



OIE Regional Commission for Europe

The Thirteenth meeting of the Regional Core Group of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe (RCG-13)

22 of April 2021, Videoconference

Draft Report

Summary

The RCG-13 meeting has been held as a videoconference, hosted by the OIE Regional Representation in Moscow- RCG Secretariat (Zoom tool). The Meeting was chaired by Dr Maris Balodis, President of the Bureau of OIE Regional Commission for Europe, OIE Delegate and CVO of Latvia.

All RCG members participated in the meeting as well as many observers from the European Commission, OIE Headquarters, OIE Regional and Sub Regional Representations (Moscow, Brussels, and Nur-Sultan). The agenda was focused on OIE standards setting process, global and regional activities of the OIE (wildlife framework, evaluation, and further development of PVS Pathway, Animal Welfare Platform), and particularly on organisation of the 88th OIE General Session (GS)., A specific attention was paid on the preparation of the Regional Commission meeting and endorsement its agenda, scheduled for the first day of GS (24th of May), namely:

- Outcomes of the 29th Regional Conference in Europe, and presentation of technical item (with questionnaire) selected by the European OIE Delegates, for upcoming 30rd Regional Conference (2022)
- OIE Animal Welfare platform for Europe – 3rd Action Plan (2021-2023)
- Selection of three strategic topics of global interest to be addressed by the OIE through various means of communication (e.g. Scientific Review, Newsletter, seminars, workshops)

In addition, ahead of the GS at the end of May, there was a specific focus on the two following topics:

- Comments on OIE standards proposed for adoption by OIE Assembly, and the possibility to support them on behalf of whole region of Europe,
- Elections to different OIE bodies; new composition of the RCG and Animal Welfare Steering Group for Europe after these elections, and technical tools for voting provided by OIE.

The Chairman of the RCG, Dr Maris Balodis, underlined the importance of the discussed topics for the European region, as well, he expressed the RCG support to the new initiative of the OIE Collaborating Centre on the Economics of Animal Health.

The next RCG meeting is planned before the General Session (May 20th) as video conference.

WORKING SESSIONS

Opening, welcome notes, adoption of agenda

All members countries of the RCG were represented. The meeting was attended by:

	OIE Delegates (or their representatives) / Members of Regional Core Group	Country
1	Dr Maris Balodis, OIE Delegate	Latvia

2	Dr Ulrich Herzog, OIE Delegate	Austria
3	Dr Vesna Dakovic, OIE Delegate	Montenegro
4	Dr Anna Sandul Representative of Dr Smilgin, OIE Delegate	Belarus
5	Dr Gulzhan Nurtazina, OIE Delegate	Kazakhstan
6	Dr Vasili Basiladze, OIE Delegate	Georgia
7	Dr Valentin Almansa, OIE Delegate	Spain
8	Dr Thomas Jemmi, Representative of OIE Delegate	Switzerland
9	Dr Christine Middlemiss, OIE Delegate	The United Kingdom
10	Dr Christianne Brusckke, OIE Delegate	The Netherlands
11	Dr Nikita Lebedev, Representative of Dr Savenkov, OIE Delegate	The Russian Federation

	Observers of Regional Core Group	Country / Institution
1	Dr Moritz Klemm	European Commission
2	Dr Budimir Plavsic	OIE, RCG Secretariat
3	Dr Mereke Taitubayev	OIE, SRR Nur-Sultan
4	Dr Roberto Balbo	OIE, SRR Brussels
5	Mr Jean Perchet	OIE, RCG Secretariat
6	Dr Dmitry Morozov	OIE, SRR Nur-Sultan
7	Dr Paolo Dalla Villa	OIE, SRR Brussels
8	Dr Tomasz Grudnik	OIE, SRR Brussels
9	Dr Mario Latini	OIE, SRR Nur-Sultan
10	Dr Barbara Alessandrini	OIE, HQ, CBD (presentation)
11	Dr Keith Hamilton	OIE, HQ, PRD (presentation)
12	Dr Montserrat Arroyo	OIE, HQ, RAD
13	Dr Nathaly Monsalve	OIE, HQ, RAD

Dr Plavsic, RCG Secretariat, welcomed members and other participants, provided technical aspects of the meeting, introduced Jean Perchet, a new staff member of the OIE regional Representation in Moscow to colleagues, and then passed the word over to the president, Mr Maris Balodis.

