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## NETWORK OF ANIMAL HEALTH REFERENCE LABORATORIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Coordination of the activity of the reference laboratories in the field of animal health has revealed to be an important asset to better fulfil the overall objectives of the network of the European Union Reference Laboratories (EURL).

Different means are used in the EU to ensure a coherent and coordinated functioning of the EURL. Basic EU legal framework<sup>1</sup> provides for a common set of general tasks and remits such as those referred to the diagnostic methods, active assistance in the diagnosis of disease outbreaks, training, ring trials. It also establishes some minimum requirements to be met by the labs as regards the staff qualification, equipments, reagents and infrastructure, confidentiality and communication issues.

Another tool fostering coordination is the financial instrument<sup>2</sup> ensuring the EU financing for the operation of the EURL. The operation and financing of the EURL is based on the approval of annual work programmes and their budget following a harmonised procedure provided for in legislation. It ensures a harmonised operation of the network and facilitates its management.

As an additional ad hoc tool to improve the functioning of the EURL network, periodic external evaluations of the network provide for valuable information as regards its effectiveness and efficiency. Certain aspects related to laboratory synergies and the structure of the networks benefit from the conclusions and recommendations from such evaluations.

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- 1 Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules.
  - 2 Council Decision 2009/470/EC of 25 May 2009 on expenditure in the veterinary field.



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