

2nd SGE for PPR and SPGP in Europe

under the GF-TADs umbrella

Online Meeting, 29th June 2026, from 12:00 to 14:20 (CET)

Chair: President of the GF-TADs for Europe Steering Committee – Dr B. Van Goethem

Report

At the opening of the webinar, Dr. Mereke Taitubayev (WOAH Sub-Regional Representation for Central Asia) welcomed participants to the Second Meeting of the Standing Group of Experts (SGE) on Peste des Petits Ruminants and Sheep and Goat Pox, convened under the GF-TADs Europe framework. He expressed his appreciation to the President of the GF-TADs Europe Steering Committee, Dr. Bernard Van Goethem, as well as to all partners, Reference Laboratories, and participating experts for their continued commitment to strengthening regional cooperation.

Dr. Taitubayev recalled that during the first SGE meeting participants had agreed that the evolving epidemiological situation of PPR and SGP required strengthened regional collaboration, timely information exchange, and coordinated preparedness. He noted that the continued occurrence of outbreaks across Europe demonstrates that the region remains vulnerable to these transboundary animal diseases. He stressed that protecting the health of small ruminant populations is essential not only for livestock production and rural livelihoods, but also for food security, international trade, and the resilience of Veterinary Services. He underlined that the meeting would provide an opportunity to review the latest epidemiological developments, receive scientific updates, exchange experiences from affected and at-risk countries, assess progress made since the previous meeting, identify remaining gaps, and develop practical recommendations to strengthen surveillance, preparedness, prevention, and rapid response. He concluded by encouraging all participants to actively contribute to the discussions and wished them a productive meeting.

Dr. Bernard Van Goethem, President of the GF-TADs Europe Steering Committee, welcomed participants and recalled that the establishment of the SGE followed the decision taken during the first GF-TADs Europe Conference in Belgrade in 2025. He emphasized that both PPR and SPGP have become significant emerging threats for the European region, citing the continued spread of PPR in Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo*, Albania and North Macedonia, as well as the deteriorating Sheep and Goat Pox situation in several countries. He stressed the importance of sharing experiences and coordinating regional actions to prevent further spread and ultimately eradicate both diseases.

Dr. Van Goethem outlined the objectives and agenda of the meeting, which included epidemiological updates from affected countries, scientific presentations by the WOAH Reference Laboratories, contributions from WOAH Headquarters, FAO, EuFMD and DG SANTE, and discussions on regional priorities and coordinated disease control efforts. He highlighted that the meeting would strengthen collaboration among Veterinary Services, international organisations and technical experts in support of a harmonised regional response to these transboundary animal diseases.

Dr. Jorgen Dedja, Albania (PPR situation)

Albania provided an overview of the epidemiological situation of PPR in 2026, describing the legal framework, outbreak response, surveillance activities, laboratory capacity, and preparedness measures. Following the first confirmed PPR outbreak on 1 April 2026, the Ministry of Agriculture rapidly activated the national contingency plan, established a National Crisis Centre, introduced movement restrictions, defined protection (3 km) and surveillance (10 km) zones, and implemented stamping-out, disinfection, laboratory testing, and enhanced surveillance in accordance with national legislation aligned with EU Regulation 2020/687. Four infected flocks were identified in three outbreaks, involving 416 susceptible animals, 117 clinical cases, and 64 deaths, with all affected animals culled and safely disposed of.

The presentation highlighted the implementation of a comprehensive national PPR surveillance programme combining passive, clinical, and active surveillance. During 2026, veterinary services clinically monitored 3,763 farms and more than 473,000 small ruminants, with over 8,200 samples collected for laboratory testing. Although numerous ELISA-positive samples were detected, all tested negative by RT-PCR outside the confirmed outbreaks. Albania's long-term objective remains obtaining WOA official recognition as a PPR-free country. The National Reference Laboratory demonstrated strong diagnostic capacity through accredited ELISA and RT-PCR methods, participation in international proficiency testing, and close collaboration with the European Union Reference Laboratory (CIRAD), which confirmed that the Albanian virus belonged to Lineage IV, identical to the strain responsible for the recent emergence of PPR in Europe.

Albania also outlined the principal challenges encountered during the response, including delays in disease detection and reporting, informal movement of small ruminants, limited farmer awareness, reluctance to report suspected cases because of potential economic losses, and constraints in veterinary resources. Regarding Sheep Pox and Goat Pox, Albania reported that no outbreaks have been confirmed to date. Nevertheless, the country continues to strengthen preparedness through passive surveillance, investigation of all suspected cases, development of a national contingency plan, awareness campaigns, and close cooperation between Veterinary Services and livestock owners to prevent disease introduction.