Dr Balodis presented the priority topics of the Agenda and speakers. The agenda was agreed/adopted by all members. In addition, the Final report of the twelfth meeting of the Regional Core Group was endorsed.

Topic 1- Global topics – OIE Wildlife framework – proposal for a technical item.

Dr Keith Hamilton gave a presentation on OIE's Wildlife Health Framework¹ which aims to better integrate wildlife health into OIE's core work programme and into One Health strategies. The overall aims of the framework are to manage emerging disease risks (which are a threat to humans and animals) whilst protecting wildlife and preserving biodiversity.

The framework is within the competencies of the OIE and aligned with its mandate.

The development of the OIE Wildlife Health Framework has been informed by a questionnaire on the role of veterinary services in wildlife health (sent to all OIE Member Countries); the outcomes of two global webinars with national focal points; consultations with experts (including the OIE working group on

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https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/International_Standard_Setting/docs/pdf/WGWildlife/A_Wildlifehealth_conceptnote.pdf

wildlife) and partners; and on a literature review of evidence on managing the risk of disease emergence through wildlife trade².

The framework aims to promote the value of wildlife, for example the essential role of wildlife in maintaining ecosystems services and providing biodiversity. This is important because too often wildlife is seen as a threat in terms of disease emergence, but wildlife is also a victim of disease emergence. The framework recognises that wildlife trade is broad and complex. Wildlife trade provides many benefits (food, trade, supporting livelihoods, conservation) as well as creating some disease risks.

The OIE Wildlife Health Framework is the basis for a coordinated programme of work, specific outputs are supported by concrete work packages which build on OIE's existing tools and mechanisms. Many of these work packages will be implemented in collaboration with technical partners. A budget has also been developed for the workplan and some activities are already funded and underway. Other activities will require funding.

Partnerships will be critical in addressing wildlife health. Although veterinary services have responsibility for wildlife health, they are often not the lead agency at national level, and at international level there is no one lead agency on wildlife health. Collective action is required.

This year's technical item would focus on lessons learned before and during the pandemic. It promotes better engagement on emergency management, wildlife health and sustainable laboratories.

Dr Klemm looks forward to this technical item. He asked about availability of the concept note, and other presented documents. These should both be uploaded to the General session website next week, says Dr Hamilton. He noted that there are often many assumptions made about links between wildlife trade and risk of emerging disease. But evidence is often lacking, particularly on the effectiveness of different risk mitigation strategies. . We make these assumptions, but the evidence is not comprehensive. Therefore, risk mitigation strategies should be accompanied by further research to understand the risks, and by monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess that the strategies have the desired consequences.

Dr Almansa said that links between domestic and wild animals do exist in some areas, in the case of Tuberculosis in Spain, for instance. He also added observation by his VSs that growing populations of wild boars and their density are a problem, and for control of risk it is important to gather specific evidence. He thinks that in some other countries, wildlife density is growing, and that this can be a problem, particularly for ASF. The question is not intensive farming, but that there is excessive wildlife in some places. This can lead to many difficult discussions between stakeholders. Human resources are needed for animal and public health field. Valentin agrees with the One Health concept, generally, but in practice in the field it is not always very applicable. Of course, on the other hand, even if wildlife is clearly a reservoir, that does not mean that eradication is the solution, but that other solutions must be found.

Dr Hamilton agreed that these problems are complex, highlighting potential problems from invasive species and population imbalances. . For him, it is all about getting a healthy balance between wildlife, humans, and farm animals too and protecting biodiversity.

Dr Middlemiss supported previous interventions; also recalling the example of badgers and bovine tuberculosis. She was happy to see that there is work and energy going into that area; but reminded that VS are funded to carry out primarily animal health, not One Health. She explained that colleagues in wildlife and human health actually have a lot more funding; so even if UK have a splendid interest in supporting OH, of course they also need to focus on our central remit.

