



Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in the Baltic and Eastern Europe region

under the GF-TADs umbrella

Kick-off meeting

Report

<i>Location:</i>	Bern, Switzerland
<i>Date:</i>	Monday 22 September 2014 (7-8pm)
<i>Present:</i>	Countries: <u>EU</u> : EE, LT, LV, PL; <u>non EU</u> (RF, UA); OIE; European Commission (EC) (see Annex – detailed list of participants)
<i>Objectives:</i>	1. To set up the Standing Group of Experts on ASF 2. To agree on the <i>modus operandi</i> of the Standing Group of Experts on ASF
<i>Next meeting:</i>	[October 27-28 2014, Kiev (Ukraine)] – to be confirmed

A new initiative called **Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in the Baltic and Eastern Europe region** (hereafter referred as ‘SGE’) was set up under the GF-TADs umbrella¹ to build up a closer cooperation among countries affected by African swine fever (ASF) and thereby, address the disease in a more collaborative and harmonised manner across the Baltic and Eastern Europe sub-region.

The kick-off meeting of the SGE was organised on 22 September 2014 in Bern, Switzerland as a side-event of the OIE 26th Conference of the OIE regional Commission for Europe, to take advantage of the combined presence of Delegates and representatives of FAO, OIE and the EC. The meeting was chaired by Dr B. Van Goethem (EC/DG SANCO) in his capacity as President of the GF-TADs for Europe Steering Committee. All invited countries attended the meeting except Belarus, whose absence was regretted as their participation is crucial to the envisioned work of the SGE.

Dr Van Goethem made a thorough introduction to the SGE objectives and presented a tentative mode of operation, to serve as a basis for discussion. The SGE will operate under the Global Framework for Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) umbrella. To facilitate the financing of participation of member countries and experts by the EC, it will also be a Working Group of the EC Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (Standing Committee). The SGE main objective is to strengthen mid-term regional cooperation on African swine fever (ASF) control through:

- Regular exchange of information on the ASF situation and control measures applied, both as regards the domestic pig sector and wild boar;

¹ ASF is one of the 7 priority diseases addressed by the GF-TADs for Europe (refer to [GF-TADs for Europe 5-year Action Plan 2012-2016](#))

- Regular review of national control strategies by experts based on scientific risk assessments, experience and best practice in the region, with a view to harmonising control policies and building a science based regional control strategy;
- Collaboration on laboratory diagnostics (exchange of best practice on methodology; support and training / capacity building as needed);
- Collaboration on awareness raising campaigns in the affected countries (exchange of best practice and communication tools).

The SGE will meet every month or two months depending on the evolution of the ASF epidemiological situation in the region; meetings will take place in the countries concerned, on a rotating basis. The Secretariat of the GF-TADs Europe (assured by the OIE SRR in Brussels) will ensure the technical Secretariat of the SGE.

Countries also had the opportunity to briefly present their current ASF situation and control measures in place, in particular with regard to wild boars. Russia indicated that they had launched a similar initiative – a center for ASF control based in Vladimir, headed by the vice-President of RF - a few weeks ago involving RF, BY and UA.

During the discussions, the following needs were expressed, as prerequisites to ensure active and direct involvement of all countries in ASF control:

- Countries shall demonstrate willingness and readiness for greater transparency, by fully respecting their notification obligations to the OIE as well as by sharing data and information on surveillance, prevention and control measures within the SGE;
- Countries shall establish direct lines of communication among each other;
- The SGE shall remain small (less than 40 people) to ensure fruitful and conclusive discussions; country representatives shall not exceed 4 and shall all speak in one voice;
- Countries shall be represented in the SGE meetings both by experts and decision-makers (CVO or deputy CVO level); during meetings, decisions shall be made on proposed actions as well as country commitment to implement them at national level;
- Discussions in SGE meetings shall remain practical, based on independent expert opinions and with a view to fostering regional collaboration; this shall *de facto* exclude discussions that may be political (in particular with a trade dimension) or favour bilateral dialogue only;
- The SGE meeting agendas shall be well-defined and focussed on jointly selected topics; they shall allow for (i) detailed country presentation on ASF situation and control measures, (ii) specific discussions on selected topics and (iii) country reports on the implementation of measures decided in prior SGE meetings;
- Countries shall conduct preparatory work – which may involve in-country consultations – to deliver relevant presentations and share informed views during SGE meetings;
- While control options may differ among countries, they shall however never contradict each other and shall all aimed at achieving ASF freedom at regional level.

Main conclusions of the kick-off meeting:

- 1) Participating countries supported the new initiative. Solutions will be explored to include the Russian initiative under the GF-TADs umbrella and avoid the two initiatives run in parallel, with possible detrimental effects to ASF control in the region;
- 2) The SGE objectives and mode of operating, in line with the proposals made by the Chair, were unanimously adopted. The SGE can therefore be considered as officially launched;
- 3) The technical topic of the first meeting of the SGE (SGE1) will be on wild boars (control measures in wild boars; methodology to assess wild boar density at national level; roles of hunters and environmental agencies/organisations in ASF control). The recommendations of the OIE – CIC Joint International Meeting on early detection and prevention of African swine fever and other animal health issues at the

wildlife-livestock-human interface held in Paris on June 30-July 1 can serve as a basis for in-country consultations/discussions ([link to the OIE-CIC meeting recommendations](#)).

➤ **Next Meetings of the SGE**

The next meeting (Meeting 1 – SGE1) should be organized in Ukraine, 27-28 October 2014, as a side event to the BTSF seminar on ASF (28-30 October 2014) to take advantage of the presence of experts and CVOs *in situ*. The agenda, invitation letters and logistical details will be sent in due time by the Secretariat. Experts on ASF in wild boars will be invited to address the main topic of the SG1 Agenda. [*In the meantime, due to unavailability of several experts, the date and venue of the SGE1 have had to be rescheduled, tentatively to 1-2 December 2014 in Minsk, Belarus (to be confirmed).*]

SGE2 could be in Russia (to be confirmed during the SGE1).

Annex – detailed list of participants in the kick off meeting

Estonia (EE): Ago Pärtel (CVO, OIE Delegate), Olev Kalda (deputy CVO);

Latvia (LV): Emils Jegers (Deputy Head of Food and Veterinary Services), Antra Brinke (Deputy Head of veterinary and Food);

Lithuania (LT): Vidmantas Paulauskas (Deputy CVO), Zilvinas Ilevicius (Attaché in Brussels), Kestutis Patasius (Chief regional State Food and Veterinary Service);

Poland (PL): Krzysztof Jażdżewski (Deputy CVO, OIE Delegate);

Russia (RU): Nikita Lebedev (expert); Svetlana Egorova (adviser);

Ukraine (UA): Ivan Bisiuk (OIE Delegate);

OIE: Monique Eloit (Dep Director General), Etienne Bonbon (Vice President of the Code Commission), Nikola Belev (regional Representative for Eastern Europe), Kazimieras Lukauskas (regional Representative in Moscow), Nadège Leboucq (sub-regional Representative in Brussels and SGE Secretariat);

European Commission, DG SANCO: Bernard Van Goethem (Director, Veterinary and International affairs), Alberto Laddomada (Head of Unit, Animal Health), Francisco Reviriego (Head of Sector, Animal Disease Control), Moritz Klemm (Legislative Veterinary Officer, Relations with the OIE).