FVE CALLS UPON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO LOOK INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 25 AND TO GIVE FURTHER GUIDANCE TO ENSURE PROPER AND CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 25!

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) - representing around 300,000 veterinarians across 38 European countries - aims to enhance animal health, animal welfare, and public health and to protect the environment by promoting the veterinary profession.

The plethora of national requirements with respect to the covered species, type of holdings, executing veterinarian, and subjects indicate a crucial need for more consistent implementation in most EU countries.

CONCLUSIONS

FVE reinitiates that the intention of regular animal health visits should be to advise farmers on improving animal health, biosecurity, and to carry out preventive work. To achieve this, only a veterinary practitioner regularly visiting the establishment will have solid and detailed knowledge about the operating conditions and will be able to build, together with the caregiver, a robust preventive animal health plan.

To ensure proper and further guidance to Article 25 and to give consistent application of Article 25, FVE calls upon the European Commission to look into the implementation in the EU.
Animal health visits have great potential to improve animal health and welfare, reduce the use of antibiotics, enhance sustainability and profitability, and improve working conditions in terms of workload planning and predictability, especially in rural areas.

These 'animal health visits' were to be implemented in all EU countries by April 2021. With the support of its members, FVE investigated the situation in 2022 and established a country score based on the criteria laid out in the FVE position paper 'Prevention is better than cure' and the Animal Health Law.

The maximal score of 100 (the ideal situation according to the FVE position paper) was not achieved by any country.

The Netherlands and Belgium head the ranking (respectively 80 and 77 points), while the maximal score of 100 was not achieved by any country.

A total of 18 EU MS/EFTA countries (58%) had implemented regular animal health visits in 2022, but most of them only in specific livestock species. Of eight countries that haven't implemented regular animal health visits, three said they had plans to do so in the future.

Most regular animal health visits are performed by private practitioners with a one-to-one contract with the farm (15/21 responses). Alongside private practitioners, official veterinarians performed the animal health visits in Finland, France, Spain, and Sweden. In Switzerland and Estonia, solely official veterinarians performed the animal health visits.

Biosecurity, while specifically mentioned in Article 25 of the Animal Health Law, was only included in 23 countries having implemented regular animal health visits. Animal health data (e.g., antibiotic use, withdrawal follow-up) and performance parameters (e.g., morbidity and mortality) were included in 65/72 responses. Animal health visits are performed by private practitioners with a one-to-one contract with the farm (15/21 responses).

Top topics covered by animal health visits were the most current subjects: performance parameters, antibiotic use, withdrawal follow-up, animal health data, and biosecurity.

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The Netherlands and Belgium head the ranking (respectively 80 and 77 points). Eight countries scored > 65 points; eight countries scored < 40 points; nine countries had between 40 and 65 points.

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