

Concept Note: Proposed action to support OIE Member Countries in Eastern Europe in the implementation of the OIE standards on animal health and welfare.

(Final version endorsed during the 81st OIE General Session in May, 2013)

CONSIDERING

1. That the Technical item of the 25th Regional Conference of the Regional Commission for Europe was: «Regional steps towards common Animal Welfare approach in Europe»
2. The need to improve the efficiency of veterinary services in the countries of Eastern Europe, particularly with respect to effective implementation of OIE standards for good governance of Veterinary Services, animal health and animal welfare;
3. That animal welfare, including the key component, animal health, is the subject of OIE standards, and
4. That though many countries of Eastern Europe have started to follow the PVS Pathway, the pace of implementation of OIE standards on animal welfare, including the key component, animal health, is too slow.

The OIE proposes the activity outlined below.

Introduction

Through PVS Evaluation and other activities, the OIE is aware that many countries of Eastern Europe face major challenges to effective implementation of quality veterinary services. Typically these challenges include: lack of political support, absence of basic legislation, poor awareness on the part of producers and the veterinary profession, inadequate veterinary education, and shortfalls in financial and human resources available to the veterinary services. Moreover, stakeholders in the livestock and meat production sector are often not well organised, representative associations may be absent, and there is little basis for the veterinary services to form the 'public-private partnerships' essential to achieving sustainable compliance with OIE standards on animal health and welfare.

Through the PVS Pathway and other capacity building tools, the OIE is already playing an important role in raising awareness of governments and donors, and supporting the Veterinary Services in Eastern European countries to meet international standards. Considering the global leadership of the OIE in relation to animal health and welfare, participants at the seminar for National Focal Points on Animal Welfare (Kiev, March 2012) called on the OIE to develop a mechanism in the sub region to facilitate better application of OIE animal welfare standards.

During the 80th General Session of the OIE in May 2012, the theme «Regional steps towards common Animal Welfare approach in Europe» was chosen as the technical item of the 25th Regional Commission for Europe to be held in Germany on 17-21 September 2012.

Outline of proposed activity

The goal is to assist OIE Member Countries in Eastern Europe to progressively comply with OIE standards on animal welfare and animal health.

Key elements of the proposed activity are, as appropriate:

Development and adoption of legislation in participating member countries to enable effective implementation of OIE animal standards on welfare and, as appropriate, animal health;

Development of participating member country veterinary services using the OIE PVS Tool and Gap Analysis (including veterinary education and veterinary statutory body performance);

Capacity building in participating member countries through OIE focal point seminars and training programmes;

Improvement of awareness of the value of implementation of OIE standards through engagement and partnership with stakeholders including non-governmental organisations and industry associations (for example, via invitation to focal point seminars and by publishing documents translated in Russian or national languages);

Development of an electronic platform for dialogue and exchange on best practices in animal welfare and, as appropriate, animal health and veterinary public health; for information and knowledge; and to enhance scientific cooperation.

Governance, arrangements and resources

It is proposed to establish a Steering Group, which would be tasked with assessing the current needs and developing a detailed action plan for consideration by the OIE Regional Commission for Europe. It is suggested that the Steering Group be comprised as follows:

- (i) a representative of OIE HQ, who will chair the Steering Group;
- (ii) representatives of three Eastern European countries, being either the OIE National Delegate or the nominated national Focal Point for Animal Welfare (see Annex 2);
- (iii) representatives of two countries of the European Economic Area, being either the OIE National Delegate or the nominated national Focal Point for Animal Welfare (see Annex 2);
- (iv) a representative of the European Commission / DG SANCO;
- (v) a representative of an OIE Animal Welfare Collaborating Centre in the region;
- (vi) a representative of the OIE Regional Representation of Sofia;
- (vii) a representative of the OIE sub-Regional Representation in Brussels;
- (viii) a representative of a donor organisation active in Eastern Europe.

The Steering Group may invite, on an ad hoc basis as needs arise, other interested parties notably from the civil society, including the industry and NGOs.

Based on approval of this concept note by the Regional Commission, it is proposed that the Steering Group collect information and develop recommendations on the activities to be carried out. The Steering Group would meet at least each 6 months, or more regularly, under the chairmanship of OIE Headquarters. Meetings will be convened by the Chair and will take place in different places in Europe on a rotational basis.

The Secretariat for the Steering Group will be provided by the OIE sub Regional Representation in Brussels.

The OIE will seek resources for development and implementation of the proposed programme (see Annex 1), and the OIE World Animal Health and Welfare Fund will manage the resources obtained. A detailed estimate will be provided as and when appropriate.

Recommendation

That the OIE Regional Commission for Europe considers and endorses this proposal.

Annex 1: Proposed future actions for consideration by the Steering Group

1. Create and maintain an electronic forum that provides for access to, and exchange of information.
2. Information to be collected:
 - a) Scientific and practical material relevant to animal welfare and, as appropriate, animal health in the region. This could include communication materials, training courses, good practice guidance documents, etc.
 - b) Information on relevant animal welfare/animal health, initiatives in the region, including AWARE (Animal Welfare Research in an Enlarged Europe), CALLISTO (Companion Animals multisectorial, interprofessional, and interdisciplinary strategic think tank on zoonoses), AWIN (Animal Welfare Indicators), ANIWhA (The ERA-Net Health and Welfare of Animals).
3. PVS Pathway Activities:
 - Conduct – upon country request – OIE PVS evaluation or OIE PVS Pathway follow-up to assess the level of compliance with OIE standards, and PVS Gap Analysis missions to determine financial needs and national objectives to reach within a 5 year timeframe;
 - Based on the outcomes of the PVS evaluation, conduct – upon country request - PVS veterinary legislation missions (identification missions and, if needed, establishment of a framework agreement to modernize in depth national legislation) to assist the countries in establishing an enabling legal and regulatory framework in animal welfare and, as appropriate, animal health;
 - Facilitate – upon country request – veterinary education twinning projects to achieve OIE recommendations on the competencies for graduating veterinarians;
 - Conduct - upon country request – review of Veterinary Statutory Body performance and needs. This may also lead to twinning projects between Veterinary Statutory Bodies;
 - Develop or strengthen partnerships with the professional sector on these issues, particularly those working with transport, slaughterhouses and stray dog management.
4. Organise regional seminars for focal points on relevant topics (such as animal welfare, veterinary products, veterinary legislation) every two years.
5. List of proposed priority topics for the first three years:
 - ❖ Transport of animals (by land);
 - ❖ Stray dog population management;
 - ❖ Slaughter of animals.

Note: Activities will systematically be conducted in English and Russian.

Annex 2: Composition of the Steering Group for the first three years
(update May 2014)

European Economic Area countries:

- Ireland
- Spain

Eastern Europe Countries:

- Russia
- Serbia
- Turkey

OIE Animal Welfare Collaborating Centre in Europe:

- Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "G. Caporale" (IZSAM) – Teramo

Representative of Donors:

- France