Meeting on the OIE PVS Tool (Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services) in Eastern Europe countries

Sofia, Bulgaria, on 23 January 2008

In line with the OIE global mandate to improve animal health worldwide, and within the framework of assessing and strengthening the Veterinary Services of the OIE Member Countries of Europe on the basis of OIE standards, an OIE-PVS Training Seminar, organised by the OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe, was held in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 23 January 2008.

There were 21 participants, including the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) and other representatives of the Veterinary Services of 11 OIE Members of Europe, OIE experts, PVS assessors and veterinary media (see list below).

The seminar was chaired by Prof. Nikola Belev, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe and OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe. Reports were presented by Dr Gastón Funes, Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department and responsible for coordinating PVS evaluation missions, Prof. Ivan Bojkov (Bulgaria) and Dr Niksa Barisic (Croatia), who are both OIE-certified PVS experts, and Dr Asylbek Kojumratov, CVO of Kazakhstan.

The Seminar was opened by Prof. Belev, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the OIE and its Director General, Dr Bernard Vallat. He explained the objectives of the Seminar and emphasised the importance of the PVS tool as the instrument through which governments can be made aware of the need to strengthen their national Veterinary Services (VS).

Dr Jeko Baichev, CVO of Bulgaria, also welcomed the participants on behalf of the host country and the Bulgarian Veterinary Services.

Dr Funes gave two presentations on the OIE PVS Tool: ‘Evaluation of National Veterinary Services using the OIE PVS Tool’ and ‘OIE-PVS Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services. Status of the OIE Programme. Lessons Learnt’. The first presentation provided general information on the objectives, benefits, fundamental components and application of the OIE PVS Tool and the steps in the evaluation process in relation to the objectives of the OIE and its global mandate. The second presentation focused on various technical issues with regard to the successful implementation of the PVS programme: its current status, the improvements made, the evaluations conducted so far, the data gathered and expectations for the future.

Prof. Bojkov, an OIE-certified PVS expert and team leader of three PVS missions (to Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan), gave a presentation on the main factors and activities with regard to the effectiveness of the OIE PVS Tool. He identified the major players in the evaluation process (the OIE, the PVS expert team, the national CVO and the state authorities of the evaluated country) as being equally responsible for its successful application. Prof. Bojkov discussed in detail the activities prior to the mission (preparation, documents to be studied, self-evaluation of the country’s VS, issuing of visas, etc.), during the mission (meetings, visits to key locations, etc.), and after completing the mission (discussion of reports and recommendations, requesting funding from international donor organisations, etc.).
Dr Barisic, an OIE-certified PVS expert from Croatia, informed the participants of the activities of the PVS experts, the difficulties they have to deal with (for example, the huge bulk of documentation, the language barrier, etc.) and put forward numerous proposals for improving the evaluation process: reducing the number of documents, increasing the length of time to prepare for the mission, careful selection of dates for carrying out the mission, maintaining constant relations with the VS of the evaluated country, etc.

Dr Kojumratov, as CVO of Kazakhstan, discussed the evaluation of his country's VS in July–August 2007. He highlighted the role of the PVS experts as helpers, and not inspectors, who provided the VS with consultancy and practical assistance and emphasised the importance of adopting international standards and guidelines. Dr Kojumratov stressed two points that should be carefully addressed so as to maintain the high quality of the evaluation process:

1) the selection of experts to conduct PVS evaluations should take into account, among other aspects, a knowledge of the relevant language to avoid any discrepancies or misunderstandings, thereby facilitating a mutual understanding between the experts and the local veterinarians; and

2) an OIE representative should officially present the expert mission to the government of the evaluated country, thus settling any questions as to the legitimacy of the expert group.

Dr Funes provided some additional comments and clarification on the existing criteria for selecting experts, one of which is the need for the appropriate language skills. He also indicated that the possibility existed for the OIE Regional Representative or other senior OIE officer to participate in PVS missions, at least during the initial and closing meetings, depending on the political context of the evaluations, and that this had already been the case with some missions. He also pointed out that the legitimacy of the Team of Experts is provided by the OIE Director General when officially nominating the members of the team, through the letter that he sends to the country with the OIE proposal. During PVS missions, the OIE-certified Team of Experts acts on behalf of the OIE, and sometimes includes OIE staff as observers.

Finally, Prof. Beklov presented the draft Programme of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe and the OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe for 2008-2009, entitled ‘Building the Veterinary Future of Europe’. The new draft Programme was presented as a natural continuation of the Joint OIE/European Commission 'Seminars on the Dialogue and Common Activities between the OIE Member Countries of the European Union and the other OIE Member Countries of the Regional Commission for Europe', 2005-2008, successfully conducted in 18 OIE Member Countries so far. The draft Programme consists of two main parts:

1) the PVS as the top priority; and

2) a series of round tables and workshops intended for specific groups of veterinary specialists: CVOs, heads of border veterinary services, heads of State veterinary inspectorates (food safety), national focal points for animal health information, and senior officials of professional veterinary organisations and statutory bodies.

The participants expressed their high regard for the proposed programme and considered it a great step forward, focusing on such vital issues as the PVS, food safety, border control, education, etc. They also welcomed the idea of organising round tables, where participants would each have the opportunity to share the experience of their own country, the lessons learned and approaches for the future development of the Veterinary Services of Europe.
List of Participants

**OIE:**

- Prof. Dr Nikola Belev, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe and OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe
- Dr Gastón Funes, Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department
- Mrs Rina Kostova, Secretary, OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe
- Mrs Alejandra Balmont, Bilingual Secretary/Conference Assistant, OIE Administration and Management Systems Department
- Mrs Violeta Radkova, Technical Assistant, OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe

**Representatives of the following European countries (in alphabetical order of countries):**

- Dr Lefter Klimi, CVO of Albania
- Dr Ismail Hassanov, CVO of Azerbaijan
- Dr Sanin Tankovic, Deputy CVO of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Dr Jeko Baichev, CVO of Bulgaria
- Dr Boyko Likov, Head of the International Cooperation and European Integration Directorate, National Veterinary Service of Bulgaria
- Prof. Dr Ivan Bojkov, Thracian University of Veterinary Medicine, Bulgaria, and an OIE-certified PVS expert
- Dr Ivan Manga, Editor in Chief, VM News Journal, Bulgaria
- Dr Niksa Barisic, Head of the Structure and Organization of the Veterinary Service Department, National Veterinary Service of Croatia, and an OIE-certified PVS expert
- Dr Koba Dzamashvili, CVO of Georgia
- Dr Asylbek Kojumratov, CVO of Kazakhstan
- Dr Dejan Runtevski, CVO of FYR Macedonia
- Dr Grigory Porcescu, CVO of Moldova
- Dr Stefan Nicolae, CVO of Romania
- Prof. Dr Gheorghe Ontanu, Institute for Diagnosis and Animal Health, Veterinary and Food Safety Agency of Romania
- Dr Miroslav Marinkovic, CVO of Serbia
- Dr Maja Andrijasevic, Chief of Epizootology and Animal Welfare Unit, National Veterinary Service of Serbia