

FVE General Assembly - June 2021 report

Members

Albania
Austria
Belgium
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
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Greece
Hungary
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Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands
Montenegro
North Macedonia
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Serbia
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom

Observer

Armenia
Russia
Ukraine

Sections

UEVP
Practitioners

EASVO
State Officers

UEVH
Hygienists

EVERI
Veterinarians in
Education, Research
and Industry



“It’s not without emotion that I welcome you to our third online general assembly in a row,” said Rens van Dobbenburgh, FVE president, welcoming its members via Zoom on 11 June.

“For FVE it is bread and butter to meet live.” Yet the Covid pandemic had also a silver lining, he said, as it had highlighted the One Health concept and the role of veterinarians, *“and the human health sector seems to have realised this.”* The pandemic had also shown that the veterinary profession is resilient. *“As a profession, we adapt and continue working. The same for FVE, as demonstrated through the many activities and achievements listed in our [activity report](#).”*

Antimicrobial resistance

One issue that has kept the FVE busy is antimicrobial resistance (AMR). *“The new [Veterinary Medicines Regulation](#)¹ will enter into force in January 2022,”* reminded Nancy De Briyne, FVE’s executive director, and *“the list antimicrobials reserved for human use – and therefore banned in animals – still needs to be defined.”* She also announced that the [23 June webinar on the new legislation](#)², jointly organised by the FVE and the European Medicines Agency, would focus on changes to the classification of critically important antibiotics in pets and livestock. Also focusing on antimicrobial use was the [Farm-to-Fork strategy](#) of the European Green Deal. *“The Commission announced it will reduce by 50% the sales of antibiotics for livestock and aquatics by 2030 – while the profession has already managed to reduce it by 34%.”* She said the FVE together with the other EPRUMA partners would meet EU Health and Food Safety Commissioner Kyriakides on 24 June to discuss details of this strategy and highlight the efforts already made.

FVE is also involved in the multi-stakeholder [Healthy Livestock Project](#) which tackles AMR through improved health and welfare of livestock, and in the [AVANT](#) (alternatives to veterinary antimicrobials) project.

The use of cannabis in pets

During the assembly, the [FVE position paper on the use of cannabinoids in animals](#) was unanimously adopted. *“The recreational and medical use of cannabis and its derivatives are changing rapidly,”* commented Ms De Briyne. *“Practitioners see an increase in the number of cannabis toxicosis and there is much legal uncertainty about its use.”* She warned vets that although there are currently few regulated cannabis-derived products on the EU market, many companies are selling so-called *“nutritional supplement”* or *“care products”* containing cannabis-derivates, some of which seem to make therapeutic claims. [An open-source scientific paper on the issue was published earlier this year by the FVE](#), on the regulatory framework, therapeutic



President

Rens van Dobbenburgh

Vice-Presidents

Thierry Chambon
Siegfried Moder
Torill Moseng
Stanislaw Winiarczyk

uses and toxicology of cannabinoids in animals authored together with representatives of the American and Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations.

Cage-free systems for hens, euthanasia protocol for horses



The [position paper on more animal welfare-friendly systems for laying hens](#) was also adopted. The paper calls for the development of more evidence-based, welfare-friendly cage-free alternatives. *“Animal welfare is at the core of veterinary activities,”* recalled Torill Moseng, FVE vice president. *“As a profession, we should lead in defining and supporting a good quality of life and a humane death for all animals.”*

The assembly also adopted the [best practice protocol for the euthanasia of horses](#) for veterinarians, produced jointly by FVE and the Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations (FEEVA). It outlines the preferred protocols and procedures to consider when euthanising horses. The technical document is an addendum to the broader paper, [FVE/FEEVA End of life for horses](#), which covers the more ethical aspects. Also discussed were the April webinar on transporting brachycephalic animals and the dogs and cats breeding and [transport](#) guidelines published by the EU Commission.

One health and sustainability – a role for vets

On the animal health front, FVE vice president Thierry Chambon presented the new EU Animal Health Law, which entered into force on 21 April. *“It will include rules on animal disease prevention, surveillance, movements and emergency measures,”* he recalled. *“Its motto is ‘Prevention is better than cure, with a focus on early detection of emerging diseases and [regular animal health visits](#). This is clearly where the veterinary profession can add value.”*

Another area where vets can play a role in sustainability, and the assembly unanimously adopted the FVE position paper [Veterinarians commit to sustainable farming systems](#).

“Sustainability is an area gathering increasing interest,” explained Simon Doherty (UK), chair of the FVE working group on food safety and sustainability. *“It’s not just the environment, but also*

touches on One Health, food safety, animal health and welfare, antimicrobial resistance and a circular economy. As veterinarians, we should step forward and show where we can add value.”



Education



This is in line with the [FVE Strategy 2021-2025](#) on One Health. *“One of the FVE objectives is to strengthen our collaboration to promote One Health education for veterinary and medical students”*, recalled FVE senior Policy officer Despoina Iatridou, who recently obtained her PhD in One Health education. In a recently [published paper](#), she mapped current interdisciplinary initiatives on One Health in European veterinary schools. Joint teaching initiatives are still in the early stages, she said and noted that post-graduate initiatives were often easier to implement. She also observed that the Covid pandemic responses had stimulated

wide intersectoral collaboration and had enhanced the role of the veterinary sector and the One Health concept.

Also on education, [VetCee](#) was now looking into its new mandate and aimed to provide a framework for the accreditation of continuing professional development (CPD) for vets all over Europe, based on a system of mutual recognition.

Veterinary telemedicine

“Regarding veterinary telemedicine, there is much uncertainty in our member countries, and regulations differ,” concluded Marc Veilly (France), chair of the Statutory bodies working group, presenting an FVE survey on veterinary telemedicine. In some countries, telemedicine is tolerated, more for pets than for livestock, usually, if the animals have been seen previously by the veterinarian, and prescription-only medicines often require an established veterinary-client-patient relationship. *“When asked, 15 out of the 20 responding members said they believed it was an opportunity for the profession.”* He also presented a [guidance document on the temporary provision of services](#), as veterinarians crossing borders do not always contact the competent statutory bodies, he noted.

Gunda the documentary featuring a pig

The FVE board was unanimously re-elected for another 2-year term, with Rens van Dobbenburgh as president and Thierry Chambon, Siegfried Moder, Torill Moseng and Stanislaw Winiarczyk as vice-presidents.



To compensate for the lack of personal interaction, the agenda included two sessions of 2-minute person-to-person interactions, a speed-networking event via the social video chat Glimpse.

Finally, “as a special thank-you to colleagues and friends for steering the veterinary community in these difficult times,” the FVE board shared the link to the award-winning documentary [‘Gunda’](#), named after the sow living with her piglets, a one-legged chicken and two cows on a smallholding in Norway. *“Children and vets will be the best public – you know an animal is not something but someone,”* commented



filmmaker Victor Kossakovsky, who joined the GA for a short interview. *“They are smart, have feelings and have their own life.”* The black-and-white film co-produced by Joaquin Phoenix only has animal sounds, and *“after viewing, both vets and farmers have told me they’ve earned something.”*

The next FVE meeting will – provisionally – be held in Brussels on 11 and 12 November, while the spring 2022 general assembly is

planned for 16-18 June in London.