



9th Stakeholders consultation meeting of the WOAH Platform on animal welfare for Europe

19th June 2024 – Brussels

MEETING REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The 9th Stakeholders consultation meeting of the WOAH Platform on animal welfare for Europe took place in Brussels on June the 19th, 2024. The objectives of the meeting, in line with the previous one, were to report on the implementation of the Platform activities carried out since the last meeting held in June 2023 and present the activities to be implemented under the 4th Action Plan for 2024-2026.

Stakeholders were invited to comment the work of the Platform and to report on new and planned activities in the five priority topics of the Platform – transportation, slaughter, dog population management, disasters, working equids, and suggest on possible additional initiatives to be taken in the framework of the Platform activities or any other activity they deem important to share.

The agenda of the meeting is available in *Annex 1*. Twenty participants attended the meeting, the full list of participants is available in *Annex 2*.

The meeting was open by a tour de table giving the opportunity to introduce Tom Kenis the consultant on communication who will work on the Platform's communication strategy.

The short introduction presented overview of the 4th Action Plan that has been formally adopted by the Regional Commission for Europe on the 27th of May 2024.

Since its launch 2013, the WOAH Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe successfully implemented three Action Plans for 2014-2016, 2017-2019 and 2021-2023. The 4th Action Plan for 2024-2026 has been developed by considering the needs identified by WOAH Members of the Regional Commission for Europe, the outcomes and lessons learnt from the implementation of the initiatives taken over the last years, and the results of the external evaluation of the WOAH Platform activities. It will ensure the continuity with the previous ones by building upon their achievements, and by retaining the strategic purpose of empowering Veterinary Services to improve animal welfare across Europe, consistently with the objectives of the 7th WOAH Strategic Plan and the WOAH Global Animal Welfare Strategy.

1. Transport of animals by land and sea ([link to the presentation](#))

1.1. WOAAH update

Network of National Contact Points on Long-Distance Transportation in Europe (NCPT)

Currently 49 out of 53 WOAAH Europe members nominated their NCPT (plus one confirmation of no relevance for nomination).

The 3rd meeting of the WOAAH network of NCPT was held on 20-22 June 2023 in Dublin, Ireland. This meeting was the first meeting of the network in face-to-face mode that gave the opportunity to all participants to meet each other and establish direct contact that will be helpful for future collaboration. The discussion clearly showed the importance given by the members to network meetings for strengthening communication and collaboration within the networks and the importance of developing common documents to build a community around long-distance transportation that will contribute to the progress made on this topic through time.

The 4th meeting of the network of WOAAH NCPT (online) is planned for early July 2024. The update of relevant regional activities, plan of animation of the network will be presented and discussed during the meeting.

Multi-regional Whole Journey Scenario (WJS) workshop on long distance transport (land and sea) Europe - North Africa/Middle East

The workshop was held in Tunis on 7-9 November 2023 in collaboration with North Africa and the Middle East WOAAH offices. The workshop was organised as a follow-up of the last workshop held in Egypt in 2022 with the participation of the same WOAAH Members. 15 WOAAH Members participate in the workshop for a total of 44 participants. The main points highlighted through discussion were:

- Multiregional whole journey scenario workshops are useful and instrumental to improve multiregional collaboration and collaboration between Competent Authorities.
- Need for strengthening communication and collaboration between Competent Authorities.
- Importance of defining responsibilities.
- Importance of appropriate journey planning and preparation before animals' departure.
- Importance of emergency procedures including process of verification, updates, and revisions.
- Need to further develop procedures in the event of refusal to allow the completion of the journey.

Self-Assessment and Monitoring Tool for the evaluation of the level of implementation of WOAAH standards on transport

To develop the tool internally requires support of the WOAAH's IT Team. IT team support for the project starts in November 2024. In the meantime, using the result of the Observatory thematic study the methodology and survey will be developed.

Review of animal welfare standards on transport

Chapters 7.2. transport of animals by sea and Chapters 7.3. Transport of animals by land (Terrestrial Animal Health Code) are currently under review by dedicated ad hoc Group. In addition, a preliminary discussion with IATA on revision of Chapter 7.4. Transport of animals by air was initiated.

