

Better Training for Safer Food

Small, but mighty! Meet the team behind the BTSF initiative!

For the high impact they have and the impressive number of training courses given both in and outside of the EU, the BTSF initiative is implemented by a small team at the Consumers Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency. We spoke to the team about how such a small team manages to do so much!

Who's working on the BTSF initiative?

We are just four people here, says Udo Juterschnig, with a laugh. "Well, four and a half, because we have been getting a lot of support from Marc Vandebroek who works in another team too." "We're small, but mighty", chimed in the new Head of Unit for the BTSF initiative, Donata Meroni, "and the reach and impact of our activities is huge in training staff of competent authorities to better implement EU animal health and welfare, plant health and feed and food legislation. This is particular relevant in case of crisis, such as diseases outbreaks as we have seen recently with African swine fever."

What are your main responsibilities?

"Our task is really to implement the BTSF initiative, which accounts for EUR 17 million a year and has trained since its start more than 68.000 participants" says Meroni. "I think there's a saying 'the buck stops here'", adds Udo Juterschnig. "What I mean by that is that we are entrusted by the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) to launch the calls of tender following the strict rules for public procurement procedures. We also need to ensure that the trainings take place when and where they are scheduled to and that they meet the high expectations and fulfil the needs they were intended to."

"We also are the people behind the BTSF World and BTSF Academy' initiatives, and we are the ones who transform ideas into reality, we make it happen. We aren't just maintaining the *status quo*, we are looking ahead and developing ways to expand and provide training to an even greater number of people with innovative e-learning tools, says Marilena Verbari, who just recently joined the team.

How does such a small team meet these responsibilities?

"When I took over as Head of Unit in 2017, I found a motivated and talented team. They have experience, knowledge and a great work ethic!" says Meroni. "We work really well together and we also have a great network of people who support us in our work." says Juterschnig. "We work in conjunction with DG SANTE and we have built up a team of service providers and other contacts over the years who know their jobs well and facilitate the on-site trainings."

"Although at the moment, establishing and developing the BTSF Academy demands a lot of our time and energy, in the long-run it is going to make things easier for us here," says Efthymia Tzitzikli "Through the Academy, we're establishing not only an on-line training facility, but also a rich database we can also benefit from. In addition, it will help stream-line procedures like registration, feedback and follow-up."

"Keep an eye on us. Visit our website and see what's happening" says Meroni, "because I can assure you, there will be plenty to see, with new developments and activities in the future!"

New wave of calls launched for provision of upcoming trainings

New opportunities to provide expert training through the BTSF initiative are available. Please read through the criteria of each call carefully and if your organisation can offer the high-quality training needed, make a bid to join the BTSF network of skilled and efficient trainers!

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Infoday for interested tenderers to take place in Luxembourg on 17 January 2019

Don't miss this opportunity to learn about how more about how to make a successful bid of tender to participate in the BTSF initiative. Meet the BTSF management team in person, get the answers to your questions and network with like-minded professionals!

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Better looking and easier to navigate! Chafea website gets an upgrade

The upgrade naturally includes a visually improved and more user-friendly BTSF section too, since the BTSF initiative is an important part of the Agency's work. Check out the BTSF section, and feel free to take a 'walk' around the whole website too!

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Get great training without leaving home! New e-learning modules launched through the BTSF Academy

The BTSF Academy is helping to make more information more readily available for those who really need it. An increasing number of our basic training courses can be followed online, making it possible for those with limited resources or time to participate as well.

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Evaluation confirms it: BTSF Initiative is great value for money

We all know that a little prevention is worth a lot of 'cure' – and a new evaluation confirms that the expert training provided by the BTSF Initiative is very cost effective and of great value. Training to help save lives and livelihoods is priceless – but BTSF makes it available and affordable!

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2016 BTSF Annual Report is now available in more languages

Discover the BTSF activities performed in 2016. The report is now available in French, German and Spanish as well as in the original English. And soon, the 2017 BTSF Annual Report will also be available. Read the 2016 report here, in the language of your choice.

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