Dr Tsvetelina Lyubomirova Parvanova, Bulgaria, (SPGP).

Bulgaria presented an update on the epidemiological situation of Sheep Pox and Goat Pox, highlighting the significant disease activity experienced in 2025 and the measures implemented to control outbreaks during 2026. In 2025, the country reported 191 SPGP outbreaks across eight regions, with the highest number occurring in Plovdiv Region (143 outbreaks), followed by Haskovo, Pazardzhik, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Burgas, Kardzhali and Kyustendil. During 2026, the epidemiological situation improved considerably, with only two confirmed outbreaks, both occurring in Plovdiv Region (on 2 February and 22 June), and no additional suspected cases reported at the time of the meeting.

The presentation described the response to the second outbreak in detail. Following notification by the farmer of clinical signs and mortality in a flock of 30 sheep, veterinary authorities collected samples on the same day, and the National Reference Laboratory confirmed SPGP infection the following day. The affected flock was immediately stamped out, demonstrating the effectiveness of early reporting, rapid laboratory confirmation and prompt implementation of disease control measures.

Bulgaria also outlined the comprehensive control measures currently in place to prevent further spread of the disease. Restriction zones have been established in accordance with EU Regulation 2020/687 and the relevant European Commission Implementing Decision, including movement restrictions within affected regions and a ban on trade, transport and markets for small ruminants in designated areas. Nationwide measures include mandatory official pre-movement clinical inspections and certification, slaughter only at designated slaughterhouses, enhanced biosecurity, intensified surveillance and sampling of suspect animals, awareness

campaigns, and strengthened cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, border police and customs authorities to prevent illegal animal movements. These measures aim to maintain control of the disease and prevent further outbreaks throughout Bulgaria.

Dr. Domagoj Tomec, Croatia (PPR situation)

Croatia presented an update on the epidemiological situation of Peste des Petits Ruminants following the country's first-ever incursions of the disease. The initial outbreaks were confirmed on 13 December 2025 in Split-Dalmatia County, marking the first detection of PPR in Croatia. Between December 2025 and February 2026, a total of six outbreaks (two primary and four secondary) were confirmed in Split-Dalmatia and Zadar Counties. Control measures, including the establishment of protection and surveillance zones, were successfully implemented, resulting in the culling of 173 animals, and restrictions were lifted on 4 March 2026 after the outbreaks were brought under control.

The presentation further described a new wave of outbreaks detected in June 2026 in the northern part of the country, within Bjelovar-Bilogora County. The first two outbreaks were confirmed on 10 June on epidemiologically linked sheep establishments in Markovci following reports of fever, diarrhoea, pneumonia and mortality in lambs. A third outbreak was confirmed on 12 June approximately 60 km away in Donji Dragičevci, while two additional outbreaks were confirmed on 19–20 June. Epidemiological investigations identified links between the affected holdings and persons who had previously visited infected establishments, highlighting the importance of tracing animal and human contacts during outbreak investigations.

Croatia outlined the extensive disease control measures implemented in accordance with EU Regulation 2020/687. Protection (5 km) and surveillance (20 km) zones were established around infected premises, while the European Commission adopted emergency measures prohibiting the movement of sheep and goats from Croatia to other countries until 30 September 2026. The national control programme includes mandatory reporting of clinical signs, enhanced farm biosecurity, movement controls, clinical inspections, targeted sampling, and comprehensive epidemiological investigations. Authorities also highlighted the considerable logistical challenges posed by the size of the restricted areas, which encompass approximately one-third of Croatia's national sheep and goat population, including a large proportion of dairy sheep and goat farms, resulting in significant restrictions on the trade of animals, milk and meat products.

Dr. Mary GIANNIOU, Greece (SPGP situation)

Greece presented an update on the epidemiological situation of Sheep Pox and Goat Pox, which remains one of the most significant animal health challenges in the region. Since the beginning of the epidemic in August 2024, Greece has reported a total of 2,194 outbreaks resulting in the culling of 492,882 animals. Although disease activity has markedly declined in 2026 compared with 2025, 173 outbreaks and the culling of 25,540 animals had still been recorded by 26 June 2026. Restricted zones continue to be updated in accordance with the relevant European Commission emergency measures following confirmation of new outbreaks.

