



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from:	Presidency
to:	Working Party of Chief Veterinary Officers
Subject:	Working methods of the CVO Working Party

At their meeting of 6 March 2013, the Working Party of Chief Veterinary Officers held a discussion on the working methods of the CVO Working Party, based on an introductory Presidency note (doc. 6688/13).

From this debate, the Presidency drew a series of draft conclusions, as presented in the Annex to this note, for discussion by CVOs at the Dublin meeting in April 2013 and subsequent adoption as CVO conclusions.

Working methods of the CVO Working Party
(draft CVO conclusions)

At their meeting of 6 March 2013, CVOs held a discussion on the working methods of the CVO Working Party, based on an introductory Presidency note (doc. 6688/13).

I. GENERAL POLICY QUESTIONS

A. General principles for CVO work methods

- aa) CVOs agreed that the mandate given by Coreper (doc. 16069/03) continues to be a valid basis for the work of the Working Party.
- ba) They took note of the examples of past achievements in the four activity domains defined by their mandate, as presented in doc. 6688/13 and its annex.
- ca) They agreed on the expediency to orientate their future work along these lines and in accordance with the following principles:

A.1. Focus on strategic orientations and general guidelines

- 1) There was agreement that the specific value added by the Working Party is the veterinary point of view from which it can contribute to discussions on both strategic matters and more technical topics, thus complementing the work done by experts in other Working Parties from a different perspective.
- 2) With a view to avoiding duplication of work, the CVOs should focus their efforts on providing strategic guidelines for legislation and keeping focus on an evidence- and risk-based approach.

- 3) Without impeding a horizontal overview on the work done by technical Working Parties in the veterinary field, the agenda should be geared towards items which need substantive discussion and/or preparation of strategic guidelines.
- 4) Where coordination for work undertaken by international organisations with relevance in the veterinary field falls into the competence of other Council Working Parties (such as in the case of FAO and CODEX), the overview undertaken by CVOs shall concentrate on creation of synergies with international activities falling into their own competence, in particular within the framework of OIE.
- 5) In setting the agenda, the division of competence between Institutions is to be respected (e.g. the role of the Commission in the post-legislative phase). However, practice has shown that the CVO Working Party has sometimes to be ready to deal, where necessary, with agenda items which ordinarily would be more fitting for a Commission expert group or committee.

A.2. Emphasis on horizontal preparation of files BEFORE technical experts' work

- 1) While the CVO mandate foresees general guidelines before and examination of key technical elements after work done by technical Working Parties, CVOs agreed that a greater emphasis should be placed on providing guidelines in the preparatory phase.
- 2) This role will once more be put to the test by the imminent wave of major legislative proposals. In this context, the following key issues for which guidance from CVOs will be crucial were named as examples:
 - a) categorisation of diseases
 - b) control fees
 - c) incentives for prevention
 - d) priority-setting and sharing of funds
 - e) delegated acts vs. implementing acts in animal health package
 - f) review of mandate for agencies (e.g. EFSA)

- 3) During the legislative process, CVOs can also play an important role in supporting the Council position in high-level contacts both at national and EU level (in particular towards MEPs).

A.3. EU strategy towards/within OIE

- 1) Given that all the Member States (but not the EU itself) are members of the OIE and that many OIE activities cover legislative areas which are either harmonised at EU level or under mixed competence, continuous coordination of positions is essential.
- 2) After preparation of EU input to ongoing work on OIE Codes by Commission expert groups and technical Council Working Parties, CVOs traditionally establish the EU position by consensus. According to standing practice, the result is submitted to OIE by a letter jointly signed by the CVO of the acting Council Presidency and a Commission representative ¹. In the absence of consensus, the CVO Working Party reports to Coreper/Council for a definitive decision.
- 3) Beyond coordination of regular work on OIE Codes and of the EU position in OIE task forces, steering groups etc., CVOs stressed the importance of establishing over-arching strategic outlines for EU activity towards and within OIE, as for instance in the preparation for the 6th Strategic Plan.

¹ The Commission representatives regularly ask for the following statement to be entered in the outcome of proceedings:

"The Commission considers that the procedure followed for forwarding the EU comments to the World Organisation for Animal Health (both by the Presidency, on behalf of the Member States, and by the Commission) does not correspond to the procedures usually followed in similar cases (notably in the case of the Codex Alimentarius). The fact that the EU only has observer status with an international organisation does not prevent the Commission on its own from forwarding the EU comments.

The Commission accordingly considers that the procedure followed in the case in question cannot constitute a precedent likely to be invoked for forthcoming OIE sessions or in other similar circumstances".

- 4) Like for all international organisations for which the CVO Working Party is in charge of EU coordination, it seeks consensus on the persons who will get the joint support of EU Member States for nomination into the elected bodies of OIE.
- 5) In this context, CVOs underlined the importance of regular exchanges of views with these elected representatives at Working Party meetings.

