



Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe under the GF-TADs umbrella

Fourteenth meeting (SGE ASF14) **Sofia, Bulgaria, 10 and 11 September 2019**

REPORT

Summary

The fourteenth meeting of the standing group of experts on African Swine Fever (SGE ASF14) took place in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 10 and 11 September 2019. Representatives from 34 European countries attended the meeting, as well as a representative of China.

A high-level session for ASF coordination and preparedness in South-East Europe was attended by 2 ministers (Bulgaria and North Macedonia), one vice-minister (Albania), two State Secretaries (Montenegro and Serbia), the EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety the OIE General Director and an FAO representative. The ministerial statement calls for the Balkan to significantly raise the level of awareness on ASF and take appropriate initiatives to address the situation, and all European countries to ensure transparency, enhance coordination and cooperation, provide support to the Veterinary authorities and develop awareness campaigns and risk communication strategies.

The 14 currently affected countries and the Czech Republic presented their latest epidemiological situation and surveillance results since the last meeting of the SGE in May 2019 in Paris. The European Commission also provided an overview of the current situation of ASF in the European Union.

The main topic addressed by the SGE ASF14 was 'Outbreak investigation and relevant data collection'. Experts from Lithuania, Belgium, Russia, Germany and Bulgaria shared their experience and good practises, while EFSA provided an updated on the SIGMA Animal Disease Data Model. The SGE agreed on the creation of a specific section of the e-depository in the GFTADs website where check-lists, questionnaires and other relevant tools for outbreaks investigations and data collection may be shared; it also called for a GF-TADs guidebook on 'ASF outbreak investigations and data collection'.

The report of the SGE expert mission in Belgium last June was presented and approved. The next missions of the SGE experts will be in Serbia and Slovakia.

The challenges and state of play with regards to the development of a vaccine against ASF were explained by an expert from the FLI, Germany. The most promising approach seems to be with attenuated vaccines, but it will require to decide on the level of acceptable risk and will probably not be ready anytime soon.

The latest update on the ASF situation and measures implemented in China were presented by the representative of the China Animal Health and Epidemiology Centre (CAHEC), while OIE regional officers presented the initiatives taken to address the situation in Asia and face the threat of ASF in the Americas, under the GF-TADs umbrella.

The FAO provided an overview of its activities to support the fight against ASF, with a focus on the state of implementation of the Emergency Regional TCP in the Balkans. The first results of the OIE awareness campaign launched at the beginning of 2019 were reported and the upcoming second phase of that campaign discussed.

The SGE ASF14 eventually approved a set of recommendations, with a focus on 'Outbreak investigation and relevant data collection'. The SGE ASF15 should take place in Slovakia around March 2020.

Minutes

Participants

See the attached list of participants, representing the 13 official members of the SGE ASF, 2 recently infected countries (Serbia and Slovakia), 20 observer countries (including China), experts from the Friedrich Loeffler Institute and EFSA, as well as representatives from the European Commission, the FAO and the OIE.

Furthermore, the following personalities attended a high-level session for ASF coordination and preparedness in South-East Europe: Mrs Desislava TANEVA, Minister of Agriculture and Food and Forestry of Bulgaria; Mr Trajan DIMKOVSKI, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of North Macedonia; Mrs Ermira GJECI, Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania; Mr Djuro ZUGIC, State Secretary at Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro; Mr Velimir STANOJEVIC, State Secretary at Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Serbia; Mr Vytenis ANDRIUKAITIS, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety; Mrs Monique ELOIT, OIE General Director.

Altogether, 82 people attended the SGE ASF14.

Introduction and objectives of the meeting

The SGE ASF14 was introduced by Francisco Reviriego-Gordejo, representative of the President of the GF-TADS for Europe. He noted how relevant it was to organise this meeting in Bulgaria, considering the latest development of the ASF situation in South-East Europe. He also highlighted the high-level session included for the first time in an SGE meeting, meant to raise the political awareness on the concerning situation in this particular sub-region and in Europe at large.

Tsviatko Alexandrov, deputy CVO of Bulgaria, confirmed the devastating impact of the current epizooty of ASF in his country, where almost 1/3 of the pig sector has been affected. Bulgaria is committed to address the situation, despite the high cost and hard work.

All PPT presentations and relevant documents are available on the [GF-TADs for Europe website](#).