The presentation highlighted the most recent epidemiological developments between 12 May and 15 June 2026, during which 22 new outbreaks were confirmed across several regional units. Particular attention was given to outbreaks occurring in Arcadia and Messinia, previously disease-free areas, as well as the recurrence of disease in Kozani after approximately ten months without outbreaks. Epidemiological investigations suggested that possible routes of introduction included mechanical transmission via shearing teams, milk collection vehicles, or unregistered animal movements, although no definitive source had been confirmed. Comparative analysis demonstrated that, unlike the sharp increase observed in spring 2025, the epidemic in

2026 showed a sustained downward trend despite the occurrence of sporadic outbreaks and the expansion into new geographical areas.

Greece also presented the extensive surveillance programme implemented within protection, surveillance and further restricted zones. Between 7 May and 10 June 2026, veterinary services inspected thousands of holdings and clinically examined more than 770,000 animals, while collecting over 40,000 samples for laboratory testing. Only a limited number of additional positive holdings were detected through this intensive surveillance, demonstrating the effectiveness of active monitoring and early detection. In parallel, national authorities strengthened enforcement activities through close cooperation with the police, carrying out more than 93,000 inspections, identifying 133 confirmed violations, and making 129 arrests related to illegal animal movements and non-compliance with disease control measures. These actions underline Greece's comprehensive approach combining surveillance, epidemiological investigations, movement controls and law enforcement to contain the spread of Sheep Pox and Goat Pox.

Dr. Martin Josheski, North Macedonia (SPGP)

North Macedonia presented an overview of the epidemiological situation of Sheep Pox and Goat Pox, highlighting the increasing regional risk posed by outbreaks in neighbouring countries. The country assessed the risk of introduction of PPR, SPGP, Bluetongue and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) as high, given the occurrence of outbreaks in Greece, Bulgaria, Kosovo* and other neighbouring areas. Passive surveillance was intensified during 2026 for several transboundary animal diseases, including SPGP, PPR, FMD and Bluetongue, with seven SPGP-positive holdings identified through the national surveillance programme.

The presentation described the country's first occurrence of SPGP, confirmed in January 2026. Initial suspicions were reported on 21 January following the observation of clinical signs in sheep, with differential diagnosis initially focusing on PPR due to the epidemiological situation in neighbouring countries. Laboratory confirmation was obtained on 27 January 2026, followed by three secondary outbreaks within the same village. Between January and June 2026, North Macedonia confirmed seven outbreaks (three primary and four secondary), involving 1,023 susceptible animals, 31 clinical cases, 20 deaths, and the culling of 995 animals to eradicate the disease.

North Macedonia implemented comprehensive control measures in accordance with EU Regulation 2020/687, including the establishment of 3 km protection zones and 10 km surveillance zones, stamping-out of affected flocks, safe disposal of carcasses, movement restrictions, enhanced biosecurity, cleaning and disinfection, active surveillance, clinical examinations, epidemiological investigations, and strict controls on livestock markets and animal movements. Following the lifting of restrictions, additional preventive measures remained in force in the affected regions, including a six-month ban on restocking, continued movement controls, regular disinfection of premises and vehicles, and ongoing biosecurity measures. The authorities also implemented extensive awareness campaigns targeting veterinarians and livestock owners through expert meetings, multilingual information materials, sampling guidelines, online educational resources and outreach activities in border regions to strengthen preparedness against SPGP, PPR and other transboundary animal diseases.

Dr. Cristian MORTASIVU, Romania (PPR and SPGP)

Summary on PPR

Romania managed a series of 68 PPR outbreaks between 2024 and early 2025. The vast majority occurred in 2024, with 67 outbreaks recorded between July 15 and December 2 in the counties of Tulcea, Constanța, Timiș, and Ialomița. Only one outbreak was recorded in 2025, located in Bihor County, with restrictions officially lifted

on May 10, 2025, under Decision 2025/638. However, a new outbreak (RO-PPR-2026-00001) was confirmed on June 5, 2026, in a sheepfold of 882 sheep in Vișoara, Mureș County, after animals exhibited severe clinical signs such as high fever (reaching 41.7°C), coughing, hypersalivation, and nasal discharge.

Following the confirmation of the June 2026 outbreak, immediate stamping-out measures were enacted on June 8, 2026, resulting in the killing of 748 remaining animals (with 134 having already died from the disease). The carcasses were safely buried on-site, and three rounds of disinfection were completed by June 15, 2026. A 5 km protection zone and a 20 km surveillance zone were established, under which clinical veterinary examinations were performed on a total of 83,242 small ruminants across 873 establishments, yielding no further clinical signs. Ongoing epidemiological investigations suggest the virus may have been introduced via the illegal transport of unidentified, untested animals, poor biosecurity, or contact along a public forest road crossing the pasture.

