

## Regional Core Group of the WOAHA Regional Commission for Europe

### Regional Core Group (RCG) Europe Activities in 2025

#### Executive Summary

In 2025, the WOAHA Regional Commission for Europe achieved a major governance milestone through the unanimous adoption of the revised Terms of Reference (ToR) and working mechanism for the Regional Core Group for Europe (RCG). Endorsed by all 53 Member Countries during the General Session, the new ToR modernise the RCG's mandate, establish a clear and functional subregional structure, and strengthen the Region's capacity to contribute to WOAHA's global governance, standard-setting, and strategic planning processes.

A comprehensive consultation process, conducted across five subregions and supported through meetings in Vienna, and online, resulted in the formation of a balanced 13-member RCG (six elected and seven nominated WOAHA Delegates by sub-regions). The final composition reflects the political and geographical diversity of Europe and was achieved without political tension, demonstrating strong regional unity during a challenging geopolitical period.

The adoption of the ToR was followed by the inaugural meeting of the newly composed RCG (RCG-19), held on 22 September 2025 in Belgrade as a side event of the GF-TADs Regional Conference for Europe. This meeting formally launched the new RCG cycle and established a shared understanding of its mandate and priorities. Members aligned the WOAHA-Europe and RCG work plans, received updates on the development of the 8<sup>th</sup> Strategic Plan and the Governance Review Committee, and initiated a coordinated subregional approach for the 2025–2026 standard-setting process.

RCG-19 also defined next steps, including preparations for the spring 2026 meeting ahead of the General Session, and reinforced the RCG's role as a platform for coordination between Delegates, WOAHA-Europe, and WOAHA Headquarters.

Overall, 2025 was a year of strategic consolidation, reform, and renewed cohesion in the Europe Region. The strengthened governance structure, revitalised communication mechanisms, and successful inaugural meeting position the Region to play an increasingly active and influential role in WOAHA's governance landscape in 2026 and beyond.

The RCG expresses its gratitude to **Switzerland** for its financial support and encourages WOAHA leadership to ensure sustainable funding for the Group's key activities, particularly in-person meetings essential to effective regional governance.

#### Strengthening Regional Governance: Revision and Adoption of the RCG Terms of Reference

A major governance achievement in 2025 was the successful adoption of the revised Terms of Reference and working mechanism of the RCG for Europe by the WOAHA Regional Commission for Europe during the General Session in May 2025. The new ToR, endorsed unanimously by all 53 Member Countries, modernise and clarify the mandate of the RCG and provide an updated, regionally tailored structure to support improved coordination, communication, and contributions to WOAHA's governance and standard-setting processes.

The adopted ToR establish five subregions (informal): EU, Western Europe non-EU, South-Eastern Europe, EAEU, and Western Eurasia (including the Caucasus). It reflects political, geographical, epidemiological, and trade realities in Europe region. This enables equitable representation while avoiding political sensitivities during a period of significant geopolitical tension. The process achieved full consensus and strengthened regional cohesion.

The revision process, initiated in Samarkand (October 2024), continued through consultations in Tbilisi (November 2024) and Vienna (March 2025), online meetings with Regional Commission, extensive exchanges with Delegates, namely with online meetings with subregions, and close coordination with RAD and the Director General, ensuring alignment with global governance reforms and RCG structures in other regions.

### **Subregional Consultations and Formation of the New RCG (2025–2027)**

Between January and May 2025, comprehensive subregional consultations were organised to select the RCG members under the revised ToR. Each of the five subregions successfully agreed on their nominations, demonstrating strong participation and shared ownership of the governance process. The Region avoided political complications and achieved a balanced composition reflecting all subregional priorities.

