groups of stakeholders and across countries and areas in the Western Balkans. The discussions focused on internal and external barriers: internal barriers were defined as barriers to sharing information between sectors and stakeholders within a country/area, while external barriers were defined as barriers to sharing information with other countries and areas.

The participants and observers identified the following internal barriers:

- lack of standard operating procedures;
- undefined and/or unclear roles and responsibilities between the different agencies responsible for food safety;
- limited human resources and capacity;
- large numbers of sectors and stakeholders to involve in risk communication;
- unclear procedures for information sharing;
- “person-based” systems, where specific individuals are assigned specific functions.

The external barriers identified included:

- unharmonized legislation and policies;
- “person-based” systems, where specific individuals are assigned specific functions;
- different procedures for communicating and reporting to RASFF and INFOSAN.

To overcome the barriers to effective food safety communication, the participants and observers proposed fostering and strengthening international cooperation; harmonizing working protocols, procedures and communication channels for the Western Balkans; building capacity regarding information management; and creating a roster to manage interactions with networks within and beyond the Western Balkans. It was also suggested that WHO should work with the EU focal point for RASFF to harmonize the notification requirements for RASFF and INFOSAN.

Day 2: Tabletop simulation exercise on communication and information sharing during a food safety emergency

At the beginning of day 2, the participants and observers were divided into three groups. The groups were taken through a fictional scenario with different injects concerning an outbreak of foodborne illness linked to internationally distributed food products in four fictional countries. The aim of the exercise was to give participants and observers the opportunity to work through a typical food safety event with international implications, in order to understand the roles and responsibilities of the different players connected through INFOSAN. The exercise also demonstrated the flow of information on food safety between international stakeholders.

Participants and observers were guided through ten injects. The first inject involved a cluster being notified of an event, which aimed to help participants and observers understand how a national authority should communicate such an event to the public. The second inject addressed the confirmed event, asking participants and observers to determine which actors, organizations and agencies should be involved, when and how to involve them, and how information updates should be delivered to the public. The third inject concerned outbreak investigation, with participants and observers identifying the actors, stakeholders or agencies involved and assessing whether notification through INFOSAN, RASFF and/or the IHR focal point was necessary. Injects four and five covered notification, the recall of the products concerned from the market, and what additional actions should be taken in such situations. Injects six to ten were intended to provide participants and observers with a better understanding of how to notify INFOSAN of an event beyond national jurisdiction and how to link with the INFOSAN focal points in the countries or areas affected. These injects demonstrated how an outbreak is identified, the exchange of information, the investigation, the timely reporting of information, and efficient processes and procedures for the emergency response. They also showed how useful the INFOSAN Community Website is as a resource for real-time information sharing during international food safety events.
The participants and observers then reflected on their experiences during group and plenary discussions, highlighting the following main learning points:

- It is important to have a clear mechanism in place and improve the roles and relationship between the national IHR focal points and the INFOSAN emergency contact points, including the information flow between them.

- The food legislation framework should be improved to clearly define and address any loopholes regarding food withdrawals and recalls.

- Roles and relationships in some settings could be improved by clearly defining the procedures for communication between ministries of health and food safety authorities.

- Public communication mechanisms in relation to food safety risks should also be improved.

- It is important to maintain good relationships with food businesses, both in normal times and during food safety emergencies.

- There should be written procedures for all relevant stakeholders to follow.

INFOSAN Community Website

The INFOSAN Community Website, which provides members with a safe online space to connect and communicate, was demonstrated during a live session. The website is the main tool for the dissemination of information and communication between INFOSAN members and the Secretariat.

During the session, participants and observers were taken through the login and landing pages, as well as the various tabs on the main page. They also learned how to access notifications, how information is passed to national IHR focal points and INFOSAN focal points, and about alerts/events and the dissemination of food safety information during emergencies.

The INFOSAN Community Website also enables INFOSAN members to notify WHO of a food safety emergency of potential or confirmed international concern through an online reporting form. The exchange of information during such emergencies is facilitated thanks to the dynamic contact list of INFOSAN members.

There is also a forum for members to discuss topical food safety issues with experts from around the globe, as well as a chat function for real-time communication with other members, including the INFOSAN Secretariat. INFOSAN members can also create workspaces where they can add other members of the network according to specific needs and interests (e.g. countries, regions, topics of interest, etc.). Workspace members can then exchange useful information and upload related documents more easily.
A specific workspace has been created for the Western Balkans. Participants and observers learned how to access the Western Balkans INFOSAN Community Workspace, which has been customized according to the needs of its members, and which can also be used to share documents and hold discussions. Group content is easily accessible and securely stored on the INFOSAN Community Website, making online collaboration simple. The Western Balkans INFOSAN Community Workspace also serves as an email list, making it possible to populate a member’s email client by simply clicking a button. This group function is an invaluable component for facilitating information sharing and exchange within a group.

VI. CONCLUSION
The workshop provided an opportunity for participants and observers to discuss options for strengthening the rapid exchange of information during food safety emergencies in the Western Balkans. It focused specifically on strengthening country/area participation in INFOSAN and promoted the use of the INFOSAN Community Website as a platform for food safety emergency notifications, networking and the sharing of experience between sectors and countries and areas.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS
For countries and areas:
- Move towards “system-based” INFOSAN/RASFF emergency contact points, as opposed to the current chiefly “person-based” system.
- Develop or adapt protocols for communication and coordination between national IHR focal points and INFOSAN emergency contact points.