Due to the persistent threat, the European Union implemented Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2026/1387 on June 17, 2026. This emergency directive prohibits all movements of sheep and goats from Romanian territory to any other EU Member State or third country until December 31, 2026. To combat the disease, Romania has centralized data for a National PPR/SGP Monitoring Program targeting over 50,000 blood samples across 42 counties. Backed by EU recommendations (HADEA and DG SANTE), the active surveillance strategy aims to perform 5,040 clinical examinations and collect 70,560 serological samples over two years to detect even a low 5% prevalence of the virus with 95% confidence. As of late June 2026, serological screening has identified a total of 2,173 positive and 481 doubtful samples across the country.

Summary on SPGP

Between April and May 2026, four distinct outbreaks of sheep pox and goat pox caused by the Capripox virus were confirmed in Mureș County, Romania. The outbreaks occurred sequentially in the localities of Toldal (confirmed April 23), Dumbrava (confirmed April 30), Malea (confirmed May 15), and Luieriu (confirmed May 18). Affected animals consistently exhibited severe clinical signs, including high fever, heavy ocular and nasal discharge, and prominent skin nodules on their heads, abdomens, mammary glands, and genitals. Diagnoses were officially confirmed via Real-Time PCR and ELISA serological testing conducted by the National Reference Laboratory (NRL - IDAH) in Bucharest.

To prevent further spread, the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (ANSVSA) implemented strict sanitary protocols. Immediate "stamping out" (culling) was ordered for all animals in the affected flocks. Across the four outbreaks, this resulted in the depopulation of major sheepfolds:

- Outbreak 1 (Toldal): 398 sheep culled on April 25, followed by three rounds of disinfection.
- Outbreak 2 (Dumbrava): 226 sheep and 22 goats culled on May 1 (with 16 prior deaths) and disinfected twice.
- Outbreak 3 (Malea): 815 sheep culled on May 16 (with 15 prior deaths) followed by three rounds of disinfection.
- Outbreak 4 (Luieriu): 382 sheep culled on May 19 (with 10 prior deaths) followed by three rounds of disinfection.

Carcasses were safely buried on-site within approved grazing areas, and intensive cleaning and chemical disinfections of the premises were carried out.

A 5 km Protection Zone and a 20 km Surveillance Zone were established around the outbreak sites to monitor and restrict animal movements. Authorities initiated extensive active and passive surveillance, performing

clinical exams, conducting censuses, and evaluating biosecurity measures. Investigations conducted alongside the Mureş County Police Inspectorate revealed that some owners had purchased unidentified animals without proper veterinary health certificates, resulting in official contraventional sanctions. Epidemiologists identified several likely pathways for the virus's introduction, including the trading of lambs during the Easter holiday, movement of animals during their incubation period, unauthorized and un-disinfected transport, improper carcass disposal, vector circulation, and contaminated pastures.

Dr. Andy Haegeman, Sciensano, EURL for Capripox viruses

This presentation, delivered by Andy Haegeman on June 29, 2026, on behalf of Sciensano (the EU Reference Laboratory for Capripox viruses), provides an update on the epidemiology and phylogenetic analysis of sheeppox virus (SPPV) outbreaks across Europe between 2022 and 2026. Capripoxviruses—comprising SPPV, Goatpox virus (GTPV), and Lumpy skin disease virus (LSDV)—are genetically stable double-stranded DNA viruses with high nucleotide identity (~96%) that evolve slowly. Because of this slow mutation rate, determining the exact sequence of outbreak strains is vital to understanding diagnostic accuracy, virulence, vaccine efficacy, and origin.

The report highlights a shifting epidemiological landscape in Europe over the four-year period. Spain's initial wave of 32 outbreaks from September 2022 to May 2023 was successfully resolved with no further developments. However, multiple countries have faced continued or new outbreaks. Bulgaria and Greece have experienced ongoing cases since 2023, with Greece experiencing a massive spike of 1,483 outbreaks in the latter half of 2025. Other regional developments include outbreaks in Romania (2025–2026), Serbia (which resolved 3 outbreaks in late 2025), and North Macedonia (reporting 8 outbreaks in early 2026).