WOAH Observatory thematic study on Animal welfare during transport by land and sea: level of implementation of WOAAH standards and challenges faced

The study aims to assess to what extent the standards related to transport of live animals are implemented and seek feedback on Members' overall experience with these standards (facilitating factors versus barriers). The recently finished 1st phase consisted in a worldwide survey to assess the level of implementation of WOAAH standards related to animal welfare during transport by land and sea. The 2nd phase, which will help better understand the survey's findings, will follow up with focus groups/interviews with samples of Members. The results of the Thematic Study are expected to be presented at the end of this year.

1.2. Stakeholders update and discussion

With reference to Theory of Change and respective indicators for measuring impact, Four Paws raised the issue of how reliable and trustworthy results are in terms reflecting real situation and activities contribution toward impact. The following discussion highlighted challenging aspect of define indicators and collecting reliable data, especially at policy level, to measure level of implementation of WOAAH standards on field level and its actual level of contribution towards ensuring animal welfare. FAO recalled example of CODEX approach for measurement of impact through case studies.

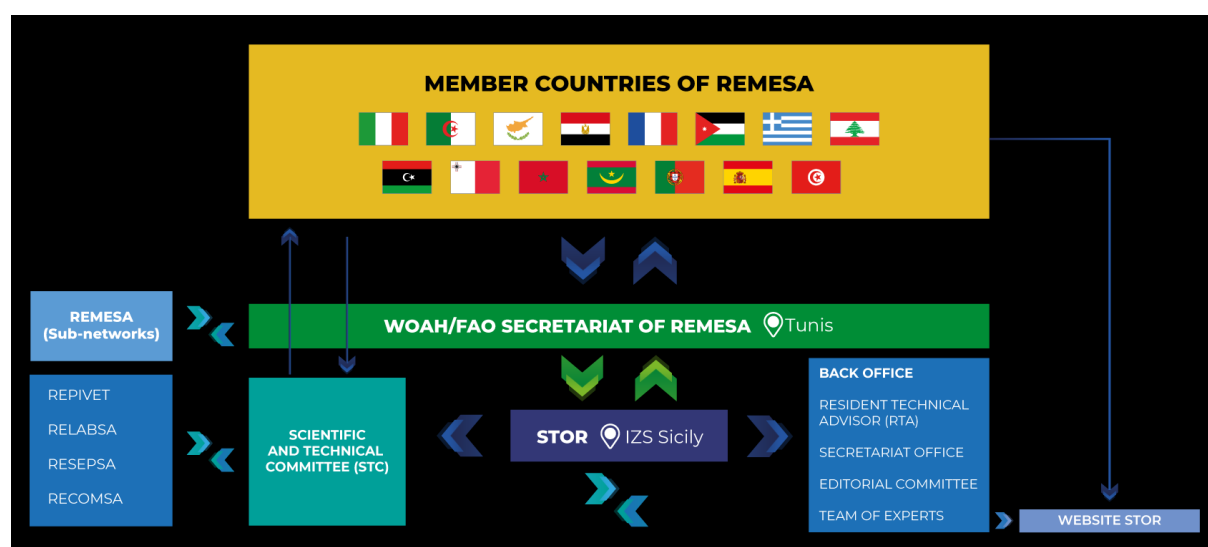
FESASS highlighted progress on animal welfare during transport within EU as well as relevance of WOAAH activities in Europe and link with North Africa and the Middle East and need to continue in collaboration efforts including involvement producers and business operators' organization.

AnimalHealthEurope also congratulated WOAAH for the initiatives on transport and raised the point on euthanasia methods and procedures used in long distance transport.

Copa Cogeca raised the point to include discussions on constrain trade issues within WOAAH activities. The Network of National Contact Points on Long-Distance Transportation and WJS workshops don't directly focus on trade constrains, still aims to facilitate communication and exchange relevant information between Competent Authorities and also all stakeholders.

Stakeholders expressed interest in following up on the development of the self-assessment tool on transport of animals. The methodology and survey questionnaire will be shared with stakeholders for comments after feedback from SG.

Following on a raised question on REMESA activities related to trade and animal transport and link with WOAAH – the Mediterranean Animal Health Network (REMESA) secretariat is done in coordination between FAO and WOAAH Sub-regional offices based in Tunis. Moreover, WOAAH is currently funding the activities of the Scientific Technical Office (STOR) of the network



2. Slaughter of animals

2.1. WOAAH update

Thematic webinar for National Focal Point on animal welfare

The thematic webinar on slaughter was held on 12 December 2023. 27 WOAAH Members participated to the webinar with a total of 37 participants. An update on recent developments on animal welfare during slaughter in the context of a proposed revision of WOAAH standards was presented. The webinar also was the opportunity to discuss the e-learning module on animal welfare during slaughter, WOAAH Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe 4th Action Plan (2024-2026).