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https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/International_Standard_Setting/docs/pdf/WGWildlife/OIE_review_wildlife_trade_March2021.pdf

Dr Hamilton appreciates the comments and agrees we should stick to practical, in-the-field solutions. OIE is working for VS and supports animal health first. The idea is to add a little wildlife health to what VS already do, not adding huge new sectors of activity.

Dr Basilidze explained that in Georgia there are challenges in animal health linked to predators and transfer of zoonotic diseases to livestock but also humans. In reaction to this, they are starting transboundary disease control programmes with their neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan for rabies vaccination, for instance.

Dr Jemmi explained that the approach could also be integrated at the country level. For instance, they have the CITES authority in the same office that houses the veterinary services, which is very practical for operational collaboration. They also use this to address issues of international trade as well. For him, it is particularly important that agencies responsible for animal, wildlife, and human health, can interact at the national level, and that one-health type interactions are not limited to international organisations, but not less important on national level.

Dr Hamilton agreed that collaboration within countries was of particular importance, and that it was a very good practice when focal points from different organizations could speak together.

Dr Jemmi added the following note: One Health and Climate Change are especially important topics to deal with, and he support these proposals as well. There could be another one: animal welfare and the implication on international trade. Consumer expectations on animal welfare are getting higher. In several importing countries restrictions or even import bans of certain products produced under poor animal welfare conditions are demanded and discussed. Furthermore, there are calls for specific labelling of imported products. It will be important to know if and how OIE positions itself on this topic.

Members of the Regional Core Group fully supported the technical item 'OIE wildlife framework.'

Topic 2- PVS Pathway External Evaluation and the next steps

Dr Barbara Alessandrini, head of Capacity-Building Department of OIE presented the independent external evaluation of the "PVS Pathway." Interviews and documental reviews have been used to carry out the assessment of the PVS relevance, effectiveness, impact, and possible improvement. The presentation is available in Annex 2.

The external evaluation showed that that the PVS is often a story of success, but also of frustration: Members are set for improvement through the PVS, but such improvement is difficult to be put in place, while the wealth of PVS data is not adequately used. The presentation highlighted the main key findings on the programme strengths and weaknesses (see Annex 2 for details) and the recommendations finalised to increase its uptake, adherence to the core principles, connection to the other OIE functions and impact. Suggestions to guide the PVS evolution were also included.

- Provided that the PVS is a sustainable programme to strengthen Veterinary Services' capacity building focusing on a country-led approach, the evaluation encouraged the OIE to find ways forward to foster its impact, bringing the evolution to fruition and protecting the original spirit.

The OIE response to this external evaluation consists in a mid-term strategy that also considers the evolving societal needs, the alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the OIE 7th Strategic Plan)Responding to Members' needs, Data governance and Digital Transformation, in particular.

- Overall, the OIE has launched several initiatives to evolve the PVS programme: the work currently in progress crosses all the pathway steps, invest on new technologies and digitalisation without denying the importance of face-to-face meetings, and exploiting the opportunities offered by the OIE Platform for the training of the Veterinary Services. In particular: Orientation Training Workshops are being updated to be delivered remotely.

- PVS evaluation and follow up missions are being revised to be delivered in a blended format (partially at distance, partially face to face)
- A new tutor-supported self-evaluation will be soon available to strengthen Members' capacity to monitor their progresses and improvements. An expert peer-review of the self-assessment report will improve the quality of the information gathered.
- A new remote gap analysis methodology (in the near future also supported by a dedicated information system) will be piloted in Kazakhstan.
- The Targeted Support step is increasing its services: remote laboratory missions and legislation support programmes are already ongoing, while new workforce assessment, VLSP AMR, and PPP tools are being developed.

The digitalisation of the PVS pathway has started with two projects aiming at increasing and facilitating access and participation in the programme activities, data use and sharing, needs and impact assessment, and at generating new synergies with the other OIE and partners' programmes.

At the same time, a robust monitoring and evaluation system is being built in line with the OIE M&E framework.

Members are encouraged to review the independent evaluation and the OIE management response to provide comments and inputs, particularly helpful in this creative moment.

Dr Nikita Lebedev expressed full support for this work and underlined that PVS tool might be essential also for his Veterinary Services. Self-assessment in Russia is quite difficult because of their structure and distances inside the country. He thanked to the OIE for tools, competencies, and for simplicity of use of the tools made available for countries.

