



FNH-RI Newsletter

Edition 2 | June 2020

The European Commission has postponed the final submission date for the ESFRI Roadmap applications until September 2020. To keep our partners of the FNH-RI community and everyone else involved in the project informed and connected during the interlude from May till the 9th of September 2020, the initiative has been taken to edit this newsletter containing news and information about FNH-RI and the PROSPECT-proposal. This temporarily newsletter will contain all the latest news from the FNH-RI Board, keeps you updated about the community building activities which are still ongoing, and will inform you in more detail about the next phase(s) in the process. In addition, each of the four monthly issues of this newsletter will highlight a specific subject of the proposal.

On behalf of the FNH-RI coordination team we wish you all the best in these difficult times and hope to meet you again in good health after the summer period.

FNH-RI NEWS

FNH-RI BOARD

On the 8th of June 2020 the FNH-RI Board had a Skype meeting. The meeting was chaired by Pieter van 't Veer and all of the Board members were present ([see previous newsletter for the complete list of members](#)). Apart from issues regarding the governance and collaboration within the Board, the main subject for discussion was the ESFRI Roadmap bid (PROSPECT).

The next Board meeting is scheduled on the 7th of September 2020.

PERSONNEL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Krijn Poppe will retire in August of this year. Krijn has been active for almost forty years as Research Manager and Senior Economist at Wageningen Economic Research. He was one of the 'founding fathers' of the FNH-RI. We want to thank Krijn for his contribution and his inspiring debates in the domain of food, nutrition and health.



Krijn Poppe debating during the final event RICHFIELDFS, Brussels 2018

FNH-RI COMMUNITY



In the previous newsletter it was announced that preparations were underway for the participation of Hungary. In the meantime, we have made good progress and are happy to announce that a Hungarian National Node has been formed lead by the University of Debrecen. The head of Node Prof. Dr. István Komlósi, organized a first meeting to inform the Hungarian partners about FNH-RI and the follow up. Apart from the University of Debrecen, the partners are: University of Pécs, University of Miskolc, Széchenyi István University, National Institute of Pharmacy and Nutrition, Hungarian Platform of Diet, Physical Activity and Health, Hungarian Dietetic Association, Hungarian Society of Nutrition, GS1 Magyarország Nonprofit Zrt, BioTalentum Kft., University of Szeged.

Currently talks are in progress for participation by Poland, the Czech Republic, Montenegro.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- The final draft version of the FNH-RI (PROSPECT) application has been issued to the head of nodes with the request to share the documents with their partners in the national node and to give their final comments. These comments will be included in the final version before the proposal will be submitted in September.



▪ FNH-RI AND COVID-19 (*blog by Krijn Poppe*)

The COVID-19 pandemic dominates our lives and work. That is also the case for the work on the Food, Nutrition and Health Research Infrastructure. One of the interesting discussions in the project team in the hub that works with the support of the nodes on the final version of the ESFRI proposal, concerns the question if COVID-19 increases the need for the FNH-RI. [Read more.](#)

INTRODUCING A NATIONAL NODE



FNH-RI-SL Slovenian Node
(*by Barbara Korousic*)

Political and financial commitment

Slovenia has been involved in the FNH-RI activities since 2015, when we informed our Ministry of Education, Science and Sport about FNH-RI (named DISH-RI at that time) for the first time. Their feedback was very positive, however, because five years ago in Slovenia there was a limited ESFRI budget, we were unable to gain financial commitment. In 2019, when the Slovenian national node FNH-RI-SI was officially constituted, we introduced FNH-RI to other two ministries, i.e. to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. This time, we gained political commitment from the ministries. In 2020, just before the COVID-19 situation, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport published a call for new international research infrastructure (RI) initiatives to express their interest for being included in the Slovenian plan for RIs for the period 2021-2030. The Slovenian national node FNH-RI-SI expressed its interest and the ministry has already informed us that in the near future we will be invited to an interview.

Reasons and goals for Slovenian participation

Although Slovenia is a tiny country, its FNH-RI node has diverse knowledge and expertise as well as access to diverse data on food, nutrition, physical activity, and health. Moreover, partners from the hospitals work daily with patients. It is a nice example of a community that has worked for years on similar problems but independently. However, by joining our forces, we believe that the results will be much stronger. At the Jozef Stefan Institute we have also done an extensive work in Computer science related to food, nutrition and health.

Partners and their scientific focus areas

The partners from the Slovenian node come from different fields of Food, Nutrition, Biology, Sports, Health and Social sciences as well as Computer Science, and include big

universities (University of Ljubljana, University of Maribor, University of Primorska), research institutes (National

Institute of Public Health, Jozef Stefan Institute, Nutrition Institute Nutris, Institute of Quality Research and Development), hospitals (University Medical Centre Ljubljana, General Hospital Novo mesto) and companies (GS1 Slovenia, RES-PONS d.o.o.). Our main research focus is on the standardisation and interoperability of heterogeneous data which will allow us to find answers to open research questions, e.g. on reasons for non-compliance with the recommendations for healthy living, or from personalized medicine etc.