Development of an e-module on slaughter

The call for the development of the e-module on slaughter has been finalised and should be published in June 2024. A 12-month development period is foreseen further to the selection and contracting of the tender. The e-module should be ready by the 2nd semester of 2025.

Revised Chapter 7.5 Animal welfare during slaughter

Revised Chapter 7.5 Animal welfare during slaughter of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code with relevant definition in the glossary (slaughter, stunning, euthanasia) was adopted during 91st WOAHA General Session in May 2024. Revised text identifies hazards to animal welfare during slaughter and provides recommendations for all steps from arrival animals to the slaughterhouse to stunning and bleeding provides animal-based measures to assess the level of welfare and recommends remedial and corrective actions to be applied, when necessary. The adoption of the revised Chapter creates need for re-engage with capacity activities on animal welfare during slaughter to support Members in implementation of the standard. You can find an article that was published after the adoption following this [link](#).

2.2. Stakeholders update and discussion

The implementation of the revised Chapter 7.5, Animal welfare during slaughter in the context of slaughter without stunning was raised during the discussion. In the past, WOAHA already organized a series of training sessions on welfare during slaughter, targeting the Middle Eastern and Southeast Asia Members addressing specifically slaughter without stunning within the local context.

In the past, WOAHA already organized a series of training sessions on welfare during slaughter, targeting the Middle Eastern and Southeast Asia Members addressing specifically slaughter without stunning within the local context. The revised standard creates opportunity to re-engage with capacity building in the Middle East and North Africa, still it will require additional financial and experts' resources.

In addition, WOAHA is not specifically involved within Halal stakeholder fora and events, as those specific welfare issues are covered in Chapter 7.5 in provisions on the slaughter without stunning.

In addition to WOAHA training activities and resources, the European Commission offers to non-EU member countries competent authorities access to the BTSF academia online learning course. FESASS highlighted that implementation of standards and improvement of animal welfare requires significant investments in facilities and infrastructure.

3. Dog Population management

3.1. WOAHA update

5th WOAHA Regional Workshop on Dog Population Management (SDB5)

The fifth WOAHA Regional Workshop on Stray Dog population management (SDB5) was organized in Croatia from the 4th to the 6th of July 2023. Ten Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo¹, Serbia, Romania, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Greece) were represented by experts and officials working at central level on the implementation of the WOAHA standards on Dog Population Management (DPM) and in charge of policy and coordination with other stakeholders at regional and local level. As part of the workshop preparatory activities, WOAHA Members were requested to conduct their second self-assessment using the new Self-Assessment and Monitoring System for Dog Population Management system (SAM4DPM). Participants unanimously committed to make use of the new SAM4DPM system autonomously and upon need; to utilize the expertise of the pool of DPM managers in the Balkans, in order to expand the range of training and capacity building opportunities; to progress in the implementation of their national road-maps with the objective of becoming fully compliant with Chapter 7.7. by 2026. The 6th regional workshop on Dog Population

¹ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

Management (DPM) for the Balkan countries is planned to be organized in Montenegro in December this year.

4th Regional Workshop on dog population management (SDWE 4)

The event was held in September 2023, in Tbilisi (Georgia), and gathered a total of 33 participants from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. As part of the workshop preparatory activities, countries were requested to conduct their second self-assessment using the new Self-Assessment and Monitoring System for Dog Population Management (SAM4DPM). The session dedicated to rabies marked the celebration of World Rabies Day and offered an opportunity to take stock of the situation on the level of involvement in the “Zero by 30” Global Strategic Plan. Participants reached full consensus around the utility of the new SAM4DPM system and the need to make profit out of the WOAHP resources, including the WOAHP Network of Collaborating Centers on Animal Welfare, the Regional Animal Welfare Centre (RAWC) as well as other sub-regional Academic bodies/Institutions and local/international Non-Governmental Organizations. To be noted the growing interest around the importance of promoting the full implementation of the new Chap.7.7 in other regions, where Dog Population Management (DPM) should be considered an integral part of rabies control programs. The next workshop is planned to be held in 2025.

Under the 4th Action Plan, the intention is also to provide tailor-made technical assistance to individuals or groups of countries involved in the Platform activities that are interested.

