



World Organisation
for Animal Health

Founded in 1924



Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe

Annual report 2023

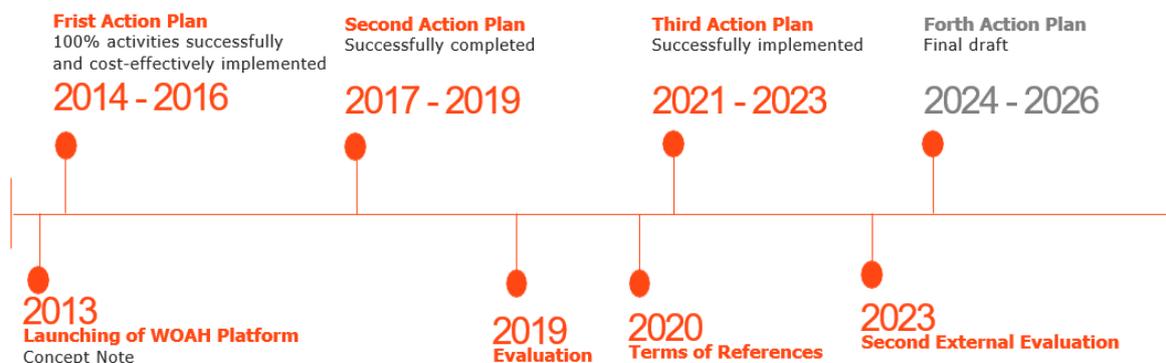
Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe

Annual report 2023

The Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe (the Platform) of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) was created in 2013 to coordinate efforts to improve animal welfare in all 53 countries of Europe and to encourage Veterinary Services in the region to perform in compliance with the WOAH standards on animal welfare.

The Platform's activities aim at supporting WOAH Members in Europe to progressively improve the level of implementation of WOAH standards and guidance, with a focus on the following priority topics: transport of animals by land and by sea, the slaughter of animals, dog population management, the welfare of animals during disasters and the welfare of working equids.

Since its creation, the Platform has already successfully implemented three Action Plans for the periods 2014-2016, 2017-2019 and most recently 2021-2023.



2023 marked the conclusion of the 3rd Action Plan of the Platform and the establishment of the 4th Action Plan for 2024 – 2026 with the contribution of the Members and partners of the Platform. To help the Platform progress in its accomplishments and to build the most accurate next Action Plan, an External Evaluation of the Platform activities and governance was also conducted during this year.

Each September, the Platform Secretariat (ensured by WOAH Subregional Representation in Brussels) publishes an annual newsletter presenting an overview of completed and planned activities of the Platform. You can find the 2023 newsletter following this link: [2023 Newsletter \(woah.org\)](https://www.woah.org/newsletter). We, the Secretariat provide here after further details and key achievements on the implementation of the 3rd Action Plan of the Platform.

Key achievements of the Platform in 2023

2023 was a pivotal year for the Platform to conclude a successful implementation of the 3rd Action Plan and to build the next Action Plan for 2024 - 2026.

The first overall achievement of 2023 consists of the finalisation of **the implementation of the 3rd Action Plan**. We **fully completed 87% of the planned activities**, with continuous progress on the remaining activities and only a few being cancelled. Our main achievements through the Platform five priority topics are:

- **Slaughter of animals.** The development of the concept note to build an e-module on the slaughter of animals. The concept note will serve to launch a call for tenders in early 2024. This training material will be available by the end of 2025. The objective of this e-module is to enable easy access to training materials on the slaughter of animals to veterinarians and paraprofessionals. This material will also enable the Platform to organise once more Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops as those held between 2015-2018, which Members and partners of the Platform are eager to see planned again. The aim is to organise these ToT workshops before the end of the 4th Action Plan.
- **Transport of animals.** The Network of National Contact Points on Long-Distance Transportation has been reinforced. The evidence comes from the strong participation of the region as a total of 49 Members of the region have nominated a contact point to join the network. We can also confirm the reinforcement of the network through feedback received from Members on their exchanges within the network to share good practices and resolve immediate issues. These two aspects demonstrate the relevance of the network.