Updates from the 13 member countries of the SGE ASF, and from Serbia and Slovakia

With a view to improve the comparability and consistency of the data provided, and to focus on the most critical information for the SGE, the countries were proposed for the first time to use a template PPT provided by the GF-TADs Secretariat. This short presentation was mainly about surveillance in wild boar (found dead vs hunted) and in domestic pigs, in zones of the country considered free vs zones of the country considered infected, results of PCR and serology testing; and corresponding maps.

Most of the countries used this template PPT, adjusted according to their local situation. All PPTs are displayed on the GF-TADs webpage – highlights:

- Belarus: no positive result (PCR or ELISA).
- Belgium: no case in wild boar in non-infected zones of the country; no ASF in domestic pigs.
- Bulgaria: dynamic situation during summer, unfortunately, but no new outbreak for the last 20 days in the pig sector.

- Czech Republic: ASF was eradicated last March, no positive result since the last case on 15 April 2018. It appears that the repopulation by the wild boar of the fenced area infected in 2017 is very slow.
- Estonia: no outbreak in domestic pigs for the last 2 years. There has been a drastic reduction of the national wild boar population after the intensive ASF wave.
- Hungary: ASF has continued to extend in wild boar over the summer, but still no outbreak in domestic pigs.
- Latvia: only 1 outbreak in 2019. The biggest challenge is now to keep up awareness in the public.
- Lithuania: despite a cluster of 15 outbreaks since 29 May in the South of the country, the overall situation is improving.
- Moldova: most of the outbreaks have been found in the South of the country, close to the border with Romania. Awareness efforts are ongoing, compensations are being introduced, the human factor remains a concern.
- Poland: 43 outbreaks in pigs since 29 May, but all of them as well as all positive results in wild boar have been confirmed in the restricted zones.
- Romania: 16 outbreaks in commercial farms and 1069 in backyards since 29 May. Romania is working hard on the reduction of wild boar populations and backyards.
- Russian Federation: some cases in wild boar and outbreaks in pigs have been confirmed in the far East, next to the border with China. In Western Russia, the epizootic wave seems to be decreasing.
- Serbia: no confirmation in wild boar so far, but a cluster of 17 outbreaks in backyards in the district of Belgrade, in a 35 km-wide zone.
- Slovakia: the 1st outbreak was confirmed on 24 July 2019, in a backyard 400 metres from the Hungarian border, and the 1st case in wildboar on 8 August 2019. 11 outbreaks (backyards only) and 12 cases in wild boar have been confirmed so far, all in the South-East corner of the country. The construction of an 80 km-long fence is being considered.
- Ukraine: 3 cases in wild boar and 16 outbreaks have been confirmed since 29 June, including in a commercial holding of 98000 pigs, West of the country. The situation has improved from last year.
- The European Commission presented the overall EU situation. It noted that some parts show less dots than in the past, while there's been more outbreaks in domestic pigs in others. It also showed the video from EFSA '[ASF - How to stay one step ahead](#)'.

High-level session for ASF coordination and preparedness in South-East Europe

Minister Taneva described the recent evolution of ASF in **Bulgaria**, mentioning the absence of outbreak for the last 20 days, thanks to the (unpopular) measures taken. They are now working on implementing a high level of biosecurity in all holdings including backyards. Based on the Bulgarian experience, coordinated efforts of all affected parties and countries in at risk zones are critical to control ASF. A global strategy is needed, as well as guidelines, based on the best and most updated science, with resources. Academia and scientists also need to explain the disease and risks in a simpler language so that they are understood by the public at large. The future EU common agricultural policy must include provisions to fight such diseases and identify possible funding sources. The research on a possible vaccine must be properly funded.

International practise has demonstrated that only coordinated effort bring results, that's the only possible way forward for ASF.

For **Commissioner Andriukaitis**, the packed meeting room showed the level of commitment of all countries, EU and non-EU, to work together. He referred to the global situation as 'very worrying', considering the quick progress of ASF in Asia. In a context where no outbreak in third countries originates from animals and meat from the EU, the EU is a reliable partner. But ASF has a devastating impact on the pig sector, affecting already vulnerable rural regions. There is a need to agree together

on the best way forward. No one can beat ASF alone. Cross-sector and cross-country cooperation must increase.

The EU experience shows that it is possible to control ASF: the Czech Republic was effective in eradicating ASF in wild boar; the progression of the disease has been limited to the East of the EU, except for a few human-mediated jumps, Finland managed to stay free despite having a border and maintaining continuous trade with infected countries.