Dr Alessandrini said that amongst the solutions foreseen, there is the presence of a tutor for the development of self-assessment. The tutor will not be the person doing the assessment, but the person helping to make choices, to understand questions, etc.

Dr Nikita Lebedev thanked Dr Alessandrini for this answer and indicated that official approval was underway in Russia to create specific training for specialists. He elaborated on ongoing discussions between higher Veterinary Authorities of Russia with OIE on specific capacity building project, which will include financial support by Russia to OIE, and training of Russian veterinary specialist on PVS, by OIE.

Dr Gulzhan Nurtazina was eager to be receiving a PVS mission soon, and conscious of the necessity to develop new tools to adapt to the new reality. They are also interested in the training of experts for self-assessment, like Russia elaborated.

In the chat, **Dr Sandul** supported evaluation and development of PVS Pathway, and expressed interest of Belarus for training on PVS self-assessment.

As a conclusion, **Dr Balodis** confirmed that there is need for further implementation of PVS Pathway, congratulated to OIE on activities related to its improvement, and that the interest of countries for inclusion of PVS into national capacity building programmes is stimulating for Regional Commission.

Topic 3- Animal welfare platform for Europe.

A) Outcomes of the 16th meeting of the Steering Group of the OIE Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe (15th April)

Ms Dakovic updated members on outcomes Animal Welfare platform meeting, she chaired as representative of Bureau. She expressed her overall satisfaction with organization, attendance, and agenda of the meeting, explained that there was a lot of interest for the platform during the meeting, then gave the floor to Dr Balbo, Secretariat of the Steering Group. **Dr Balbo** gave additional details of the outcomes of the 16th meeting. A new action plan is being finalized, and Dr Balbo gave an update of the

development of this third Action Plan (2021-2023). This action plan will be submitted to the regional commission.

Dr Balbo in relation to the actions of the platform on stray control management, presented the development of the upgraded stray dog self-assessment and monitoring tool (SAM Tool 2.0) which is a web-based self-assessment platform to assist countries in making progress on the agreed vision of full compliance with the OIE standards on stray dog population control in Europe. The updated version contains a new section on rabies introduced to measure the current level of compliance with TAHC Chapter 8.14 on infection with rabies virus and help the MCs to achieve “zero human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030”.

The high interest of OIE headquarters for this tool was noted. OIE HQ has decided to include this tool and data acquired in a pilot project in of the OIE Observatory.

Dr Balbo explained that animal welfare during disaster management was of high interest in Europe, and that in practice, there were projects to include animal welfare in civil protection laws on disaster management. This leads to several impressive developments, such as a new law in Bulgaria linking animal welfare and contingency planning.

The third action plan was developed; since 2013 there have been 2 action plans carried out. The 3rd action plan has become even more robust than the 2 previous ones. The “theory of change” model has been applied to this third action plan, with indicators defined. Some events that were planned in “live” format now have to be reworked to take travel restrictions into account, but tools and events continue to be rolled out.

Revision of the third Action Plan, after endorsement of RCG, will be sent for consultation by countries. Dr Balbo augured it will be endorsed during 88th General Session.

B) Update on the interest in membership of the AW Platform Steering Group (new composition)

Dr Balbo detailed the activities regarding new composition of Steering Group for the Animal Welfare Platform for Europe, as per newly adopted Terms of Reference. OIE SRR Brussels received the confirmation that continuity was desired by some of current members, and that some delegates would be invited to stay on as observers. Several delegates have expressed interest to become part of the Animal Welfare Platform Steering Group. While EU proposed two EU Member Countries, six non-EU Member Countries expressed the wish to be Member of the Steering Committee while others EU and non-EU expressed the interest to be present as Observer; there will thus be an election of three new non-EU delegates, taking, if possible, many factors into account to ensure representativity, balance, and continuity.

Dr Balbo reminded participants that membership of the AW platform SG is attached to the OIE Delegates, who could be represented by OIE Focal Points, or other representatives in exceptional cases. An agreement during the Regional Commission meeting is highly desirable, subject of selection (e.g. voting to be organized on 24th of May).