Another important achievement is the work on the evaluation of standards on transport by land and sea which combined efforts from the team working on WOAHA Observatory, the Standards Department and the Sub-Regional Representation of Brussels. A global survey was launched in November 2023 to evaluate the level of implementation of these standards amongst all WOAHA Members. The result of this evaluation will also contribute to the development of a self-assessment tool on the level of implementation of standards to help Members progress in their implementation.





- **Dog population management.**
The launch of the new self-assessment and monitoring tool for dog population management (SAM4DPM) will help Members evaluate their situation and identify what needs to be reinforced to improve their level of compliance with WOAHS standards on dog population management. Moreover, two workshops were held to discuss the Balkan and West Eurasia roadmap's progress to continue building common knowledge and to share experience. These two meetings also enabled the opportunity to test the SAM4DPM tool and the initial feedback collected confirms the tool's relevance and fit for purpose.

- **Animal welfare during natural disasters.**
The Balkans pilot project was successfully concluded, and we initiated the transition to a new three-year project intending to broaden the scope of Members involved and scenarios covered. This objective was reached through intensive consultation with Members and partners to understand the needs and how to best respond to them. A bridging workshop was designed to link the pilot project with the next Action Plan, this meeting was held in January 2024.

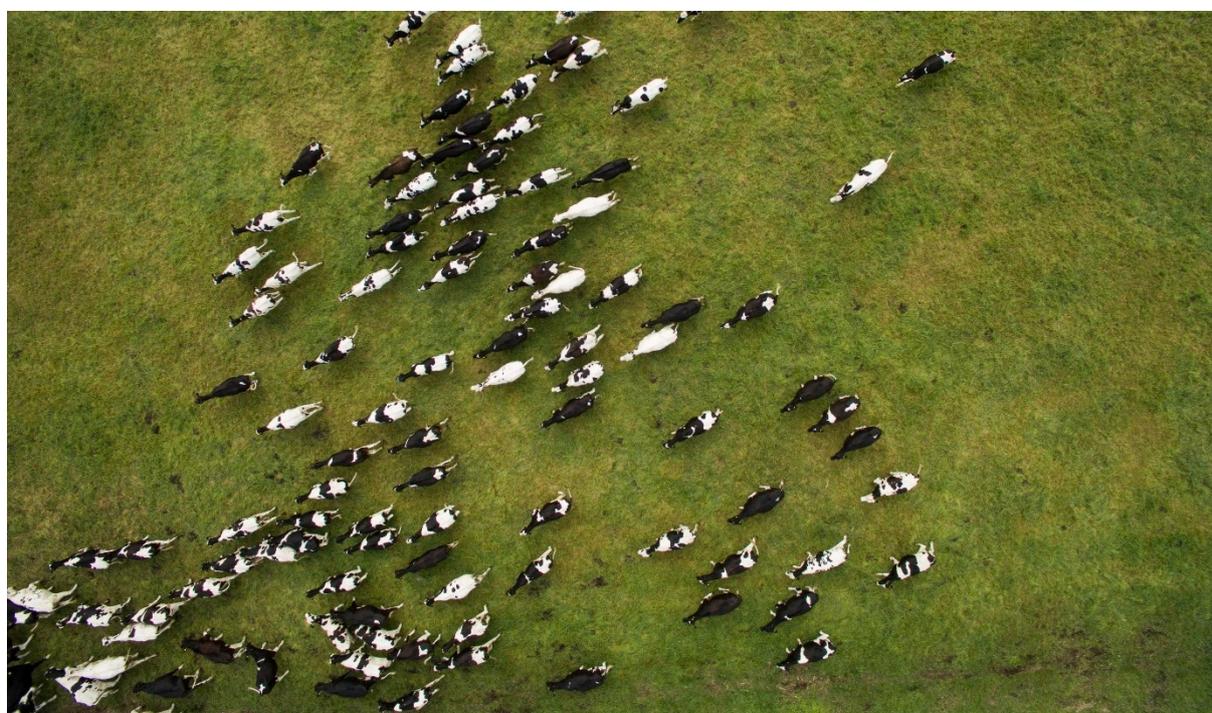


- **Welfare of working equids.**
The revision of the objective of the 3rd Action Plan which considers the welfare of working equids better responds to Members' needs. The revision was done through intensive consultation with Members and partners. An online seminar was organized to present the situation captured through the consultations and to discuss further alignment between needs and the activities included in the next Action Plan.