Critical measures include the traceability of pigs and pork products, the control of transport, a high level of communication including with other sectors (transporters...), implementing awareness campaigns on main highways and the proper disposal of trash along these highways. The EU can provide support, but the strategy must be constantly updated.

The Commission is pushing for the recognition of regionalisation at global level as it is considered the best way to limit impact. The EU is also promoting the development of a vaccine, but it will probably not happen before a few years. The EU is also organising trainings through the BTSF programme: relevant officials are encouraged to attend.

The Commission is committed to continue all possible efforts in the fight against ASF.

The OIE General Director Eloit noted that the disease remained relatively well confined in Europe until a new push in 2017, mainly southwards. The latest event in Serbia is now of high concern for the whole of the Balkan region. Considering the socioeconomic impact and trade consequences of ASF, the presence at the SGE ASF14 of ministers from this sub-region was therefore particularly welcome and their commitment of huge importance. She urged the ministers present not to leave their veterinary services alone to face ASF. The collaboration within the administration (customs, etc.) and with other sectors was vital, as well as securing appropriate funding from the ministries of economy.

GF-TADs has played a significant role in Europe, its Standing Group of Experts being now duplicated in Asia and very soon in the Americas. In a context where the OIE standards are recognised by the WTO as the scientific reference, the GF-TADS is also a mechanism for preventing possible trade disputes. A global initiative is being actively developed by OIE and FAO.

Vice-Minister Gjerci insisted that **Albania** remains free of ASF but is nonetheless taking action to prevent its introduction. The pig population in Albania is 200.000 pigs, most of them free range and some in high biosecurity commercial farm. A ministerial order on the control of ASF describes measures to be taken upon suspicion and in case of confirmation. The veterinarians and the sector have been actively informed of these measures including the prohibition of swill feeding and recommendations on biosecurity; the administration in charge of forestry and this sector have been informed about the risk in wild boar. Albania is committed to implement the GF-TADs recommendations.

Minister Dimkovski also noted that ASF has not been registered so far in **North Macedonia**, while acknowledging that his country was now at risk. Measures have been adopted to address the situation, they include: the training of inspectors in the veterinary, forestry and hunting sectors; the identification and registration of farms; the training of farmers on biosecurity and of hunters started in 2018; hunting has started earlier than usual in an effort to reduce the population of wild boar; some financial support is provided to farms with inappropriate biosecurity measures; controls at the borders have been reinforced; the winter feeding of wild boar is now prohibited, etc.

State Secretary Zugic explained that **Montenegro** is very closely following the EU legislation. He referred to the success of the coordination against LSD, under the GF-TADs umbrella, to express his willingness to also cooperate with neighbouring countries in the context of ASF, considering that transparency and honest cooperation are essential to trade and mutual trust.

He explained that the number of people keeping pigs for personal consumption remains high in the country, even if the commercial pig sector is limited. Should the disease eventually reach Montenegro, its impact would therefore be very significant.

State Secretary Stanojevic, Serbia, has measured the damage of ASF in Eastern and central Europe, as well as in the rest of the world, in a context of absence of a vaccine. He insisted on the huge importance of raising awareness of farmers and building the capacity of the veterinary services to respond quickly. From the 1st case of ASF in Romania, in 2017, Serbia has understood it was at risk: surveillance in wild boar and the domestic pig population was reinforced, particularly in the border regions, and other trans-sector measures adopted in 2018, including based on the knowledge provided by an FAO project. The national crisis plan has now been activated, after the unexpected introduction of ASF in the centre of the country – which also showed how unpredictable ASF can be. Immediate actions have been implemented and will continue to control ASF. A difficult period is expected, with a lot of work and the need of receiving full support. This fight requires of global approach.

Daniel Beltran-Alcrudo, FAO representative, stressed that ASF is the deadliest pig disease today, with no vaccine available. No country except the Czech Republic has so far been able to eradicate it, due to the role of wild boar and backyard, but it is possible to keep it under control. ASF threatens the Balkan countries now that it has reached Serbia. Its impact would be devastating in rural communities where raising pigs is an additional income. He called for enhanced surveillance, thorough implementation of biosecurity in small and commercial farms, early reaction, etc. Farmers and hunters must have incentives to report suspicions. Awareness of all must be maintained.

FAO remains committed to help the countries, as demonstrated by the TCP currently implemented in the Balkans. And the GF-TADs SGE is the perfect group to exchange best practises.