Workshop on Dog-mediated rabies control and elimination and improvement of DPM

The event was organized by the Sub-regional Representation for the Arabian Gulf with the support of the Sub-regional Representation in Brussels and was held in Qatar in April 2024. Twenty participants attended the event in representation of the UAE, KSA, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, and Yemen, with the aim to review the current situation and optimize the implementation of One-Health based DPM programmes at national and sub-regional level.

Other activities

In addition, the Platform Secretariat had the opportunity to contribute to the WOAHP Twinning project on Animal Welfare between the IZS-Teramo and the École Nationale de Médecine Vétérinaire (Tunisia) with a presentation on “Dog population management in the WOAHP Europe Region”, and to disseminate the SAM4DPM during the ERFAN online meeting on “Stray dog population management: the WOAHP standard and examples of the current situation in Northern Africa, Southern Africa and Italy”. Finally, it contributed to the ongoing WOAHP labeling process of the ICAM courses on DPM. A technical meeting was organized to support to the Israeli Veterinary Services, in relation to the risks posed by the feral and free-ranging dogs fleeing away from areas under conflict.

3.2. Stakeholders update and discussion

RSPCA reminded the key role played by the Regional Animal Welfare Center (RAWC) in encouraging the development and adoption of best practices on animal welfare among veterinary professionals and facilitating a closer collaboration between key stakeholders. Special attention is given to the development of knowledge management strategies, based on the ongoing professional qualification of a network of DPM managers. A series of Training of Trainers' initiatives aiming at promoting the ICAM evidence-based approach to DPM and tailoring specific interventions to the local needs and challenges will continue with the upcoming organization of a training course in Kosovo*, that will target Albanian experts.

FAO highlighted their proactive engagement in the promotion of animal welfare in central Europe, at the scope of favoring the accession of new EU candidate Countries, as in the case of Georgia, where the local Representative is actively involved in the organization of a FAO program to promote the establishment of an identification and registration (I&R) system, and the implementation of DPM programmes at national level.

As outlined by Four Paws, many of their initiatives are strongly complimentary to the Platform strategic goals, and they are willing to operate more closely with WOAAH in several animal welfare areas, considering the tangible results of the Platform implementation. A Four Paws policies strategic revision for 2025-2028 is being developed and will be backed up by significant investments in Central Asia/Western Europe, to promote harmonized implementation of the WOAAH Standards in the Sub-Region.

AnimalhealthEurope reported their campaigning for more neutering in the stray dogs and shelters context and highlighted the joint positioning from NGOs and industry regarding the need for a proposal on dogs and cats' welfare, with a special focus on microchipping and preventive medicine.

For the EU Commission, the potential impact of the new "proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability" should be primarily expected in a stronger control of the breeding and trade of dogs and cats. Buyers will be able to verify the origin of their future pet, increasing the chances to be physically and behaviorally healthy. EU Member States will offer training to animal handlers and anyone buying a dog or cat will be informed about the importance of responsible ownership. Imports of dogs and cats will have to meet equivalent welfare standards. The impact of this new EU Regulation will therefore essentially depend on the Members' readiness to adapt to the new conditions, on the availability of strong and efficient interoperable systems, and on the non-EU countries capacity to respond to requirements of eligibility for export to the EU. As noted by RSPCA, there is straightforward evidence that animal abandonment, unregulated breeding and weak traceability of dogs have a significant impact on the size of the free roaming population in the EU. The implementation of these norms will certainly lead to a significant reduction of the free-roaming dogs population size, inside and outside the EU.

Joe Moran raised a need to address cat population management issues and possible WOAAH engagement including developing relevant standards or guidance documents.

4. Animal welfare in natural disasters

4.1. WOAAH update

Bridging workshop on Disaster Management and Risk Reduction

Building from the experience gained with the organization of the pilot project carried out in the Balkans from 2018 to 2021, the results of the WOAAH survey on the "Levels of Veterinary Services' preparedness for dealing with animal welfare emergencies during natural disasters" and the outcomes of the online stakeholder's "Consultation meeting on the role of Veterinary Services on animal welfare in natural disasters" the Platform has organized a bridging workshop on Disaster Management and Risk Reduction in January 2024 in Lisbon, Portugal to ensure continuity between the 3rd and 4th Action Plan. The event aimed at analyzing challenges and achievements gained over the time by the WOAAH Members involved, to increase their capacity to address animal welfare issues during natural disasters, by developing Contingency Plans and operating on the basis protocols and procedures. Twenty-nine representatives from 14 WOAAH members from Europe and North Africa participated. On this occasion, participants contributed to identify the objectives of the online "Regional meeting on Disaster management and risk reduction for Europe" planned to be organized in September 2024.