The second overall achievement of the Platform in 2023 was the **building of the next Action Plan for 2024 - 2026**, ensuring that it responds to the Members' needs and is adapted to the available resources.

As part of the process, many consultations were conducted throughout the year with all parties implicated in the Platform activities, taking advantage of all events we organised or participated in to collect participant feedback.

Another element that largely contributed to the establishment of the new Action Plan was the **External Evaluation** process which provided inputs on what needed to be improved from the previous plan and offered insights on what should be maintained. The evaluation confirmed the high level of relevance of the Platform to its Members and stakeholders. The Platform consultative approach and its long-term strategy of building on the foundations, achievements and lessons of successive Action Plans were identified as a key strength. Improving the monitoring and evaluation of the real impact of our activities in the region as well as improving reporting and communication remain the main focus for upcoming activities of the 4th Action Plan.



In conclusion this year enabled the successful implementation of the 3rd Action Plan which was adapted through time to best respond to Members' needs and constraints. It also allowed the building of the future Action Plan which will be implemented for the next three years.

Activities

SLAUGHTER OF ANIMALS

Development of training materials (e-module) on slaughter

As animal welfare during slaughter remains a priority topic for the WOAAH Members in the region, and to exploit the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies, WOAAH proposed to develop online learning resources on the welfare of animals at slaughter.

The concept note describing minimum requirements for the development of an e-module on the slaughter of animals was developed and circulated through the Steering Group of the Platform, and WOAAH Capacity Building and Standards departments. The launch of the procurement call is planned for early 2024, and training materials will be available by the end of 2025.

These training materials will be available through the [WOAH Platform for the training of Veterinary Services](#). They will serve as a basis for other WOAAH activities in Europe and beyond and their dissemination will be done through a series of ToT sessions, workshops and events provided availability of funding.

More information: [link](#)

Thematic regional webinar on the slaughter of animals for WOAAH National Focal Points on Animal Welfare in Europe

19 December 2023 – online



The meeting provided an opportunity to share recent developments on animal welfare during slaughter in the context of an ongoing revision of [Chapter 7.5](#) of the WOAAH *Terrestrial Animals Health Code*, the scientific views of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), and the development of online training resources.

Moreover, the meeting offers the opportunity to present the proposed 4th Action Plan for 2024-2026 for the Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe, as well as to discuss the outcomes of the external evaluation and the topics to be addressed at the next seminar for National Focal Points on Animal Welfare.

More information: [link](#)

Session on slaughter during the Multi-regional Whole Journey Scenario workshop on long-distance transport by land and sea

8 November 2023 in Tunis, Tunisia

A short session dedicated to the welfare of animals during slaughter was held in the framework of the Multi-regional Whole Journey Scenario workshop providing an opportunity to recall provisions of Chapter 7.5 of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* and available WOAAH training materials on animal welfare during slaughter and shortly discuss challenges for implementation of the standards.

Outcomes:

- Strengthening engagement of the National Focal Points on Animal Welfare in the standards-setting process, particularly the revision of Chapter 7.5 on the slaughter of animals.
- Providing opportunities for Members to be updated on the latest scientific information.
- Identifying specific needs of the WOAAH members for capacity-building activities.