During the discussion that followed these addresses, Belarus acknowledged that it wasn't possible to claim eradication of ASF when the disease remains present in neighbouring countries. It has however adopted obligations to keep the wild boar in fenced areas only, the free movement of wild boar being prohibited in Belarus.

The Commissioner repeated that cooperation is the master word, adding that it would be 'science fiction' to consider that one country can win alone the battle against ASF. He also mentioned the pilot projects launched by the Commission in Moldova and Ukraine, and also proposed to Belarus and Russia.

A draft ministerial statement was presented and eventually approved after minor amendments.

Technical session on 'Outbreak investigation and relevant data collection'

Outbreak investigation and relevant data collection – domestic pigs – Lithuania example (Alvydas Malakauskas, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences)

The Lithuanian authorities have worked on the risk factors to be systematically investigated in the pig sector: biosecurity, pig feeding and bedding, movements of people, etc. In each outbreak a map is prepared showing the location of other outbreaks and wild boar cases. Results of ELISA tests are also important to refine the date of introduction of the virus.

The presentation explains what to do when arriving in an infected farm, what questions to investigate (e.g. 'Are you regularly going to the forest?', 'Are you keeping other farm animals?').

In the Lithuanian experience, visitors, swill feeding and visiting the forest have a particular impact.

Outbreak investigation and relevant data collection – wild boar – Belgium example (Annick Linden, Veterinary Faculty, University of Liège)

The origin of the infection in wild boar in Belgium is unknown so far, despite a few hypotheses.

The data collection process is organised in 3 phases in Belgium.

- In the field: carcass search procedure, a time-consuming process. When a wild boar is found or culled, GPS location is the most critical data to collect; the carcass must be carefully identified before being removed by the team to the carcass disposal premises.

- At the collection centre: that's where the collection of samples takes place, together with establishing a technical sheet for each carcass with a lot of information (GPS coordinates, aspect of the carcass...). Only the photo of the technical sheet is shared outside of the collection centre.
- Laboratory testing: samples are transported 3 times per week from the collection centre to the laboratory. PCR results are made available the same day. All data are included in the wildboar database, plus a 'carto database' which can produce all kinds of maps, including about the fences network, the location of the traps, etc. This data is processed into material used by the crisis management organisation.

A slide sums up the most relevant measures to be implemented or which require attention.

Answering a follow-up question, the expert mentioned road accidents, pasteurellosis and acute parasitic diseases as the most frequent causes of wild boar mortality when ASF is not involved.

Outbreak investigation and relevant data collection – domestic pigs and wild boar – Russia example (Alexey Igolkin, Federal Centre for Animal Health – FGBI 'ARRIAH')

The presentation describes the basis of the Russian approach. The slide n° 5 lists the main questions that will guide investigations while the data to be collected are proposed in slide 10 (wild boar), 11 (pig carcasses), 13-15 (backyard pigs), 17-19 (commercial pig holdings). Each outbreak is unique, there is no one-size-fits-all template to investigate an ASF outbreak.

Answering a follow-up question, the expert mentioned that probably 5 to 7% of infected wild boar do not die from the disease.

Outbreak investigation and relevant data collection – initiative in Baltic States and Bulgaria (Laura Zani, Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Germany)

The presentation focused on two aspects of an outbreak investigation, i.e. 1/ the identification of the likely origin of the disease and means of its spread; 2/ the likely length of time that the disease has been present (HRP = High Risk Period; the HRP does not reflect the incubation period - 5 to 7 days).

A thorough assessment of the biosecurity is necessary to address the first aspect, while mortality data are very important to calculate the HRP. The larger the epidemiological unit, the longer the HRP will be. There is a significant risk of delayed detection of ASF in big farms, hence the EU provision to encourage for the testing of 2 dead pigs (older than 2 months) per week.

In terms of method, the proposal is to 1/ Postulate different hypothesis, 2/ Address each hypothesis separately, and 3/ Exclude hypothesis one by one.

During the general discussion which followed these experts' presentations:

- Belgium mentioned the BIOCHECK method, a tool which is currently being tested in Belgium to assess biosecurity in pig farms. This tool was developed by the University of Ghent, in the department of Professor J. Dewulf. Its use should become widespread in the short term following the introduction in Belgium of a new regulation specific to biosecurity control in pig farms. More information is available at <https://www.biocheck.ugent.be/biocheck.php>.
- Lithuania confirmed having a questionnaire which is being updated and may include a formal checklist in the future.
- Russia has developed check lists to assess biosecurity in pig farms, and a questionnaire to interview the farmer.
- It was proposed that all this material be shared in a new section of the e-depository of the GF-TADs webpage dedicated to the topic 'outbreak investigation and relevant data collection'.