For WHO:
- Organize a webinar and an online simulation exercise on strengthening coordination and communication between national IHR focal points and INFOSAN emergency contact points/focal points using the INFOSAN model.
- Speak to RASFF about the possibility of simplifying notifications and reporting to RASFF and INFOSAN.
- Consider organizing a subregional event on operationalizing the One Health approach to address foodborne and zoonotic diseases in the Western Balkans.
- Follow up and advocate for the implementation of country/area recommendations.
- Use events/training organized by INFOSAN for the general public to raise awareness about INFOSAN/the food safety emergency response and improve contributions from relevant stakeholders.
### VIII. ANNEX

1. Workshop agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda item</th>
<th>Resource person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1: 10 May 2022</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 09:00–10:00     | Welcome and opening remarks  
  - Abebayehu Assefa Mengistu (Coordinator, WHE Western Balkans Hub, WHO Regional Office for Europe)  
  - Peter Sousa Hoejskov (Technical Officer, Food Safety and Zoonotic Diseases, WHO Regional Office for Europe)  
  - Verica Jovanović (Director of the Institute of Public Health of Serbia)  
  Background and introduction to workshop  
  Introduction of participants and observers  
  Group photo | Facilitator: Abebayehu Assefa Mengistu (WHE Western Balkans Hub)                                                                                                                                                 |
| **BREAK**       |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 10:30–11:00     | Emerging food safety issues in Europe and beyond | Anne Gravett (United Kingdom Food Standards Agency)                                                                                                        |
| 11:00–1130      | IHR (2005) core capacities for food safety in the Western Balkans: Summary of capacity scores and recommendations | Abebayehu Assefa Mengistu (WHE Western Balkans Hub)                                                                                                        |
| 11:30–12:00     | Food safety incidents and emergency response: Risk communication and how to share information | Peter Sousa Hoejskov (WHO Regional Office for Europe)                                                                                                     |
| 12:00–12:30     | Q&A Country/area participants                                                                                                                      | Country/area participants                                                                          |
| **LUNCH BREAK** |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 13:30–14:00     | Global update on INFOSAN: Developments and new initiatives | Raul Garcia (INFOSAN Secretariat)                                                                                                                          |
| 14:00–15:00     | Developments in food safety and information sharing in the Western Balkans (5-10 minutes per country/area)  
  - Albania  
  - Bosnia and Herzegovina  
  - Montenegro  
  - North Macedonia  
  - Serbia  
  - Kosovo | Mixed country/area groups                                                                                                                             |
| **BREAK**       |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 15:30–17:00     | Plenary discussion: Barriers to information sharing and how to overcome them                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                         |
| 17:00           | Summary of Day 1                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                         |

---

1 All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
### Day 2: 11 May 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00–9:10</td>
<td>Recap from Day 1</td>
<td>Participants and observers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:10–9:20</td>
<td>Introduction to tabletop simulation exercise</td>
<td>Raul Garcia (INFOSAN Secretariat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20–12:30</td>
<td>Tabletop simulation exercise on communication and information sharing during a food safety emergency</td>
<td>Mixed groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>LUNCH BREAK</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30–14:00</td>
<td>Simulation exercise evaluation</td>
<td>Anne Gravett (United Kingdom Food Standards Agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00–15:00</td>
<td>Introduction to the INFOSAN Community website: Practical session on how to use it</td>
<td>Raul Garcia (INFOSAN Secretariat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:30–16:30</td>
<td>Plenary discussion: Recommendations and practical ways forward to strengthen food safety information sharing in the Western Balkans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:30–17:00</td>
<td>Group reporting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:00–17:15</td>
<td>Next steps and closing remarks</td>
<td>Abebayehu Assefa Mengistu (WHE Western Balkans Hub) and Peter Sousa Hoejskov (WHO Regional Office for Europe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. List of participants and observers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/area and WHO office</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Lindita Molla</td>
<td>Head of Environmental Health Department, National Institute of Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polikseni Drazho</td>
<td>Specialist, Sector of Scientific Activity and Communication, National Food Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Vesna Rudic Grujic</td>
<td>Ministry of Health, Republica Srpska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zehra Gilic</td>
<td>Food Safety Agency of Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>Snežana Barjaktarović Labović</td>
<td>Hygiene specialist, diet therapy subspecialist, Institute of Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lazar Daković</td>
<td>Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>Suzana Manevska</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Igor Spiroski</td>
<td>Institute for Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Verica Jovanović</td>
<td>Director, Institute of Public Health (National IHR Focal Point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dragana Jović</td>
<td>Institute of Public Health (National IHR Focal Point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goran Stojković</td>
<td>Ministry of Health (INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO headquarters</td>
<td>Peter Sousa Hoejskov</td>
<td>Technical Officer (Food Safety and Zoonotic Diseases), WHO Health Emergencies Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raul Garcia</td>
<td>Technical Officer, INFOSAN Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHE Western Balkans Hub</td>
<td>Abebayehu Assefa Mengistu</td>
<td>Western Balkans Hub Coordinator, WHO Health Emergencies Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yuster Ronoh</td>
<td>Western Balkans Hub Epidemiologist, WHO Health Emergencies Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO Serbia country office</td>
<td>Miljan Rančić</td>
<td>National Professional Officer – Health Emergencies and IHR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ivan Zivanov</td>
<td>National Professional Officer – One Health Focal Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Balkans Hub</td>
<td>Slavica Stojković</td>
<td>Programme Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom Food Standards Agency</td>
<td>Anne Gravett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>Bafiti Murati</td>
<td>Food and Veterinary Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Festim Rexhepi</td>
<td>Food and Veterinary Agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1 All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
3. Photos
The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

Member States
Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czechia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
North Macedonia
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Tajikistan
Türkiye
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
United Kingdom
Uzbekistan