Activities

TRANSPORT OF ANIMALS

3rd meeting of the WOAHA network of National Contact Point on long-distance transportation in Europe

20 - 22 June 2023, Dublin, Ireland

The network of National Contact Points on long-distance transportation (NCPT) was established in 2021, however, due to travel restrictions, this was the first meeting to be held face-to-face favouring the building of connections and facilitating engaging and comprehensive discussions. It also provided the opportunity to recall the objectives and role of the network, to update participants on the last activities done at WOAHA regional and global levels, as well as to share countries' experiences, stakeholders' perspectives, EU activities and EFSA scientific opinions on the transport of animals.

The working group sessions held during this workshop review of WOAHA draft guidance (emergency plan model and checklist) as well as the identification of focus points to assess the implementation of WOAHA standards on transport. Those exercises highlighted the importance of discussing and exchanging views on the approach taken by the different Members.

The network has now reached 49 nominated NCPTs out of 53 Members in the region.



Whole Journey Scenario for Europe

The workshop was held during the 3rd meeting of the NCPT allowing to present challenges and best practise for the specific route of transporting animals by sea. Sharing members' experiences on establishing collaboration between Authorities by selected members provided examples and context for further discussion on how to advance with building robust collaboration between Competent Authorities involving all actors to ensure the welfare of animals during transport.

More information: [link](#)

Multi-regional Whole Journey Scenario (WJS) Workshop on long-distance transportation by land and sea between Europe, the Middle East and North Africa

07 – 09 November 2023, Tunis, Tunisia

The workshop was built upon routes with similar livestock transportation challenges from Europe to the Middle East and North Africa. The main objectives were to help countries improve animal welfare during long-distance and cross-border transport in compliance with WOAHA standards for the whole journey along the selected route, focusing on the responsibilities of the Competent Authorities over the entire journey. Sharing best practices and strengthening collaboration and communication between Competent Authorities was a complementary objective of the meeting.

The workshop highlighted the need for strengthening communication and cooperation between Competent Authorities and all actors involved in transporting live animals, the importance of well-defined responsibilities, and appropriate planning and establishing emergency procedures. The participants called for further WOAHA activities to strengthen the collaboration between Competent Authorities, inter-regional cooperation, and sharing experiences.

More information: [link](#)

Outcomes:

- Reinforcement of the engagement in the NCPT network to strengthen collaboration and coordination in the region and at the multiregional level.
- Members enhanced knowledge on the transportation of animals through the sharing of best practices.
- Scientific information is updated through the provision of the most recent scientific information and stakeholder's perspectives.

Activities

DOG POPULATION MANAGEMENT

Launch of the Self-Assessment and Monitoring for Dog Population Management tool (SAM4DPM)

19 June, online event



The SAM4DPM is a web-based platform to assist countries in making progress on the implementation of [WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code on dog population management](#) with a rabies component. The objective of the tool is for WOA Members to be self-sufficient in monitoring and assessing the progress of their roadmaps.

The tool was developed by WOA in collaboration with the IZS Teramo. WOA Standards and Science Departments and the Observatory team were implicated in building the tool to ensure consistency with all relevant standards (especially on rabies), and harmonisation on the data collection to evaluate the implementation of those standards. The data collected might be used by the Observatory to expand the analysis on standard implementation and the SAM4DPM will be shared with all interested WOA Members.

5th Regional Workshop on Dog Population Management for Balkans

4-6 July Tuheljske Toplice, Croatia

The overall objective of the workshop is to assist Members in the full implementation of WOA standards on dog population management. Participants engaged in discussions on the national and regional situation on dog population management and progress made by Balkan countries since last meeting (2021), using initial results from the self-assessment conducted using the new SAM4DPM tool.

The workshop provided the opportunity to discuss challenges while implementing standards, share experiences, and foster collaboration. The importance of long-term collaboration between Veterinary Services, Competent Authorities, stakeholders and civil society and the need to progress in a coordinated direction, were highlighted. Participants confirmed commitment towards meeting the roadmap towards full compliance with the standard by 2026 with support from WOA and its partners.