Dr Almansa confirmed they will not be present as Members but they will continue to be present as Observers, in consideration of the outcomes of the SG AWP.

Dr Balodis underlined the fact that the draft action plan needed to be adopted soon. It will be sent to RCG members after the meeting, who will have opportunity until the 29th of April to approve it or send comments back. It will then be submitted to 53 Delegates for their comments and endorsement during the General Session for adoption, so delegates are invited to actively comment the proposal.

Topic 4- Final agenda for the meeting of the OIE regional Commission for Europe.

Dr Plavsic presented the draft agenda for the for the OIE regional Commission for Europe meeting of during the General Session (Annex 3). This agenda is based on the following topics:

- Sharing the last regional conference information
- Presentation of outcomes of 29th OIE Regional Conference for Europe that was organized in November 2020.
- Endorsement of the first technical item (with questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 30th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, selected in November by Regional Commission (“Long distance transport of live animals: OIE standards and best practices including societal perception and communication aspects”).
- Discussion on common positions for Europe for selected OIE Codes chapters to be proposed on behalf of the 53 Members of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe during the 88th General Session.
- Confirmation of the dates and venue of the 30th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe to be held in 2022 by Dr Davide Lecchini, OIE Delegate of Italy.
- Proposal of three strategic topics of global interest to be addressed by the OIE through various means (Scientific Review, Newsletter, scientific paper, technical item or during a specific activity/meeting)
- Application from UK/Netherlands/Norway for an OIE Collaborating Centre consortium on Economics of Animal Health, to be elaborated by Dr Christine Middlemiss, Delegate of UK.
- Closed session.
- Elections of Specialist Commissions and the OIE governance bodies, current candidates for elections of the Bureau of the Regional Commission and the OIE Council
- New Composition of the Regional Core Group and Steering Group for Animal Welfare, after elections, with technical tools for selections (voting).

Proposed draft agenda was adopted by the RCG.

Topic 5 – Proposal of three strategic topics of global interest to be addressed by the OIE through various means.

Dr Monsalve, from OIE Headquarters, referred to a small change suggested in the agenda of the meeting of the Regional Commission during the General Session. Instead of asking the Regional Commissions to propose topics for the General Session (two years in advance), which usefulness has come in question in the face of a rapidly changing reality, it is requested that the Regional Commissions propose three strategic topics of global interest that could be addressed by the OIE through different means, depending on what is more useful and relevant to respond to Members’ needs (through the Scientific Review, Newsletter, scientific paper, technical item or during a specific activity/meeting).

Regarding the proposal of topics, the idea is to give the floor to the regions to make suggestions based on needs mandated by the situation, and potential future challenges.

The RCG is free to decide the way it wants to manage this discussion during the meeting. However, it is suggested that an email consultation be done by the President of the Bureau to all Members of the region for them to provide their ideas of topics in advance. The RCG can then select the three topics it considers more relevant to Members and present them during the meeting of the Regional Commission for approval.

Dr Basilidze suggested pandemic preparedness, one health, and wildlife framework as possible priority topics for Europe.

Ms Dakovic confirmed that the “one health” topic is important; along with it, there could be a topic on climate change, which could also be considered part of OH, since climate change has a major impact on environmental health and living conditions. In addition to this, in line with OIE conference carried out in

Italy 2 years ago about Big Data, she confirmed that IT tools are particularly important to Members and OIE, the RCG could consider grouping IT systems, data stewardship and Big Data together under one priority topic.

Dr Lebedev supported “wildlife framework” and “pandemic preparedness” as two topics of interest. **Dr Nurtazina** expressed interest for “pandemic preparedness,” “wildlife framework” and “climate change,” while **Dr Sandur** recognized emergency preparedness and response especially important, particularly under One Health umbrella.

Dr Balodis concluded that all suggestions from RCG should be taken into account and requested Secretariat to facilitate further expression of interest first by RCG till 29th of April, and then with rest of 53 European Members of the Regional Commission.

Topic 4- OIE standards setting: Terrestrial and Aquatic Animal Health Code: common positions of Europe for 88th General Session.