The final **13-member composition** (6 elected, 7 nominated), adopted by the Regional Commission for Europe during the General Session, is as follows:

- **Elected Members (6):**
  - *Bureau:* Dr Maris Balodis (Latvia), Dr Ulrich Herzog (Austria), Dr Galib Abdulaliyev (Azerbaijan), Dr Keti Margariti (Albania)
  - *Council:* Dr Susana Pombo (Portugal), Dr Cristine Middlemiss (United Kingdom)
- **Nominated Members (7):**
  - *EU:* Dr Herman Claeys (Belgium), Dr June Fanning (Ireland), Dr Vaidotas Kiudulas (Lithuania)
  - *Western Europe non-EU:* Dr Laurent Monnerat (Switzerland)
  - *South-Eastern Europe:* Dr Sasa Boskovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
  - *EAEU:* Dr Konstantin Savenkov (Russian Federation)
  - *Western Eurasia / Caucasus:* Dr Abrar Akbarov (Uzbekistan)

This composition is fully aligned with the regional structure and will serve from May 2025 to May 2027.

### **Technical and Governance Engagements in 2025**

To support the adoption and implementation of the new ToR and composition, several key engagements took place:

- **RCG Meeting** (Austria, Vienna, 13–14 March 2025, with online meeting with all Delegates from Europe): Focused on ToR revision, consultations, 2025 work planning, and initial preparation for Delegate engagement.
- **Virtual Regional Commission Meeting** (15 May 2025): Final review of the revised ToR and presentation of proposed nominations.

- **In-person Regional Commission Meeting** (91<sup>st</sup> General Session, 25 May 2025):  
Formal adoption of the ToR and approval of the new RCG composition.

These engagements strengthened transparency, enhanced Member participation, and set the foundation for the RCG's renewed mandate.

### **Inaugural Meeting of the Newly Composed RCG (Belgrade, 22 September 2025)**

The **19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Core Group (RCG-19)**, held on 22.09.2025 in Belgrade as a side event of the *1st GF-TADs Regional Conference of Standing Groups of Experts*, marked the formal inauguration of the newly composed RCG. This was the first in-person session of the new RCG membership following its adoption in May 2025. The meeting fully implemented the Concept Note and Agenda agreed beforehand.

### **Key Achievements and Outputs of RCG-19**

- 1. Formal launch and review of the new governance framework:** The meeting opened with formal inauguration remarks by the Chair (Dr Balodis) and Secretariat (Dr Plavsic). Members reviewed the adopted ToR and new composition to ensure a shared understanding of the mandate, working procedures, and expectations for the 2025–2027 term.
- 2. Strategic alignment of work plans (2025–2026):** RCG members discussed and aligned the WOAHEurope work plan and the RCG work plan for 2026, ensuring complementarity between Secretariat activities and RCG strategic priorities. This alignment supports a unified approach to regional implementation and reporting.
- 3. Updates on global governance processes:** Members received two key updates, which reinforced the RCG's critical role in bridging regional perspectives with global decision-making:
  - Development of WOAHEurope's 8<sup>th</sup> Strategic Plan – presented by Headquarters, with an emphasis on expected shifts in organisational priorities.
  - Progress of the Governance Review Committee (GRC) – presented by Dr Herzog, highlighting the Europe Region's active contributions through its four representatives.
- 4. Standard-setting and subregional strategy for 2025–2026:** A dedicated strategic session focused on strengthening the Region's contribution to the 2025–2026 standard-setting cycle, including operationalising the new subregional engagement mechanism outlined in the ToR. Members agreed on:
  - procedures for gathering subregional input;
  - approaches to build consensus within and across subregions;
  - coordination with the Bureau and Council for World Assembly interventions.
- 5. Defining next steps and future meeting calendar:** The RCG agreed on:
  - thematic priorities for the next RCG meeting;
  - the need for a spring 2026 session in preparation for the General Session;
  - enhanced communication between meetings.

## **Funding**

The RCG is primarily funded by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and supported by the Swiss government. The leadership of the RCG emphasised the importance of sustainable funding for its work, particularly for in-person meetings.

## **Overall Significance of RCG-19**

RCG-19 successfully operationalised the new ToR, reaffirmed regional cohesion, and established a clear strategic direction for the new RCG cycle. It also highlighted Europe's proactive engagement in governance reform, strategic planning, and standard setting—ensuring the Region remains a highly active and influential contributor to WOAH's global agenda.