Next steps

Once the PROSPECT project is approved by the European Commission and the FNH-RI-SI initiative is included in the Slovenian plan for RIs for the period 2021-2030, we hope that financial commitment from the ministries will be gained. Meantime, the Slovenian consortium continues strengthening the collaboration between the partners and increasing its recognition by different stakeholders.

HIGHLIGHTED PROSPECT

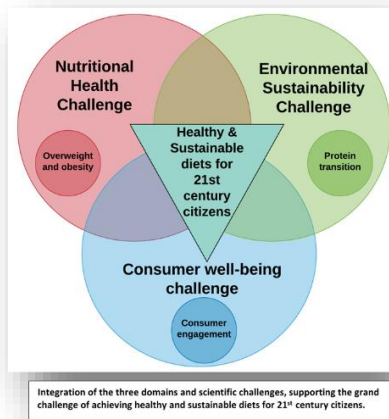
Scientific challenges of the FNH-RI: towards healthy and sustainable diets for 21st century citizens
(*by Pieter van 't Veer*)

There is an urgent need to transition to healthy and sustainable diets for all. For researchers concerned with nutrition, environmental sustainability and consumer behaviour, this means re-centering around the shared goal of providing healthy and sustainable diets for 21st century citizens. The scientific services provided by FNH-RI will enable cutting edge research to facilitate the food systems transformation, bringing about a paradigm shift in our understanding of the interaction between consumers and their social and physical food environments. The resulting technological breakthroughs and foresight will allow policy-makers, NGOs, food industries, SMEs, farmers and consumers to make responsible decisions and choices for the benefit of public health and the planet.

In the ESFRI roadmap application, the potential utility and impact of the FNH-RI in achieving healthy and sustainable diets for 21st century citizens is illustrated by three specific challenges: the overweight and obesity epidemic (nutritional health), the protein transition (environmental sustainability), and consumer engagement (consumer well-being). The first challenge addresses public health and disease mechanistic angles (obesity epidemic) and the second a food systems angle (unsustainable diets). Food production and consumption is a common denominator for both challenges; moreover, they are critically dependent on the third challenge of the need to understand the behaviour of consumers within their food environments, i.e. to engage them to make healthy and sustainable food choices.



Understanding the mutual interaction between the consumer and the food environment, and the ensuing health and environmental impacts, will catalyse innovative breakthroughs needed to truly bring about a food systems transformation.



The nutritional health challenge seeks to address the overweight and obesity epidemic; which is in need of deeper fundamental insights into the metabolism of humans and eating behaviour in order to impact this significant public health challenge. The FNH-RI will facilitate collection of data on the individual determinants of overweight and obesity, including e.g., epigenetic changes, metabolic resilience and the microbiome; as well as the influence of (built) food environment and socio-cultural/geographical factors that influence body mass. This will allow a greater understanding of the complex factors driving overweight and obesity, and the design of effective, tailored public health interventions.

The environmental sustainability challenge seeks to reduce the planetary impact of our diets by focusing on the protein transition: the replacement of animal proteins in diets by plant proteins. The FNH-RI will prioritize research on reformulated foods, diets, and behaviours needed to achieve dramatic reductions in the planetary impact of food systems. Research on the optimal composition of nutrients and foods that are both healthy, appealing and low in environmental impact will be accelerated, by e.g. aligning data on nutritional composition, carbon footprint (life-cycle analysis) and actual consumption.

The consumer well-being challenge seeks to engage consumers to help in solving the above two challenges. Consumer-centred research is needed to understand how real-life consumption patterns can become more healthy and sustainable. The FNH-RI will facilitate access to cumulative and standardized data on all aspects of consumer behaviour (e.g. food choice, purchase, preparation, consumption) on a pan-European scale, underpinned by the e-facilities, data science capabilities and modelling tools to handle such a breadth of data. This

will enable an understanding of the similarities and differences across Europe (cross-cultural comparative analyses) and across time, providing leverage points for interventions to enhance healthy and sustainable food consumption patterns.

The interaction between the three challenges is visualized in the Venn diagram above, which shows how advances in each of the three challenges are critical for producing the healthy and sustainable diet of the 21st century: no one challenge (overweight and obesity, unsustainable diets, or disengaged consumers) can be solved in isolation; an integrated food system perspective is required.

Questions at various levels of complexity concerning these three challenges will be able to be addressed – at the level of individual food choices, at the level of complex food systems and pan-European variations in food intake, and at the level of interventions and policies. What are the ‘food systems-level’ impacts of what we eat? How do we study and account for the complex sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts that determine our diets? The systems-level health and environmental impacts of individual diets, and the food choices made by individuals, is more than just the sum of individual components. In order to move beyond individual effects, multiple layers of complexity must be compared, replicated and integrated at varying levels of aggregation. This requires a more advanced understanding of the interactions between the biological and social factors operating in different settings on a pan-European level. New insights will be used to further implementation research, which examines how to most effectively translate findings into policy and innovation. This will lead to the re-shaping of food products and food environments, delivering healthy and sustainable diets for all citizens.

This newsletter is also available online: (www.FNH-RI.eu)
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