Online Regional meeting on Disaster management and risk reduction (DMRR)

This event will allow to extend the scope of the Platform initiatives on DMRR and address distinct types of emergencies with an all-hazard approach. Key objectives will be to inform the participants about the WOAAH HQ current engagement in DMRR at Regional level (I.e., the ongoing development of a WOAAH Incident management System; the finalization of the WOAAH online course on DMRR), to present the 5 years action plan and take stock of the past and current initiatives taken by the WOAAH Collaborating Centre Network on Veterinary Emergencies (EmVetNet), and to discuss the approach adopted following to WOAAH Members' request for assistance to veterinary emergencies.

Kiosk at the Civil Protection Forum

The European Civil Protection Forum is a key event for the civil protection community and stakeholders organized by the European Commission, DG European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.

The main objective of WOAHP's presence was to raise awareness of the role of animal welfare in natural disasters and explore opportunities for collaboration within the civil protection community. The event was an opportunity to present WOAHP's global and regional activities on emergency management and the role and responsibilities of Veterinary Services in Disaster Management and Risk Reduction.

At the WOAHP stand, we had the privilege of engaging in conversations with a diverse group of around 40 participants. These individuals represented a wide range of sectors, including civil protection organizations, academia, NGOs, other governmental agencies, and the private sector. Their interest confirms the need to further explore opportunities for engagement with the civil protection community.

4.2. Stakeholders update and discussion

AnimalhealthEurope has lately been involved in several initiatives aiming at promoting the inclusion of animals in the disaster management operational frameworks at European level, including the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. So far AnimalhealthEurope is the only animal health and welfare organization attending the works of the new Joint Industrial Cooperation Forum set up by the EC's Health Emergency Response Agency (HERA). This forum aims at discussing how to ensure that the EU is better prepared to react to future health emergencies. AnimalhealthEurope was asked to share information and provide insights about the level of knowledge, skills, training needs and critical medical countermeasures in times of crisis, and for mapping relevant initiatives in this field. In addition, the AnimalhealthEurope Management Committee is currently working on a One-Health internal position paper, that will highlight the main actions taken in this area, including the call to the EU to expand the vaccine banks and prepare and avoid the shortage of veterinary medicinal products in the case of emergencies, as in the case in the Ukrainian conflict.

Four Paws stressed their interest to continue supporting the Platform initiatives on disaster management, and particularly to be involved in the organization of the simulation exercise to be held in 2026.

5. Welfare of working equids

5.1. WOAHP update

The online event on the welfare of working equids

The event was held on 12th September 2023. The meeting was organised in collaboration with the International Coalition for Working Equids and the European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare Ruminants & Equines. The main objectives of the meeting were to raise awareness on WOAHP standards on the welfare of working equids and further identify WOAHP members' needs and discuss how to address WOAHP members' needs within planned activities of the next action plan of the Platform for 2024-2026.

The workshop on the welfare of working equids

The event will be held on 27 June 2024, back-to-back to the National Focal Points on animal welfare meeting planned in Madrid, Spain. The meeting will focus on presenting tools to support implementation of standards on working equids welfare and sharing country experiences.

5.2. Stakeholders update and discussion

ICAW developed an online tool, Working Equid Standards Library of Information (WESLI). In addition, FAO is working with WOAAH to finalize development of a guidance and good practices document on welfare of working equids.

[PetPower](#) is supporting efforts to establish guidelines on use of horses for therapy.

6. Other activities ([link to the presentation](#))

6.1. WOAAH update

The call for a consultancy to develop a communication strategy for the Platform was launch on 24 April 2024, and the kick-off meeting with the selected consultant, Tom Kenis, was done on the 7th of June 2024. The main objective of this consultancy is to provide support to the Platform Secretariat to improve the visibility of the Platform by revising the existing communication activities and proposing an engaging and coherent communication strategy. The background documentation review is ongoing and next week at the National Focal Point Animal Welfare meeting the consultant will have the opportunity to start collecting inputs from Members and partners. The objective is to have the report presented at the next Steering Group meeting in October 2024.