B. Topics of general interest for discussion at the CVO Working Party

Outside the range of concrete legislative proposals, the following areas and specific questions of general policy were named as examples for topics meriting particular attention by CVOs:

- 1) *Animal health / "one health" strategy*
 - a) disease prevention
 - b) anti-microbial resistance
 - c) research
 - d) veterinary medicines
 - e) strategic directions for and lessons to be learned from crises / outbreaks
 - f) coordination of strategies for new animal diseases
 - g) non-listed diseases
 - h) horses: revision of equidae ID, exclusion from the food chain, related animal welfare problems, traceability
 - i) other questions of animal movement (e.g. between MS with different health status)
- 2) *International and EU food safety standards*
- 3) *Animal welfare*

II. SEMINAR-TYPE DISCUSSIONS AND TOPICS FOR PRESENTATIONS BY INDIVIDUAL DELEGATIONS

A. Seminar-style method of work

- 1) There was broad agreement among CVOs on the expediency of taking recourse, where appropriate, to seminar-like discussions based on introductory presentations, as for example in preparation of a concrete set of CVO or Council conclusions.
- 2) Based on past experience, CVOs deemed such setting for discussion to be particularly fruitful when organised in the framework of the traditional out-of-Brussels meeting in the Member State holding the Presidency.

B. Individual presentations by Member States

- 1) CVOs also looked positively at the use of the CVO Working Party as a forum for presentation and discussion of individual Member States' approaches to specific policy questions.
- 2) As examples for topics of general interest which would call for such type of discussion in addition to those mentioned in section I.B., the following were named:
 - a) vaccination policies
 - b) experience with delegation of public service functions in the veterinary field to other organisations
 - c) follow-up action on bee and fish diseases
 - d) false positive serological reactors (brucellosis)
 - e) tuberculosis: sanitary situation and management of infected/suspected animals/herds/holdings

- f) epidemiological indicators: correct use of prevalence, incidence, epidemiological unit, suspicion, outbreak, disease-free status
- g) zoological gardens: epidemiological status – certification of animal movements between zoological gardens
- h) Schmallenberg virus
- i) individual Member States' action in food and animal health crises

III. CVO / POTSDAM WORKING PARTIES' ROLE IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

A. Organisational matters

- 1) CVOs agreed that both at meetings of the CVO Working Party and of the Potsdam Group, emphasis should be laid rather on strategic discussions and concrete decisions than on merely providing information.
- 2) As to the practical arrangements for the Potsdam Group, the CVO conclusions of May 2008 (doc. 9605/08 ADD 1 REV 1) were reconfirmed.
- 3) In this context, CVOs re-iterated the key role of Potsdam configurations as restricted groups of representatives of the Member States which actively assist the Commission services and provide them with technical support during the negotiation of veterinary agreements with certain third countries, as well as for their implementation, in particular as regards the preparation of meetings of the joint committees set up under those agreements.
- 4) In order to allow for more detailed discussion of specific third-country related questions at the Potsdam Group, preference should be given, wherever suitable, to country- or region-specific meetings of the competent Potsdam configurations over meetings with an "around the globe"-agenda.

B. Coordination of EU position for veterinary negotiations with third countries

- 1) CVOs acknowledged that the main objective of taking concrete decisions on EU positions or guidance for negotiations on third country relations can only be optimally achieved on the basis of written proposals. This requires the relevant draft positions to be provided by the Commission services sufficiently in advance of the meetings in order to allow Member States to prepare their positions.
- 2) While the CVO Working Party is primarily in charge of formulating strategic guidelines, the details of the EU position in veterinary negotiations are usually to be established by the Potsdam Group or the competent Potsdam configuration.
- 3) CVOs confirmed the principles which have underpinned such negotiations, and in particular transparency and coordination of Potsdam Group and configuration members at all stages of the negotiating process so as to safeguard the Union's interests.
- 4) The Potsdam configurations' work in providing the Commission with the necessary mandate for veterinary negotiations in a timely manner shall be done in a way that allows every Member State to participate at and/or provide written comments for such meetings. Invitations to Potsdam configuration meetings shall therefore always be addressed to all Member States.
- 5) CVOs underlined the need for all Member States to take part, in a balanced manner, in the proceedings of the various configurations of the Potsdam Group so as to achieve proportional and fair burden-sharing in terms of financial and human resources. The traditional regular up-dates of these configurations were therefore considered to be a necessary and useful exercise, in particular regarding the distribution of the chairing function among the members of each Trio Presidency.

- 6) CVOs considered it essential that the Potsdam discussions be held early enough to feed the results, where necessary, into other relevant Working Parties, such as the Trade Policy Committee. In this context, CVOs acknowledged the important role of each individual delegation in pursuing coherence and consistency of positions through national inter-ministerial coordination for such Working Parties.
 - 7) CVOs re-iterated the necessity of a comprehensive approach in establishing the negotiation position in veterinary matters towards each third country, taking into account that country's record both on the import and the export side. This includes the evaluation of the outcome of FVO missions to the countries in question.
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