This paper provides a reminder regarding the relevant definitions and missions, then analyses the strengths and weaknesses of Veterinary Statutory Bodies (VSB) with reference to, but not exclusively, the French experience.

Amongst their assets, the VSBs enjoy an official status, working in cooperation with, but independent from, government authorities which delegate some of their prerogatives to the VSB. The independence of VSBs is guaranteed by law and reinforced by the fact that they are self-financed. Their representatives are not appointed but rather elected by their peers, which give these elected officials a great deal of legitimacy to speak on behalf of the profession.

One weakness of VSBs, when considered globally, is that the relevant national legislation is of variable quality. In some cases, their authority extends over all veterinarians, whereas in others public-sector veterinarians are not members and their activities are not covered. The missions of VSBs normally have functions that are administrative functions (such as registration or licensing) and jurisdictional (such as powers to enforce codes of professional ethics) but they rarely cover initial or continuing professional training. Thanks to their disciplinary role, their jurisdictional powers are acknowledged, but their actual means of enforcement are often rather weak or non-existent. Finally, their elected officials – themselves veterinarians – are sometimes blamed for lacking knowledge in legal or procedural matters or for showing low levels of commitment or thoroughness.

However, all these weaknesses, if identified and acknowledged, may be corrected.

The system of delegating prerogatives to VSBs is invaluable to States in terms of practical considerations and cost effectiveness. Thus, VSBs must be developed and reinforced throughout the world. The democratically adopted standards for VSBs in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code provide valuable guidance to OIE Member countries who wish to strengthen their VSBs.

**Keywords:** Veterinary Statutory Body – Order of Veterinarians – OIE standards.