Dr Klemm gave an extensive presentation of the modifications to the codes, according to the report of the OIE Code Commission. He went through the titles of the chapters; rather than through the full report, since the latter is quite long. The full report of the Codes Commission is available here: https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/International_Standard_Setting/docs/pdf/A_TAHSC_Feb_2021_Report_Part_A.pdf, and presentation is enclosed to this report (Annex...).

Dr Klemm noted that there were a few changes in the Glossary, most notably:

- references to « wildlife »,
- the definition of an “epidemiological unit”
- “poultry” (moved from HPAI to the glossary), and reviewing the fact that the definition excludes birds that are kept and consumed in a single household.
- Definition of « disaster »
- changes in the naming of notifications; with a shift from “immediate” notifications to “initial” notifications, in contrast to follow-up notifications. This change comes with another change to notifications, with a new requirement to notify outbreaks of old strains, especially if they were considered eradicated in the past.

Dr Almansa commented on “Alerts” by saying that in some cases, it could be useful to downgrade the type of “alert” messages people receive as some disease for the country being alerted, do not have real relevance.

Dr Klemm gave a very brief view of other changes of lesser importance to the Terrestrial Code included changes to the architecture of chapter 1.6 on self-recognition and declaration to the OIE, modifications to annex 9 on the quality of Veterinary services, and to chapter 1.9, with editorial changes in order to include the word “wildlife” in several separate places.

Dr Klemm noted that while there could sometimes be disagreement between individual experts, decisions are made to oppose or support as a block.

He went on to detail modifications to chapter 10.4 on Avian influenza, with a lowering of the delay for disease free status recovery from 3 months down to 28 days, and the definition of poultry moved to the Glossary. The EU could support these changes, as well as the modifications to chapter 10.5 on avian mycoplasmosis.

Modifications are planned for the chapter on Peste des petits ruminants 14.7.3, 14.7.7, 14.7.24, 14.7.34; EU could also support this, as well as the modifications to CSFv in chapter 15.2, which is mostly restructuring the CSFv chapter to consider the structure of the ASFv chapter that was recently modified.

Dr Klemm gave participants an overview of the aquatic code modifications. There are few modifications this year, and no comments from the EU/ It should be noted that these chapters have been circulated several times already, and there will be support for their adoption from the EU side.

As an example, he outlined that the modifications to chapter 1.3.3 on diseases of crustaceans came from a wish to underline the fact that some parasites appear in brackish waters as well as in freshwaters. Most of the comments were editorials.

The Terrestrial Manual has 38 new draft chapters for adoption, representing more than 40 pages in the report. There is insufficient time for the RCG to examine these in detail.

EU will have a comment on LSD chapters; they would like to make sure there is reflexion on the deletion of the mention of PCR differentiation, while not recommending the deletion of the sentence. EU will just probably just ask the OIE to look at this issue more broadly. It is quite important to be able to rely on some measure of help in differentiating between vaccine strains and wild viruses, so the EU has placed some emphasis on this topic.

Common EU positions will be uploaded on the GS website, and it is hoped that there will be some discussion in writing before the 88th GS. EU positions are also all on the EU website.

In the past years, there were only oral interventions, but there were no positions sent to the OIE in writing. This time, written positions can easily be uploaded; it will also be possible to use the zoom platform and make comments during the session.

Dr Balodis thanked Dr Klemm for his clear explanations.

Dr Almansa gave a few indications. As Moritz said, the question is not the code or the manual, but how they are applied. In the modification of point 4.3, he noted the wish to have lesser emphasis on the "Alert" side of the emergency messages, and more on the information inside concerning disease and the country. He also called for the OIE WAHIS website to give the correct information. Currently, when it is not always up to date, it can give people a sense of false security or of being sure of situations when they should not be. Transparency is only an advantage when it is effective and fast.

He also reminded participants that zoning is supposed to be a decision of the country itself, not of other countries. What is needed is an applicable code that everyone can apply in the same way.

Dr Balodis thanked Dr Almansa for these comments, stating that they were better suited to the RCG than the general session, where they could be understood as blaming certain countries.

Dr Balodis went on to sum up the subjects of interest to the region:

- Avian influenza
- Peste des petits ruminants.

