

# WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH

## Communication Strategic Plan

May 2013

World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) – Communication Unit

# OIE Communication Strategic Plan

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## Introduction

This document is designed to address points 127 to 133 of the OIE Fifth Strategic Plan (2011-2015), and in particular point 131, and to guide the OIE in implementing its communication initiatives aimed at its Members, its various users and partners and the general public. It also addresses the need for planning, to take into account the increase and diversification of the OIE's communication activities.

The document thus seeks to establish a clear outline of the identity and values of the organisation, of the products and services it offers, of the image it projects of itself, its staff and others working on its behalf around the world, and of the potential targets of its communication actions.

Based on a careful analysis of previous experience and the actions currently underway, it proposes lines of action adapted according to the target groups, the types of message, the tools and the various Departments involved, with, at their core, the Communication Unit.

## **1. The OIE: its culture, values, position and products; the context**

### **The culture of the OIE:**

The OIE is one of the oldest intergovernmental organisations.

It stems from the vision of a group of decision-makers, for the most part veterinarians and biologists, who understood the critical social and economic consequences and the importance of international cooperation in the fight against animal diseases.

Its scientific and technical characteristics, which are both apolitical and transnational, are essential for an understanding of how it functions and the motives of its action.

However, the Delegates who represent Member Countries are appointed by their Governments, and this inevitably introduces a political valence. This has been further accentuated by the World Trade Organization's (WTO) formal recognition of the OIE, making the OIE a tool for global harmonisation and an unparalleled forum for discussion. The Delegates having nearly all of them a veterinary education according to the OIE basic rules, this political valence is always combined with a technical one, which facilitates compromises in the global public interest.

### **The values of the OIE:**

Against this background, the values promoted by the OIE are both:

- the values of science: rigour, objectivity, excellence, reliability and relevance, enthusiasm;
- and the values of an international community, working to achieve a common goal and sharing the same culture: transparency, consensus, solidarity, impartiality.

Its system of governance also makes the OIE an organisation that is wholly owned by its Members.

### **The place of the OIE:**

A world without the OIE would be one of more poverty, ill health and trade disarray.

Throughout its history, and especially in recent decades, the OIE has proven itself to be an essential link in the animal production chain and a key player in the field of public health.

Notably by ensuring the sanitary safety of international trade in animals and animal products, including food products, the OIE plays a role that is unique in animal health, and one that is

indispensable when it comes to the sanitary safety of food, animal welfare and the protection of biodiversity. Thus, the OIE occupies an essential place in the world economy, especially within the context of poverty alleviation.

All the activities of the OIE and those carried out by all the national Veterinary Services constitute a global public good.

If all this is well known to veterinarians in the public sector, this is less the case for veterinarians in the private sector and other health professionals, and indeed to politicians, media and the general public, even if the OIE is increasingly cited in the national and international media, in the context of sanitary crises or trade disputes.

### **The OIE's products:**

The actions of the OIE are founded on the International Agreement of 1924 and the OIE's organic and general rules, along with a multiannual strategic plan. Stemming from this are several readily identifiable products, detailed below in point 2.1. The main ones are as follows:

- transparent and timely presentation of the world animal health situation and the official animal disease statuses of Member Countries;
- international standards and guidelines relating to terrestrial and aquatic animal health, veterinary public health and animal welfare;
- scientific and technical recommendations, reports and data;
- solidarity programmes offering support in terms of governance and capacity building for Veterinary Services (as defined in the OIE Standards) and their partners.

### **The context, the needs either expressed or to be elicited:**

The general context is one of constraints: cuts in public budgets, repeated crises (including a crisis of public confidence in science and public authorities).

However, as far as the OIE's activities are concerned, the context presents a number of driving factors. These include: the inevitable increase in animal production giving the rising demand for protein, the intensification of international trade in animal products, the globalisation of health phenomena, climate change, the growing awareness of the social role of animals and the need to respect their welfare, the protection of biodiversity, etc.

This situation generates clearly expressed needs, justifying new national, regional and global investments in animal health and protection, and especially for the establishment of harmonised surveillance, prevention and control methods.

This also creates – and not just at times of crisis – a growing interest among the general public and among funding sources for public interest initiatives.

## **2. Products, objectives, targets and methods**

### **2.1. The OIE's products, services and actions**

**The World Animal Health Information System:** this system provides real-time information on the global health situation relating to priority animal diseases and zoonoses.

**Official disease status of Member Countries for specific diseases, including zoning:** this OIE activity is of the highest interest to Veterinary Services, and even political authorities, and also to numerous professionals, as recognition of their work and commitment.

**International standards:** Terrestrial and Aquatic *Codes* and *Manuals*; these annually updated standards serve as the reference for Veterinary Services in carrying out their surveillance, control and certification missions, and they help to ensure safer international trade which, as a result, is facilitated, through commodity based trade and risk analysis.

**Scientific and technical data:** these serve to ensure that the control methods used by animal health professionals worldwide are constantly updated; scientific and technical analyses of health strategies and policies are also conducted on an *ad hoc* basis, including methods for education and good governance.