Phylogenetic sequencing of the outbreak samples revealed that the ongoing 2024–2026 European outbreaks are driven by a completely different viral strain (Clade A1) than the 2022–2023 Spanish outbreaks (Clade A2). The analysis shows an exceptionally high sequence similarity among all sequenced strains from the 2024–2026 period, indicating that a single, identical strain has been spreading across these countries. Overall, the recent European outbreak strains exhibit minimal genetic diversity, with only 29 variable nucleotide positions identified in total.

FAO Activities

Dr. Beltran Alcrudo Daniel from the Food and Agriculture Organization's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (FAO REU) informed that FAO actively supports regional veterinary systems to manage and eradicate PPR and SPGP. Their approach focuses on two primary pillars: assisting countries in obtaining official disease-free status, and strengthening national capacities through virtual learning, technical resources, and strategic risk mapping.

FAO REU provides targeted, country-level support to help nations transition toward official PPR-free recognition:

- Azerbaijan: Successfully completed the process, making it the first former Soviet Union, non-EU country (excluding the Russian Federation) to achieve official PPR disease-free status.
- Armenia: An ongoing project (2025–2027) is underway to strengthen prevention capacities and build the dossier for disease freedom using serosurveillance.
- Kazakhstan: Active support is being provided to help the country cease vaccination and apply for Stage 4 of the eradication framework.

- Uzbekistan & Tajikistan: Ongoing efforts include serosurveillance (with 4,000 animals already sampled in Uzbekistan toward a target of 8,000) and dossier preparation.

To bolster regional preparedness, FAO REU utilizes advanced spatial modeling and educational resources:

- Risk Mapping & Costing: In 2024, FAO published a spatial risk assessment identifying high-risk areas for PPR spread in the Black Sea Basin. Alongside this, they utilize the Outbreak Costing Tool (OutCosT) to calculate the direct economic impact of PPR and SPGP outbreaks and control measures.
- Technical Manuals: A comprehensive field manual, *"Sheep pox and goat pox: A field manual for veterinarians,"* has been published and is available in both English and Russian.
- Virtual Learning Centers (VLC): Operating since 2021, the VLCs offer specialized 4-week tutored courses. Recent cohorts trained hundreds of veterinarians across the region, including 340 participants from 13 countries in a Russian-language PPR course in early 2026. A self-paced SPGP course is currently online, with a self-paced PPR course scheduled for release in late 2026.

Key Regional Challenges. The report concludes by highlighting several critical bottlenecks that hinder effective eradication and control:

- Reporting & Compensation: Insufficient or delayed compensation programs lead to widespread under-reporting of outbreaks by farmers and field veterinarians.
- Epidemiology & Borders: Porous borders, shared pastures, and mass animal movements during religious festivals facilitate disease spread, which is further complicated by subclinical cases of PPR.
- Vaccination Barriers: Countries remain reluctant to vaccinate due to severe trade restrictions, a lack of EU-approved vaccines, and political sensitivities, even though emergency vaccination is legally permitted under EU law.

Dr. Mereke Taitubayev from WOAHSRR for Central Asia

Dr. Mereke Taitubayev briefly updated participants on recent and upcoming WOAHSRR activities under the GF-TADs framework. He noted that, rather than repeating the information presented during the first SGE meeting held in March, he wished to provide an overview of progress made over the past year and highlight key events planned for the coming months.

He recalled that during 2025–2026 WOAHSRR had successfully organised several regional activities, including the PPR missions, the webinar on PPR and Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), the EPI system workshop for Central Asia, and training on the WOAHSRR procedure for the official recognition of PPR-free status. He also highlighted the first GF-TADs webinar on PPR and LSD held in July 2025, followed by the first GF-TADs Regional Conference for Europe in September 2025, which addressed all regional priority transboundary animal diseases. In addition, regional Roadmap Meetings on FMD and PPR were organised later in the year. WOAHSRR convened the first and second meetings of the Standing Group of Experts on PPR and SPGP, further strengthening regional cooperation and information exchange.

Looking ahead, Dr. Taitubayev informed participants of several important activities planned for 2026 and 2027. In July 2026, Azerbaijan will host a demonstration exercise on emergency preparedness for transboundary animal diseases, focusing on FMD, followed immediately by the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) Meeting for FMD in Western Asia. The second GF-TADs Regional Conference for Europe is provisionally scheduled for January 2027, while the third meeting of the Standing Group of Experts on PPR and SPGP is expected to take place in March 2027.

Finally, he announced a new WOA project to be implemented in Azerbaijan, following the country's recent achievement of WOA official recognition of PPR-free status. The project is expected to commence in July or August 2026, subject to final confirmation. Dr. Taitubayev concluded by noting that the outcomes and lessons learned from this initiative would be shared with Members during future regional meetings in 2027, contributing to continued regional capacity building and preparedness for PPR.