Read more info on our website: [link](#)

4th Regional Workshop on dog population management for West Eurasia

26 - 28 September, Tbilisi, Georgia

Similarly, this workshop also allowed us to discuss the national and regional situations regarding dog population management and progress made by West Eurasia countries since the last meeting (2019). In addition, participants gained technical knowledge and shared experiences on dog population management-related issues. A session dedicated to rabies was a key part of the workshop to mark World Rabies Day. This session enabled participants to discuss the implementation of the Global Strategic Plan to Prevent Human Deaths from dog-transmitted rabies by 2030. Participants confirmed commitment towards meeting the roadmap objectives by 2030 with continuous support from WOA and its partners.

Read more info on our website: [link](#)

Outcomes:

- A new SAM4DPM system is available for conducting the next self-assessment rounds.
- Improved technical knowledge and expertise in dog population management.
- WOA Members confirmed commitment towards meeting the roadmap's objectives.

Activities

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Online Stakeholders' Consultation on the role of Veterinary Services on animal welfare in natural disasters in Europe

14-17 March 2023, online event



The event was organized as part of the regional needs assessment with the objectives to (i) develop contingency plans built upon the lessons learned from the response and recovery strategies used during previous disasters; (ii) define short and mid-term effective actions to strengthen the Veterinary Services proactive attitude toward contingency planning; and (iii) further promoting animal welfare in natural disaster from the One Health perspective.

Participants emphasized the need to share knowledge and experiences from the pilot project for Balkans countries, enhance coordination mechanisms and improve the competencies of Veterinary Services. They proposed the development of guidance documents, templates for contingency plans, and operational procedures, along with organizing workshops and simulation exercises. The discussion highlighted the importance of communication and collaboration between Competent Authorities and partners at national and regional levels and developing strategies for resource mobilization.

Read more info on our website: [link](#)

Survey on WOAH Members' capacity to deal with animal welfare emergencies during natural disasters in Europe

As part of the regional needs assessment, the survey on WOAH Members' capacity to deal with animal welfare emergencies during natural disasters in Europe was conducted in 2022 in collaboration with Lincoln Memorial University. The results of this survey were published in 2023 in *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*. The results indicated a wide range in the capacity of WOAH European Members to respond to animal welfare in natural disasters, highlighting the gaps and potential areas of improvement. Floods, forest fires, and snowstorms/extreme cold were the three most reported disasters over the last 10 years, with 79% reporting Veterinary Services were involved in managing these disasters.

Read the full paper: <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2023.167>

Disseminating outcomes of the pilot project on disaster preparedness for the Balkans

The poster on the pilot approach to natural disaster preparedness for Balkan countries was presented at the Global Conference on Emergency Management in April 2023 in Paris. The project completed in 2021 aimed at building a culture of preparedness among Veterinary Services and relevant stakeholders with a multi-step approach to assist the Veterinary Services in building Veterinary Services Contingency Plans (VS-CPs). Three out of ten participating countries have already developed their VS-CPs. Balkan countries are committed to continuing further work on building and improving their Contingency Plan for animal welfare during natural disasters.



Read more info on our website: [link](#)

Outcomes:

- WOAH Members' needs concerning animal welfare in disaster management in Europe have been identified and mapped.
- Commitment of WOAH Members and stakeholders in the region to continue building a culture of preparedness and improving the relevant competencies.

Activities

WELFARE OF WORKING EQUIDS

Regional webinar on the welfare of working equids

12 September 2023, online event



The meeting was organised in collaboration with the International Coalition for Working Equids (ICWE) and the European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare (EURCAW) Ruminants and Equines.

The event highlighted the direct and indirect economic value and importance of the welfare of working equids with its sustainability and social/community dimension. In addition, the event was an opportunity to present existing tools and knowledge resources on the welfare of working equids and share experience implementation of specific ICWE projects.

Participants of the meeting confirmed the need for WOAHA assistance to its Members to support the implementation of WOAHA standards on the welfare of working equids.

Based on the discussions held over the meeting and in response to Member's needs, a series of activities for building awareness and knowledge within Veterinary Services and relevant stakeholders in targeted countries are included in the 4th Action Plan of the Platform, with a focus on supporting the dissemination of available knowledge resources and tools.