The call for a consultancy to develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy for the Platform was launch on 29 April 2024, and the kick-off meeting with the selected consultant, Karen Iles (who did the last external evaluation of the Platform in 2023) will happen on the 20th of June 2024. The objective of the consultancy is to support the Platform Secretariat to improve its capability to measure the impact of the Platform by revising the existing monitoring and evaluation system and building a revised strategy. The background documentation review is ongoing and in a second phase exchanges with members and partners will be organised to help build the new strategy. The consultant will also prepare in collaboration with the Secretariat a monitoring and evaluation workshop for the next Sterring Group meeting in October 2024.

Regarding the WOAAH Animal Welfare Global Strategy, in addition to the work done on slaughter and transport already presented, the Code Commission work plan includes the revision of the chapter on killing for disease control and the introductory chapter for Section 7. on Animal welfare of the Terrestrial Code.

Finally, the 6th Animal Welfare Global Forum will take place in Merida, Mexico on the 28-29 of October 2024 and will focus on “*How WOAAH Global Animal Welfare Collaborating Centre Network can support Members in the development of animal welfare policies*”. The event will precede the triennial meeting of the Regional WOAAH Animal Welfare Collaborating Centre for the Americas Region and it will be a by invitation event.

6.2. Stakeholders update and discussion

AnimalhealthEurope pointed their additional involvements relevant to animal welfare:

- Membership in Agricultural Civil Dialogue Group with focus on animal health contribution to a more sustainable food system.
- Series of webinars, including animal welfare webinar with FVE collaboration.

List of annexes

Annex 1 – Agenda

Annex 2 – List of participants

* References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

Annex 1 – Agenda

Time	AGENDA	Speaker(s)
9:30	Welcome coffee	
Welcome and introduction – 9:30		
10:00	Opening remarks	E. Hamelin
Transport		
10:10	State of implementation of the Platform activities on transport	T. Grudnik
10:20	Global activities on transport (Observatory thematic study, revision of the relevant chapters in TAHC)	
10:30	Stakeholders' activities on transport	All
Slaughter		
10:50	State of implementation of the Platform activities on slaughter	T. Grudnik
11:00	Global activities on slaughter (chapters for adoption, ...)	
11:10	Stakeholders' activities on slaughter	All
11:20	Coffee break	
Dog population management		
11:30	State of implementation of the Platform activities on dog population management	P. Dalla Villa
11:40	Global activities on dog population management	
11:50	Stakeholders' activities on dog population management	All
Disaster management		
12:10	State of implementation of the Platform activities on disaster management	P. Dalla Villa / T. Grudnik
12:20	Global activities on disaster management	
12:30	Stakeholders' activities on disaster management	All
12:50	Lunch	
Working equids		
14:00	State of implementation of the Platform activities on working equids	T. Grudnik
14:10	Global activities on working equids	
14:20	Stakeholder's activities on working equids	All
Other activities		
14:40	Communication and M&E development of the AW Platform	E. Hamelin
14:50	Others global activities	
15:00	Stakeholders' other activities	All
15:20	Closing remarks	
END OF THE MEETING – 15:30		

Annex 2

9th Stakeholders consultation meeting of the WOAH Platform on animal welfare for Europe

19th June 2024 – Brussels

List of participants

	Name	Organisation
1.	Paula de Vera	COPA COGECA
2.	Sandra Perez Zafra	World Horse Welfare
3.	Daniela Battaglia	FAO
4.	Hans-Peter Schons	FESASS
5.	Joseph (Joe) Collins	The Donkey Sanctuary
6.	Ana Maria Popa	European Commission
7.	Andrea Gavinelli	European Commission
8.	Diana Teixeira	Animal Health Europe
9.	Susanna Blattner	Eurogroup for Animals
10.	Izaskun Arrieta	Eurogroup for Animals
11.	Christina Lopez-Perea	Eurogroup for Animals
12.	Carolina Cucurella	UECBV
13.	Adrian Ardelean	Romania
14.	Alexandra Hammond-Seaman	RSPCA
15.	Joe Moran	Four Paws
16.	Tom Kenis	Communication consultant
17.	Fernando De Abreu	WOAH Brussels
18.	Tomasz Grudnik	WOAH Brussels
19.	Paolo Dalla Villa	WOAH Brussels
20.	Estelle Hamelin	WOAH Brussels