Dr. Moritz Klemm, EU DG SANTE Activities

Dr. Moritz Klemm presented an overview of the current epidemiological situation of Peste des Petits Ruminants and Sheep and Goat Pox in the European Union, together with the emergency measures implemented by the European Commission to support disease control. Since the first incursions of PPR into Europe in 2024, outbreaks have continued to occur in several countries, including Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia. During June 2026, new PPR outbreaks were confirmed in Croatia and Romania, while one unresolved outbreak in Bulgaria remains under official restrictions due to delays in completing stamping-out measures. No affected country has implemented vaccination against PPR to date. Romania and Croatia remain subject to strict EU safeguard measures, including protection, surveillance and further restricted zones, as well as a ban on movements of sheep and goats from the entire national territory. Epidemiological investigations into the recent outbreaks remain inconclusive, and the source of virus introduction has not yet been identified. In Romania, the preliminary results of a nationwide serological survey revealed positive findings on more than 600 farms, prompting the deployment of an EU Veterinary Emergency Team (EUVET) to support the development of an eradication programme and assess potential vaccination strategies.

Regarding Sheep and Goat Pox, Dr. Klemm reported that the disease continues to spread in several parts of Europe. Since March 2026, Greece has recorded an additional 65 outbreaks, with the disease expanding into new regions on an almost weekly basis. Bulgaria confirmed a new outbreak in June 2026 within the previously affected Plovdiv region, while Romania reported four new outbreaks in Mureş County, coinciding with the area where a recent PPR outbreak was also detected. Similar to the PPR situation, epidemiological investigations have not yet identified the source of infection. Greece now has restrictions covering almost the entire country, while Bulgaria continues to face prolonged restrictions because some disease control measures have not yet been fully implemented.

Dr. Klemm also outlined the comprehensive support provided by the European Commission to affected Member States and neighbouring countries, including scientific advice from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), technical assistance, and the availability of EU antigen and vaccine banks should emergency vaccination become necessary. He explained that the EU emergency measures are based on the establishment of protection, surveillance and further restricted zones under EU legislation, combined with strict movement restrictions for live animals and animal products. Regionalisation measures are continuously reviewed and updated as the epidemiological situation evolves and remain in force until disease eradication has been demonstrated. He concluded by noting that, despite the availability of emergency vaccine banks, no EU Member State or neighbouring third country has requested vaccination against either PPR or Sheep and Goat Pox to date, with disease control continuing to rely primarily on surveillance, movement restrictions, stamping-out and enhanced biosecurity measures.

Dr. Tsvyatko Alexandrov, EuFMD

The presentation, titled *"In the shadow of Sheep Pox and Goat Pox and Peste des Petits Ruminants"* by Tsviatko Alexandrov of the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD), details the escalating transboundary animal disease (TAD) crisis in Southeastern Europe. Focusing on Sheep Pox and Goat Pox and Peste des Petits Ruminants, the report chronicles how these highly contagious viral diseases have

transitioned from historically well-contained local issues into widespread regional epidemics spanning several countries.

Between 2013 and 2018, both SPGP and PPR cases were heavily concentrated in Türkiye (where they are endemic) and sparsely detected in the high-risk border regions of Greece and Bulgaria. However, the 2024 to mid-2026 data reveals a dramatic escalation. SPGP has spread far beyond border zones, impacting Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Romania. Concurrently, PPR has experienced a massive emergence across Europe, with major outbreaks recorded in Greece and Romania in 2024, moving to Albania, Hungary, Kosovo*, and Croatia by 2025 and 2026.

A primary driver of these expansive epidemics is the "human factor," notably delays in early-stage diagnosis due to local misdiagnosis and underreporting. Compounding this, veterinary authorities face poor local acceptance of strict control measures—such as movement bans and "stamping-out" (preventive culling) policies. Because the PPR virus relies entirely on direct, continuous animal transmission (surviving only hours to days in the environment), and the hardier SPGP virus can persist for up to six months in scabs and shaded pens, both legal and illegal animal movements serve as the primary pathways of regional transmission.

To address these challenges, the presentation highlights scientific simulations utilizing the European Foot-and-Mouth Disease Spread (EuFMDIS) model. For SPGP in Bulgaria, the kernel-based model indicates that combining traditional culling with a strategic, multi-year regional or nationwide vaccination campaign can accelerate disease eradication by a full year compared to non-vaccination strategies. To bolster field response, the EuFMD provides comprehensive emergency preparedness resources, including localized job aids, multilingual awareness posters, and Virtual Learning courses covering clinical diagnosis, passive surveillance, and on-farm biosecurity protocols.

