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### The present situation of training evaluation in EU

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**Within the European Union (EU-27), training and licensing of veterinarians is a Member State competence. The Community's role is limited to "to contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between member states and by supporting and supplementing their action".**

**EAEVE and FVE together run an evaluation system that provides a reliable and fair view of the quality of veterinary education in Europe. The ongoing process of external accreditation will further strengthen the quality and credibility of the system.**

**At this moment 38 out of 71 EU schools are unconditionally approved. These schools meet the minimum standards; several go far beyond that level and can be reckoned to the leading schools of the world.**

**It is very disappointing to see that in a number of cases outcomes of evaluations are not used in the way it should be. Opportunities to improve the quality of veterinary education are not recognised or simply neglected by the responsible authorities. There is a need for a rigorous enforcement of the actions needed to remedy deficiencies.**

### Introduction

Animal health, animal welfare and public health are public issues. The protection of the health and welfare of animals and people is of importance for every individual as well as for the society at large. Every-one is directly or indirectly affected by the way the protection of the health and welfare of animals and people is carried out. Well functioning veterinary services are widely considered as public goods.

For these reasons, to guarantee the quality of the veterinary work and to stop malpractice and quackery, veterinary medicine is a regulated profession. The access to and the exercise of the profession is supervised by the competent authorities, either directly by governmental services or indirectly by statutory bodies, like Orders and Colleges with an official mandate.

Evidence of proper education and training are indispensable elements for the licensing of veterinarians. Ever changing societal demands in the field of prevention and control of diseases, food security, food safety, public health and animal welfare require a continuous evaluation of veterinary education and training. Training programmes have to be adjusted to changing circumstances and new challenges. The quality of the training needs to be assured permanently, to make sure that newly graduates are capable to take up their tasks and to deliver their responsibilities.

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## EU Legislation on veterinary training

Europe has a long-standing tradition in veterinary education. The first official vet school, funded by and operating under the auspices of the national authorities, was set up in 1761 in Lyon (Fr). Preparations for the celebration of its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary – “Vet 2011” - are well underway. Since then approximately 100 veterinary schools and faculties were established throughout Europe.

Within the European Union (EU-27), training and licensing of veterinarians has always remained a Member State competence. When - in 1992 in the ‘*Maastricht Treaty*’ - education was formally recognised as an area of European Union competency, Member States agreed upon the following " *the Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between member states and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the member states for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.*"

As a consequence of this, each individual Member State is responsible for the quality of its own undergraduate training and education of veterinarians and it is the national competent authority that authorizes the access to and the exercise of the profession. The role played by the EU itself is limited.

However an exemption exists. In its aim for a single market with a free movement of people, goods, services and capital the EU adopted, some 30 years ago already, legislation about the mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications in veterinary medicine<sup>1</sup>. This piece of legislation also included provisions to facilitate the exercise of the right of establishment and the freedom to provide services throughout the community. Another Directive<sup>2</sup>, adopted at the same time, further stipulated that Member States had to require all persons wishing to take up the veterinary profession to hold a diploma, which guaranteed that during his training the person concerned had acquired adequate knowledge of relevant topics considered as the minimum for becoming a veterinarian. An Advisory Committee on Veterinary Training to help the European Commission to ensure a comparable high standard of veterinary training in the Community<sup>3</sup> was established.

Later on the two Directives mentioned above were amended by a new Directive<sup>4</sup> on a general system for the recognition of professional qualifications, and in more recent years, with effect of 20 October 2007, these were replaced by the current Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications<sup>5</sup>, which applies to all EU citizens wishing to pursue a regulated profession in another Member State than the one in which they obtained their professional qualifications.

Despite the revisions of the legislation, minimum standards for veterinary training remained unchanged over the years. Relevant provisions in the current Directive and its annexes are still the same as more than 30 years ago, and it goes without saying that these are obsolete; moreover they are non-specific and open to varied interpretations.

One exception to the general rules described here is made for official veterinarians in the EU legislation on food hygiene<sup>6</sup>. Competent Authorities may appoint as official veterinarian only those veterinarians who have passed a test to confirm their knowledge on a number of subjects, including legislation on veterinary public health, food safety, animal health, animal welfare, etc.

