Speaking about Europe is not as straightforward as one might think. In fact the number of countries considered as European depends on the geographical, historical and cultural grounds chosen to delineate Europe. Moreover the political and socio-economic situation across European countries is not uniform and there are even distinct differences between the EU member countries.

This diversity is reflected in the regulation of the veterinary profession. Although in all countries the profession is regulated, the extent to which and the way this is done varies. Many countries have an autonomous and independent Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB) consistent with some or all of the OIE recommendations on VSB. In countries without a VSB, specific tasks are carried out under direct responsibility of the government. Some countries have one VSB, while in others sub-national jurisdictions (such as States or Regions) have their own VSB. There are also differences in what falls under the authority of a VSB. Frequently there is a mixture of statutory responsibilities and member services. Official tasks and professional support services are combined. In some countries where there was no VSB until the end of communism, the profession and government authorities are working on the establishment of a VSB. These differences have an impact on the effectiveness of regulation of the profession and, hence, the quality and reliability of Veterinary Services.

Over recent years, Europe has seen a tendency towards deregulation and liberalization of markets. In veterinary medicine, which is of public interest, the benefit of this trend for society is questionable.

Many European VSBs are members of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE). Under the FVE umbrella they meet regularly to discuss issues of mutual interest. The FVE, through the development of definitions of “Veterinarian” and “Veterinary Act” and a European Veterinary Code of Conduct, and through its involvement in the evaluation of veterinary education, makes a significant contribution towards ensuring the quality of veterinary practice in Europe.

Keywords: VSB – Europe – Diversity – OIE standards.