Dr. Alexandre Fediaevsky and Dr. Corettie Medjo-Byabot WOA HQ

The presentation titled *"Overarching Framework for the Analysis and Development of Animal Movement Control Systems"* was delivered on June 29, 2026, by Dr. Alexandre Fediaevsky and Dr. Corettie Medjo-Byabot on behalf of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Addressed to the Special Standing Group of Experts for Small Ruminants, the report introduces a standardized methodology designed to help competent veterinary authorities regulate, monitor, and restrict livestock movements to prevent the spread of transboundary diseases like Peste des Petits Ruminants and Sheep and Goat Pox.

The core of the initiative relies on a scalable and adaptable system structured around seven interdependent functional elements: Legal & Regulatory Frameworks; Governance & Coordination; Operational Control Mechanisms; Compliance & Assurance; Funding & Resourcing; Preparedness, Escalation & Emergency Response; and Monitoring, Evaluation & Improvement. Because animal movement networks are highly connected and deeply intertwined with local livelihoods, food security, and human health, the framework emphasizes that poorly designed or incapable control systems can yield severe unintended economic and welfare consequences. Conversely, mature systems mitigate these risks by using traceability and digitalization as key enablers to deploy multi-layered, risk-based, and pathogen-specific layers of control.

The framework itself is divided into two primary parts to guide authorities from theory to field application:

- Part 1: Conceptual Foundations explores the underlying mechanics of how animal movement generates disease risks, evaluates the types of spatial and certification control measures available, and outlines ten core guiding principles—such as feasibility, institutional coordination, and stakeholder engagement.

- Part 2: Analytical Methodology offers a practical, seven-module pathway split into three phases: *Situation & Risk Analysis*, *Control Measure Design*, and *System Assessment & Implementation*. This structural approach is explicitly anchored in established WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Code chapters and supported by existing evaluation tools like the Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway.

Looking ahead, WOAHP outlines a progressive implementation timeline beginning with the official publication of the Overarching Framework in Autumn 2026. This will be followed by dedicated regional workshops throughout 2026 and 2027 to engage member countries, identify localized priorities, and provide direct programmatic support to selected nations before a broader regional scale-up from 2028 onward.

Closing Remarks

In his closing remarks, Dr. Bernard Van Goethem, President of the GF-TADs Europe Steering Committee, thanked all participants, presenters, Reference Laboratories, partner organisations and the organising team for their valuable contributions to the meeting. He noted that the presentations clearly demonstrated the challenging epidemiological situation of Peste des Petits Ruminants and Sheep and Goat Pox in Europe and stressed that strengthened regional cooperation and coordinated action are essential to prevent further spread of these diseases. He highlighted that illegal animal movements continue to be one of the principal drivers of disease transmission, a conclusion supported by epidemiological and laboratory findings, and emphasised the need for countries to work together to address this issue.

Dr. Van Goethem informed participants that the draft recommendations from the meeting would be circulated within one to two weeks for review and comments before being finalised through a written procedure. He also announced that the WOAHP Reference Laboratories would provide an updated scientific presentation during the Regional Commission for Europe Conference in Riga in September 2026. Looking ahead, he confirmed the intention to organise the Second GF-TADs Europe Conference in January 2027, bringing together experts to review the regional situation for all priority transboundary animal diseases. He also noted that the next face-to-face meeting of the Standing Group of Experts is planned for later in 2027.

Closing the webinar, Dr. Mereke Taitubayev thanked all participants for their active engagement and acknowledged the contributions of the organising team, WOAHP Headquarters, DG SANTE, presenters, partner organisations and Member Countries. He confirmed that all presentations would be made available on the WOAHP website and encouraged participants to contact the Secretariat should they require any additional information. He reiterated that the draft recommendations would soon be circulated for comments before finalisation and expressed his appreciation to all contributors for supporting this important regional initiative aimed at strengthening preparedness and cooperation against PPR and Sheep and Goat Pox in Europe.