Belarus and the Russian Federation supported the modifications suggested by the Codes Commission. Dr Klemm suggested that the Region support these chapters, and the UK agreed.

Given the length of text and reports available online, **Dr Plavsic** offered that countries be given one week of extra time to provide comments in writing to the RCG Secretariat, supported by **Dr Herzog**.

Dr Balodis accepted this proposal and asked Secretariat to facilitate communication with other OIE Delegates from Europe, before next RCG meeting, prior to GS.

Topic 6 OIE Elections, background, technical aspects for voting:

Dr Taitubayev gave a presentation regarding the elections of the OIE governance bodies. He reminded the RCG about the election cycle for the different bodies. Every 3 years for the Council, Members of the Bureau and the Specialist Commissions and every 5 years for the Director General (as the 2020 General Session had been cancelled, DG term of office had been extended for few months, until May 2021). Dr Taitubayev reminded the RCG about the general rules for elections. He then informed that some candidates had already sent letters of intent: Montenegro and Armenia for the Bureau of the Regional Commission, and Russia to the OIE Council.

The Regional Commission needs to: 1) decide the consultation process for Members to propose candidates, 2) facilitate the discussions at regional level to decide on the candidates, and 3) decide how the region wants to manage the discussions during the meeting on Monday 24th of May for the final decision on candidates to be proposed for the elections on Friday 28th of May.

OIE will make sure to provide the Regional Commission with the IT tools (as per decided by the RCG) to facilitate the discussion during the Monday meeting (Zoom polls or using the raised hands icon in zoom). **Dr Balodis** repeated that the two options were either for a zoom poll (secret) or “raised hands” on zoom.

OIE has sent the invitation for Delegates to attend the seminar on 11 of May for a presentation of the way the IT tool works. The importance of participation in this event was reminded again, as it is meant to help delegates during the election process in the 88 GS. Based on the presentation some countries requested to resend this invitation to ensure their participation.

Dr Basilidze declared that it was not only a question of transparency, which is in any case important; zoom polls will be faster and more precise providing statistical results with no delay.

Dr Monsalve reminded participants that in any case, this was only a tool to be used during the meeting on the 24th of May to facilitate the discussions of the region to define the candidates to be proposed for the elections on Friday. When it comes to the elections itself, there will be a specific tool provided by OIE. Delegates will be trained on the use of this tool on 11th of May.

The RCG decided to support zoom poll tool to facilitate the discussion on the candidates during the meeting of 24th of May.

The RCG was reminded of the invitation sent by the OIE to Delegates to attend a training on the General Session related processes, to be held on 11 May. It is of paramount importance that all Delegates take part in this training during which they will be instructed on how to adopt texts and vote for elected bodies at the 88th General Session (which will be entirely virtual). Based on the presentation some countries requested to resend this invitation to ensure their participation.

Topic 7- New composition of the RCG after the elections

Dr Balodis explained that RCG membership would evolve after the elections, in compliance with Terms of Reference and working mechanism of the Regional Core Group, revised, and adopted in 2020.

Members of the RCG, should be selected ensuring geographical balance, ideally with five members of non-EU Member Countries and four from EU Member Countries. The members of the Bureau are de facto members of RCG, and members of the council.

Table 2: Composition of RCG-Europe: total number of Members (Bureau, Council) and number of Delegates to be selected during 88th GS:

RCG (incl. Bureau, excl. Council) 5 non- EU Members, 4 EU-MS	OIE Council 1 non-EU 1 EU-MS	OIE Bureau 2 non-EU 2 EU-MS	For selections during GS 3 non-EU Members 2 EU-MS Members
Total=9	Total=2	Total=4	Total=5

Dr Balodis explained that countries should nonetheless provide candidates. There are three seats open for non-EU countries and two seats for EU countries. Moreover, he explained that the ToR of the RCG did not prevent former member to stay on as councillors should that prove desirable. In addition, it is possible to continue work in the Regional Core Group, and he invited current Members to express any interest.

In addition, new members are invited to come forward, and Dr Balodis requested Secretariat to send information to OIE Delegates from Europe.

CONCLUSION

Dr Balodis suggested that the next RCG be held on May 21, in online format, from 11:00 AM. This was accepted by the RCG. Important topics will be on the agenda, with both the coming elections and comments on common positions needing attention.