WOAHA will continue collaborating with ICWE and other partners working on the topic of planning and implementing regional activities on working equids' welfare.

Read more info on our website: [link](#)

Outcomes:

- Improved awareness and understanding of the provisions of WOAHA standards on the welfare of working equids ([Chapter 7.12](#)).
- Improved awareness of available knowledge resources on the welfare of working equids.
- WOAHA Members' needs identified and a programme has been defined to address them through the Platform's activities.

Activities

GOVERNANCE

Steering Group meetings

20th meeting of the Steering Group

11 May 2023 - online meeting

The Steering Group reviewed and guided the current activities of the 3rd Action Plan. Members of the Steering Group highlighted the importance of conducting an external evaluation of the WOAAH Platform activities as well as the need to pursue the development of the 4th Action Plan.

21st meeting of the Steering Group

10 - 11 October 2023, Bern, Switzerland

The focus of the meeting was the results of the External Evaluation and finalisation of the 4th Action Plan for 2024-2026. The discussions throughout the meeting showed interest from the members of the Steering Group to build a robust Monitoring and Evaluation system for the Platform and to define necessary actions to clearly measure and adequately disseminate progress towards impact achieved over the year and guide the next steps.



4th Action Plan of the Platform for 2024-2026

The 4th Action Plan has been developed to address the needs identified by Members of the Regional Commission for Europe, considering the outcomes and lessons learnt from the implementation of the three previous Action Plans and the results of the external evaluation of the Platform activities.

The desired impact of the 4th Action Plan is to continuously contribute to the improvement of animal welfare in Europe through the priority topics for the region. The outcome objective is to progressively improve the compliance of WOAAH Members in Europe to the relevant WOAAH standards.

This 4th Action Plan ensures continuity with the previous Action Plans and focuses on strengthening the Members' involvement in the development of standards and the regional collaboration towards its implementation with Members and stakeholders. Within the Action Plan, following the external evaluation recommendations, the Platform, with the support from external consultants, will work on strengthening its monitoring and evaluation system and building a communication strategy.

The proposed draft 4th Action Plan was validated by the Steering Group and submitted for consultation to the Regional Commission for Europe.

Outcomes:

- SG overviewed governance of the Platform and the implementation of the 3rd Action Plan.
- Approved 4th Action Plan for 2024-2026 and consulted with all Members of the Regional Commission for Europe.
- Updated Theory of change and Results Framework of the platform

Activities

COMMUNICATION

Side event on animal welfare in Europe – 90th WOAAH General Session

23 May 2023, Paris, France



This event was organised as part of the consultation process for developing the 4th Action Plan of the Platform. The event offered WOAAH Members and other stakeholders an opportunity to be involved in the building of the 4th Action Plan by sharing their needs and perspectives.

The event was as well the occasion to showcase the most recent achievements of the Platform.

In addition, the WOAAH Observatory team exchanged with WOAAH Members on the challenges experienced in the implementation of standards regarding animal welfare during transport, as well as to present their work on the subject.

More information on our website: [link](#)

Platform's Newsletter 2023

The Platform's Secretariat is continuously working on developing communication around the Platform's activities, with one of the main tools being the publication of an annual newsletter. This year, the Platform's newsletter starts with a contribution from the WOAAH Europe Collaborating Centre and focuses on the external evaluation and the development of the 4th Action Plan.

Please find the newsletter on our website: [link](#)



Platform's website



The Platform's website remains the main tool to share information about its activities, knowledge resources, materials and developed tools. The migration of the Platform website from the previous hosting environment to the WOAAH Regional Website has now been finalized. All past documentation is available at the [WOAH regional website for Europe](#).

Outcomes:

- Engagement of Platform's stakeholders in shaping the 4th Action Plan for the Platform.
- Enhanced information dissemination and accessibility.