Recommendations

Considering that:

1. Since the first SGE meeting in March 2026, further outbreaks of Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) and Sheep Pox and Goat Pox (SPGP) have been reported in South-Eastern European countries, demonstrating the continuous risk of introduction and spread despite strengthened preparedness measures.
2. Recent outbreaks confirmed the importance of continuous surveillance, early detection, rapid suspicion reporting, laboratory diagnosis, epidemiological investigations, stamping-out measures, movement restrictions, and effective coordination among veterinary authorities.
3. The epidemiological situation highlights the need for strengthened regional cooperation, transparent information sharing, and harmonized implementation of international standards.
4. FAO and WOAH continue supporting Member Countries through technical assistance, preparedness training, laboratory strengthening, risk assessment, simulation exercises and assistance towards official PPR-free status.
5. Sustained political commitment and adequate human and financial resources remain essential to strengthen prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery capacities.

The participants of the 2nd GF-TADs Standing Group of Experts on PPR and SPGP in Europe agreed on the following recommendations:

1. Maintain the Standing Group of Experts as the regional platform for regular exchange of epidemiological information, lessons learned, and coordination of preparedness and response activities.
2. Strengthen early detection and surveillance, including both passive and risk-based active surveillance, particularly in border areas and regions at increased risk of disease introduction.
3. Ensure timely reporting and transparent information sharing through WOAH WAHIS, the EU ADIS, and other regional mechanisms to facilitate coordinated regional responses.
4. Further strengthen national laboratory capacity, including rapid differential diagnosis of PPR and SPGP, genome sequencing, phylogenetic analysis and collaboration with WOAH and EU Reference Laboratories.
5. In the cases of suspected infection in susceptible species, both diseases should be always considered in differential diagnosis.
6. Continue comprehensive epidemiological investigations following every outbreak to identify sources of infection, transmission pathways and epidemiological links, and share relevant findings with neighbouring countries whenever appropriate.
7. Strengthen animal identification, movement controls and biosecurity measures, including controls on transport, markets, traders and cross-border movements, based on epidemiological risk assessment.
8. Maintain updated contingency plans and ensure operational readiness through regular simulation exercises, training, and evaluation of emergency response capacities.
9. Promote awareness and knowledge among farmers, veterinarians, and stakeholders to improve early recognition, rapid reporting, and implementation of practical farm biosecurity measures.

10. Support countries pursuing official PPR-free status through continued implementation of control and eradication programmes, including vaccination as appropriate, as well as surveillance programmes, evidence-based risk assessment and technical assistance from FAO, WOAH and partner organizations.
11. Continue strengthening regional cooperation through joint training activities, laboratory networking, exchange of expertise and coordinated implementation of GF-TADs regional strategies for PPR and SPGP.
12. Encourage continued investment in preparedness and resilience, ensuring sustainable human, technical and financial resources for prevention, surveillance, outbreak response, vaccination as appropriate and disease eradication.
13. Request the GF-TADs Secretariat to continue organizing regular meetings of the SGE to review the evolving epidemiological situation, monitor implementation of recommendations, and facilitate regional coordination.
14. The next meeting of the PPR and SPGP SGE will be held in January 2027 in the margin of the second GF-TADs Europe Conference (exact date and venue to be confirmed).



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Agenda

Timing	Topic	
12:00-12:05	Opening remarks	M. Taitubayev, SRR for Central Asia
12:05-12:15	Opening, adoption of the agenda and presentation of the objectives of the meeting	B. Van Goethem, GF-TADs Europe President
Technical and scientific presentations		
12:15-12:35	Overview of the PPR and SPGP epidemiological situation and how it is managed in selected countries of European Region. (5 mins per country)	Country representatives (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, N. Macedonia and Romania)
12:35-12:55	Risk pathways and biosecurity: identifying problems and advancing solutions	EuFMD, Dr. Tsvyatko Alexandrov
12:55-13:15	Information on SPGP strains in Europe	Mr. Andy Haegeman, EURL, Sciensano,
13:15-13:30	FAO/WOAH activities on PPR and SPGP in the region	Dr. Daniel Beltran Alcudo, FAO Europe, Dr. Mereke Taitubayev, WOAH SRR
13:30-13:40	WOAH overarching framework for animal movement control system	Dr. Corettie Medjo-Byabot, Dr. Alexandre Fediaevsky, WOAH HQ,
13:40-13:55	Overview of PPR and SPGP in the EU and the EU support to EU MS and neighbouring countries'	Dr. Moritz Klemm, DG SANTE – Animal Health Unit
13:55 – 14:05	Questions and Answers (on all presentations)	
14:05 – 14:15	Recommendations and possible future steps	B. Van Goethem; M. Taitubayev
14:15 – 14:20	Closing of the meeting	B. Van Goethem; M. Taitubayev

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