The SIGMA project - Where we are. Next steps. What's in it for ASF? (Sofie Dhollander, EFSA)

This project is about the processing of data from the participating countries, by the SIGMA consortium, so that they can be extracted and collated into standardised data, from the national databases to a

common database. The process is to be automated, with possibility to submit the data in just 1 click, and to create standard country reports.

The project is making good progress. It should be accessible in the future to non-EU countries, particularly IPA countries (IPA = Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance).

Belgium country mission report

This GF-TADs ASF experts mission took place in June 2019, based on the usual terms of reference for these missions. The mission visited the central authority, a large farm in Flanders and 1 smaller free-range farm in Wallonia, local control units in Flanders and Wallonia, and eventually the ASF infected zone close to the borders with France and Luxemburg. The presentation explains the distribution and importance of the pig industry in Belgium; the chronology of events and measures deployed in Belgium as of September 2018; the results of surveillance and testing. The specific measures in the regulated zone are described in more details (collection and testing of dead wild boars, fences, traps).

The conclusions are overall very positive.

The level cooperation between the veterinary services and the environmental / hunting organisations in the Flemish part of the country could however be improved. The expert team also recommended that the Belgian Central authority enhance the passive surveillance at farm level taking into account the size of farm, age groups of animals, the epidemiological situation in the region, etc. The only suggestion concerning ASF wild boar management in the southern part of Belgium is to evaluate the possibility to establish additional incentives for hunters involved in the depopulation strategy.

The domestic pig sector remains free of ASF in Belgium.

The report has been approved by the SGE ASF14, based on the presentation. It is available [here](#).

The President also announced that the next missions will be taking place in Serbia and Slovakia.

FAO activities on ASF, including in the Balkans (Daniel Beltran-Alcrudo, FAO regional representation, Budapest)

The first part of the presentation lists the documents and information on ASF produced by the FAO or in collaboration with other institutions. In particular, the official publication of the GF-TADs Handbook on ASF in wild boar is now finalised, with a new title: 'African swine fever in wild boar - ecology and biosecurity'. It can be downloaded [here](#).

The second part focuses on the FAO activities in the Balkan sub-region. The inception workshop of the TCP for the Balkans took place in Belgrade last March; it reflected on the main pathways to identify high risk areas. Assessment missions are currently being deployed in each of the 6 countries included in the project. Simulation exercises should be conducted at a later stage in the countries. Numerous activities are being organised, including on laboratories, ASF epidemiology, train-the-trainer (for field veterinarians, including an online training course), wild boar management and hunting biosecurity, stakeholder workshops on biosecurity. A disease intelligence component is also included in the programme. Awareness material is available that can be easily adjusted to the local context.

International updates

Addressing the threat of ASF in the Americas (Luis Barcos, OIE Regional Representative for the Americas, Buenos Aires)

The preparation in the Americas really started with the Ottawa forum, on 30 April and 1 May 2019. Building on the Europe and Asia experiences, the Regional Steering Committee of the GF-TADs for the Americas should also be launching a Standing Group of Experts on ASF during its 10th meeting (17 September, Panama).

To be noted that the private sector is largely involved in the Americas, where it participates in the governance of the GF-TADs.

ASF in Asia & SGE-ASF for Asia (Caitlin Holley, Regional Project Coordinator at the OIE Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific, Tokyo)

The presentation provides an overview of the progression of ASF in Asia since its first confirmation in China August 2018: Mongolia (January 2019), Vietnam (February 2019), Cambodia (March 2019), North Korea (May 2019), Laos (June 2019), Myanmar (August 2019). The Philippines have just been added to the list of countries where ASF has been confirmed; the disease could be linked to the importation of infected products fed to pigs.

A Standing Group of Experts inspired by the Europe example was initiated by China, Japan and South-Korea and officially launched in April 2019, with adjustments to address the specific Asian situation, including a dense population of pigs, the persistence of swill feeding, the permanent movements of goods and people, etc. A list of 10 priority topics to be addressed by the SGE have been identified from the beginning: ASF epidemiology, including risk-based surveillance; Biosecurity; Border control measures, etc. The second meeting took place last July and adopted recommendations on Biosecurity & Border controls. The third will be organised in Vietnam next November: it will focus on socioeconomic impact and communication.