Dr Arroyo from OIE HQ RAD reminded participants of the deadlines associated with the GS 2021. For Europe, there will be a training programme on the 11th of May. This will cover the process of adoption of the electronic resolutions. Upon request of **Dr Balodis**, she elaborated on procedures for commenting of standards, and promised to provide information how RCG will provide common positions on behalf of 53 Members from Europe once it will be clarified by GS Steering Committee.

Dr Balodis reminds OIE HQ that the regional commission will only meet on the 24th so some of these calendar steps might not be ideal for the European region; and that everything should be done as soon as possible.

Dr Plavsic confirmed that separate e-mail with reminders on behalf of RCG will be sent to RCG members that they had one week to provide comments on the standards (common positions), three global priority topics, and 3rd Action Plan on Animal Welfare Platform. Information will be sent to all 53 OIE Delegates from Europe during first week of May, for feedback, including expression of interest for new composition of RCG after elections in May 2021.

Annex 1 – OIE review of evidence on managing the risk of disease emergence in wildlife trade.

Available on this link

https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/International_Standard_Setting/docs/pdf/WGWildlife/OIE_review_wildlife_trade_March2021.pdf

Annex 2 – OIE PVS Pathway external review presentation

Some elements are available on this link:

<https://oiebulletin.com/?official=08-1-4-2020-2-pvs>

Annex 3 – draft agenda for the Regional Commission (**Confidential**)

**MEETING OF THE
OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Paris, 24 May 2021

(10:00 a.m. Paris time)

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First Draft Agenda

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| 09:50 a.m.– 10:00 a.m. | Zoom check-in and connecting |
| 10:00 a.m.–10:05 a.m. | Adoption of the agenda (Dr Maris Balodis, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe and Delegate of Latvia) |
| 10:05 a.m. –10:20 a.m. | Outcomes of the 29th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe held by videoconference on 9-10 November 2020. (Dr Ulrich Herzog, Vice-President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe and Delegate of Austria) |
| 10:20 a.m. – 10:25 a.m. | Confirmation of the dates and venue of the 30th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe to be held in 2022 (Dr Davide Lecchini, OIE Delegate of Italy) |
| 10:25 a.m. – 10:35 a.m. | Selection of Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 30th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe - “Long distance transport of live animals: OIE standards and best practices including societal perception and communication aspects” . |
| 10:35 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. | Proposal of three strategic topics of global interest to be addressed by the OIE through various means (Scientific Review, Newsletter, scientific paper, technical item or during a specific activity/meeting) (Dr Maris Balodis) |
| 10:45 a.m. – 11:55 a.m. | Application from UK/Netherlands/Norway for an OIE Collaborating Centre consortium on Economics of Animal Health (Dr Christine Middlemiss, Delegate of UK, Professor Jonathan Rushton) |

11:55 a.m.– 11:25 a.m. Discussion on common positions for selected OIE Codes chapters (to be proposed on behalf of the 53 Members of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe during the 88th General Session) (Dr Maris Balodis)

11:25 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. **The third Action Plan for OIE Animal Welfare Platform for Europe (2021-2023):** proposal for adoption by the Regional Commission (Dr Roberto Balbo, OIE Subregional Representative in Brussels)

CLOSED SESSION

11:30 a.m.– 11:40 a.m. **Elections for Specialist Commissions** (Dr Matthew Stone, Deputy Director General "International Standards and Science")

11:40 a.m.– 11:50 p.m. **Elections of the OIE governance bodies** (Dr Jean-Philippe Dop, Deputy Director General "Institutional Affairs and Regional Activities")

11:50 a.m.– 12:35 p.m. **Proposal of candidates for the election of the Bureau of the Regional Commission, the OIE Council and the Specialist Commissions** (Dr Maris Balodis)

12:35 p.m.– 12:45 p.m. **OIE Animal Welfare Platform for Europe, selection of the new composition of the Animal Welfare Steering Group** (Dr Roberto Balbo)

12:45 p.m.– 12:55 p.m. **Selection of the New Composition of the RCG** (Dr Maris Balodis)

12:55 p.m.– 13:00 p.m. Closing