Activities

STAKEHOLDER'S COORDINATION

8th annual stakeholders' consultation meeting

14 June 2023, Brussels, Belgium



Similarly, to the previous ones, this meeting created an occasion to report on the Platform's activities implemented since the last meeting (July 2022) and present the remaining planned activities in the framework of the 3rd Action Plan for 2021-2023.

The main objective of the meeting was to present planned activities of the proposed 4th Action Plan of the Platform for 2024 – 2026 and collect feedback from stakeholders.

Stakeholders also had the opportunity to report on their new and planned activities addressing the five priority topics of the Platform. The Stakeholders' meetings enable key animal welfare actors in the region to disseminate their work and identify complementary actions to those presented by others, overall avoiding the duplication of efforts and maximising support to WOAHP Members.

More information on our website: [link](#)

Participation in stakeholders' events

In addition, WOAHP staff attended several meetings organised by stakeholders to present WOAHP's work on animal welfare and specific activities of the Platform. These events included:

- AnimalHealthEurope
- Better Training for Safer Food – animal welfare
- Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)
- FOUR PAWS - European Policy Office in Brussels
- Eurogroup for Animals
- European Animal Welfare Symposium
- European Association of State Veterinary Officers (EASVO)
- European Commission – EU Platform on Animal Welfare
- European Federation for Animal Health and Sanitary Security (FESASS)



Outcomes:

- Maintaining the coordination and dialogue mechanism with relevant stakeholders.
- Sharing and promoting a common vision for animal welfare in Europe.
- Conducting Platform activities consistently with consultative, supplementary and synergic approaches.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

2nd External Evaluation of the Platform



The 2nd external evaluation of the Platform was conducted by an external expert, Karen Iles, between June and September 2023. The evaluation examined the Platform's relevance, cohesiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, and contribution towards impact through the 2nd and 3rd Action Plan activities.

The evaluation concluded that the Platform is highly relevant to Members and stakeholders. A key strength of the Platform is its consultative approach. Members' needs were continually assessed, and the emerging challenges were

addressed as far as possible during the implementation of activities. This approach has been vital in sustaining the relevance of the Platform and likely contributed to the results achieved. Overall, the governance of the Platform has functioned efficiently, with effective coordination of stakeholders and activities.

Data from quantitative and qualitative sources illustrate that progress has been made towards achieving the Platform's objectives that go beyond the targets in the current results framework.

The development of a theory of change, a results framework and a monitoring and evaluation system, despite its limitations, was an essential achievement of the Platform.

One of the most critical challenges faced by the Platform has been the inability to provide substantive evidence of progress towards compliance with WOAHA animal welfare standards across all of its priority topics. This stemmed from challenges in developing appropriate indicators and tools to measure compliance. However, developing the self-assessment monitoring (SAM) tool in the dog population management area has provided an important practical solution. Developing SAM tools and other appropriate tools for the other four topics should be a high priority. A key strength of the Platform has been its long-term strategy of building on the foundations, achievements and lessons of successive Action Plans.

The external evaluation recommendations cover six main areas: consolidate (maintain the five priority topics and number of activities), strengthen the Platform's theory of change, strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning, conduct impact studies, review and document Members' needs, and secure additional resources.

More information on our website: [link](#)

Outputs:

- Assessment of the activities and governance of the Platform revealed the relevance of the Platform for its Members and stakeholders.
- The 4th Action Plan of the Platform is built addressing findings and recommendations of this external evaluation.

Timetable of activities implemented in 2023.

Activities of the Platform	2023											
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Launch of the call for the e-module on slaughter Webinar on Slaughter												
Meeting of the network of the NCPT WJS for Europe Multi-regional WJS												
Launch of the SAM4DPM tool Balkans roadmap meeting Western Eurasia roadmap meeting												
Stakeholder consultation meeting												
Webinar on working equids												
SG20 SG21 4th Action Plan												
General Session side event Newsletter Website transfer Translation of material in Russian												
Annual meeting with stakeholders												
External Evaluation Update of the result Framework												

100 Years of Standards, Transparency, Expertise and Solidarity

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