The presentation also provides a quick overview of the market disruptions since the ASF hit China, where the live pigs and pork prices have speared up, with spill over effects on the other meat sectors.

Current situation and control measures of ASF in China (Dr. Gaolu, China Animal Health and Epidemiology Center - CAHEC)

153 outbreaks have been confirmed so far since 2018. The overall trend is a decreasing of the incidence, since the peak of October 2018. Recently all new outbreaks have occurred in smaller size farms. 3 different strains of the ASF virus have been identified in China. The main transmission routes in the farms are vehicles and personal contacts (43%), swill feeding (40%) and live pigs and pig products movements (17%).

The introduction of the virus in China probably happened via the smuggling of products from endemic countries, or passengers' carry-on. Control measures aim at 1/ controlling the source of infection, 2/ cutting off the route of transmission and 3/ protecting susceptible animals. These measures include reinforcing screening and surveillance; optimizing the contingency plan; strengthening inspection in slaughtering (lab tests); restricting movements of live pigs and upgrading the vehicles; reforming the health management (certification, zoning approach, broker management); stopping swill feeding (which implies improving the capacity processing food leftovers); improving biosecurity, particularly in large farms, etc. Efforts are also under way for promoting the multi-sector collaboration and public awareness, and for enhancing international collaboration.

Russia expressed interest to know more about the wild boar management in China, with a concern about the preservation of wild boar in Far East Russia: wild boar in China is under the competency of the ministry in charge of forests. There is no clear idea of the numbers of wild boars in China. The strain of the virus in the wild boar in China appears to be different from the strain of ASF in the pig population. Answering another follow up question, Dr Gaolu mentioned that until now 1,3 million pigs have been culled in China because of ASF.

ASF vaccines – history and state of play (Sandra Blome, Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Germany)

The presentation describes why it is difficult to come up with a vaccine against ASF. Several approaches are being explored, but most of them have serious draw-backs. The most promising approach seems to be with attenuated vaccines, but it will require to decide on the level of acceptable risk and no vaccine will probably be ready anytime soon. In any case, vaccination will not be the holy grail, management measures will remain critical to control the disease.

During the follow-up discussion, the expert stressed that it is critical to let the public know about the difficulty of producing a vaccine and not let the rumour spread that a vaccine will be developed very soon. It was also clarified that seropositive/PCR negative animals are considered as presenting no further risk of ASF spreading; however, the notification of these animals remains compulsory.

ASF - OIE awareness campaign: towards the second phase (Catherine Bertrand-Ferrandis, OIE, Paris)

The participants were reminded about the content, tools and how to use them, of the OIE awareness campaign 'Don't be the carrier of a deadly pig disease', launched early 2019. A recent OIE survey on ASF communication activities shows that a very large majority of countries in Europe are developing risk communication activities; the tools of the OIE campaign have been translated in 10 local languages. The OIE is now reflecting on the second phase of the campaign and is looking for the input of the countries as regards possible additional tools for the existing targets; suggestion of new targets; adaptation of the existing messages to local realities; change the characters featured in the existing tools.

Several ideas came up in the discussion, including: build a communication on trash disposal for long distance transporters; produce guidelines on how to address the messages to journalists, creating good stories that they will pick up; linking the ASF topic to food security and climate change; create a catalogue of targets.

A survey will be launched soon about the second phase.

The GF-TADs secretariat reminded the participants about the existing section of the E-depository dedicated to the awareness material developed by other countries of the region – visit https://web.oie.int/RR-Europe/eng/Regprog/en ASF_depository.htm#Awareness_countries.

Countries which haven't yet shared their national material are warmly welcome to do so (please write to f.schneegans@oie.int).

The OIE also reminded the participants about the next regional training seminar for OIE National Focal Points for Communication, which will take place in Budva, Montenegro, on 19-21 November 2019 (formal invitations to be sent out very soon). ASF and the OIE campaign will be showcased during the seminar.

Presentation, discussion and adoption of SGE ASF14 recommendations

The draft recommendations of the SGE ASF14 were presented by the President and endorsed by the SGE ASF14 participants.

CLOSING REMARKS – FUTURE STEPS

The next meeting (SGE ASF15) should take place around March 2020, in Slovakia (TBC).



We would like to sincerely thank the European Union and the OIE for supporting, and the Government of the Bulgaria for kindly hosting, the SGE ASF14.