**Support programmes for Veterinary Services:** support for good veterinary governance through the "PVS Pathway" for capacity building in all its aspects; support is also provided through specific studies, vaccine banks and participation in regional or global programmes, with the involvement of other international players.

## 2.2. The objectives of communication

The overall objective is of course to enhance the visibility and image of the OIE to the point where it will be recognised as the uncontested leader in its field, and to forge an identity for the OIE that is unique, recognisable and widely recognised.

The specific objectives, however, are to better inform policymakers in Member Countries and the general public about the context of risks associated with animal diseases, to propose knowledge transfer and understandable interpretation of health events and to bring about a change in behaviour leading to a wider use of OIE products and greater account being taken of its analyses, positions and recommendations:

- **Induce appreciation:** emphasise the quality and utility of the products, services, and the role of the OIE; publicise its values and achievements;
- **Induce action:** enhance the transparency of Member Countries in terms of animal disease notifications, strengthen participation in the development of standards and in events organised by the OIE, increase the number of collaborative efforts and catalyse discussion and consultation between Member Countries, and increase resources through funding from donors and commitments from public and private sector international players.

## 2.3. The targets of communication

It is important to differentiate target communities according to their roles, their positions, and their respective motivations and disincentives for using the OIE. The level of knowledge and the perception that target audiences have of the OIE, its products and services (both in absolute terms and in comparison with other organisations) vary considerably and this has an impact on how they should be approached.

**2.3.1. Direct targets**, or the "core target" audience (corresponding to the OIE's "core project"), are, in order of proximity to the OIE:

- The Delegates, who are the "owners/shareholders" of the OIE and its most important users, with the greatest current potential and who can relay or even multiply messages; to these one can add, upstream, their supervisory Ministers and downstream the national Focal Points, including Focal Points for Communication; in this respect, they represent a "first circle" of communication targets, and are largely internal.
- The experts, and especially the experts of OIE Reference Centres, as well as the experts that participate in Working Groups and *ad hoc* Groups or contribute to OIE publications; this includes experts of research laboratories and veterinary education establishments.
- The professionals (veterinarians, producers, traders) and their organisations, including some specialised NGOs; they also include the specialist media.
- The institutional partners: institutional donors (Delegates' own governments, specialised health agencies, development agencies, European Commission, etc.) and other institutional partners (FAO, WHO, World Bank, etc.) and even private sector partners (major foundations).

**2.3.2. Indirect targets**, numerous potential audiences and users, must be reached more effectively to increase the OIE's sphere of influence:

- private foundations, NGOs and non-specialised stakeholder associations;
- the general public, and members of the public who are potential "consumers" of OIE products;
- mainstream media (all types of media).

## **2.4. Communication methods and tools**

The OIE's principal spokesperson is the Director General, followed by certain other senior Headquarters officials and the Regional and Sub-Regional Representatives. Also able to speak at any time in the name of the OIE are the President of the World Assembly and the other members of the Council, the Presidents and members of the Specialist Commissions, the members of Working Groups, the Presidents and members of the Regional Commissions and, above all, the Delegates themselves, who represent the OIE in their countries.

Communication actions did not formally start until 2001, when the Director General, Dr Bernard Vallat, decided to create a specialised unit and establish a policy on the subject. The OIE has gradually built up an array of communication tools, first and foremost the website (including the restricted sites and the intranet), which give access not only to scientific and technical information (animal health information, scientific information, standards), but also to media products: editorials, press releases, videos, photos, serial publications (including the OIE *Bulletin*, and fact sheets) and *ad hoc* publications, as well as the reports of global and regional conferences.

The social networks, new type of virtual communication media, are starting to be used and will rapidly become one of the OIE's important communication tools.

The OIE's voice is of course heard via interviews (some of them filmed and available on-line) and press conferences, but also on the spot speeches, presentations and exhibitions.

Other types of communication media are also used, including mail (hard copy or electronic format) and physical media such as awards and rewards (medals and recognition certificates), and promotional items (for sale or for use as gifts).

## **2.5. The messages**

Moving from reaction to action, the OIE communication tools should always include clear messages. The messages should be simple, easy to remember, and relate to a few defined qualities of the OIE, depending on the target audience.

### **2.5.1. Qualities of the OIE "product", "label":**

- The "Product" qualities are: performance, scientific quality, utilisation value, rigour of the analysis, excellence of the expertise, reduced cost;
- The "Label" qualities are: productivity, responsiveness, transparency, knowledge, impartiality, transmission, development, solidarity.

### **2.5.2. Qualities of the OIE "enterprise", "institution", "corporate body":**

- In accordance with its Mandate, and performance with regard to the objectives in the Mandate and the Strategic Plan;
- Precise, complete, clearly defined field of activity;
- Transparency in conducting activities and in decision-making;
- Ambition and determination throughout its field of activity, and in the respect of its values.

One quality must always be taken into account, the unique nature of the OIE's identity, namely the only world reference organisation for animal health and welfare: “**protecting animals, preserving our future**”.

## **2.6. The budget**

Depending on the resources available, the annual budget must include a specific budget for deploying the communication strategy: human resources, purchase of equipment, outside services (communication and media agencies, producers, consultants, among others) for activities that cannot be carried out internally.