In conclusion, apart from the exception for official veterinarians, the EU has taken on a very limited role with regard to quality assurance of undergraduate veterinary training. Notwithstanding the role of the veterinarian in assuring animal and human health and welfare throughout the Community, subsidiarity still rules. In fact the Community's main concern is to assure a free market and to prevent that member states misuse training requirements as a way to keep veterinarians qualified in other member states from their territories.

## European system of visitation and evaluation of schools

The aforementioned Advisory Committee on Veterinary Training concluded that the best way to achieve the goal of a comparable high standard of veterinary training throughout the European Community was the establishment of a permanent, Europe-wide system of visitation and evaluation of veterinary schools. The responsibility for administering the evaluation programme was assigned to the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary education (EAEVE). Later on when the Advisory Committee was disbanded, EAEVE and FVE together formed a joint Committee that took over that role. The Committee, currently called Evaluation Committee of Veterinary Education (ECOVE) consists of 7 persons: 1 chairperson and 6 members. The president of EAEVE is, by definition, the chairperson, 3 members are appointed by EAEVE and 3 by FVE. The permanent secretariat is located in Vienna.

The evaluation procedure as such is described in full detail in the Standard Operating Procedure<sup>7</sup> and its Annexes. Evaluations are carried out on a voluntary base, however when becoming a member of EAEVE, schools commit themselves to be evaluated. The first steps for a school to be evaluated is to send in an application and to prepare a self-evaluation report (SER). This report should outline the school's objectives and activities. It should also state whether these objectives are met and what is to be considered as the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The following step is the visitation of the school itself by a group of 5 experts, comprising at least one expert for basic sciences, one for clinical sciences, one for animal production and one for food hygiene. During the visitation the expert team drafts a report on the observations they made. After the draft report is sent to the school for a factual scrutiny, a final report is made and sent to the members of ECOVE.

If deemed necessary ECOVE can invite the head of the school and the chairperson of the visiting expert team to give further clarifications on the report. Finally, after the head of the school and the chairperson have left the meeting, ECOVE concludes whether there are major weaknesses (called Category I deficiencies) below the standard set by the Directives. Furthermore they decide if additional suggestions should be made for changes, which would improve the training even though they do not directly relate to the requirements.

The evaluated school or faculty will be classified as:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| - <i>Approved</i>                                | No major, "Category I" deficiencies  |
| - <i>Conditionally (provisionally) approved.</i> | Category I deficiencies are present but the school is considered being capable to correct these within a defined period. |
| - <i>Not approved</i>                            | Category I deficiencies present that would not possibly be corrected within a reasonable period.                         |

## Results of visitations and evaluations

From the evaluation reports it appears that Europe, and particularly the EU-27, counts a number of excellent schools; schools that figure in the frontlines of 21st century veterinary education and research. They are well organised and managed. They have all relevant facilities, sufficient numbers of properly trained staff and they have adequate funds and resources to offer good quality curricula. Some belong to world's leading veterinary schools. Within the EU-27, a total of 40 out of 72 (app 56%) schools are approved.

Both for approved and not approved schools evaluation reports have shown to be very helpful to get a better insight in one's own situation. In many cases the reports provided a good stimulant to improve the quality of teaching. They also have proven to be very valuable

in convincing the competent authorities that improvements (and investments!) had to be made.

On the other hand, a number of schools stays behind. They face one or more major deficiencies which continue to exist over the years. Competent authorities don't seem to be interested or have other priorities.

From a relatively large number of schools the current status is not clear. They have not been visited recently. So far they have not or only very recently applied for a visitation and evaluation and the visitation is pending. Although there is no clear confirmation, it is very likely that one of main reasons for not applying for a visitation is the expectation to fail the evaluation.

The numbers of schools, visited, approved, conditionally approved and not (yet) approved are listed in table 1<sup>8</sup>.

<b>Status of schools</b>	<b>EU-27</b>	<b>Non-EU</b>	<b>Total</b>
Visited and approved	38	4	42
Visited and conditionally approved	2	1	3
Visited and not approved	12	5	17
Visitation pending	19	6	25
Not applied for visitation	1	10	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>98</b>

Table 1. number of schools, visited and approved, visited and conditionally approved, visited and not approved, with a visitation pending and schools that have not yet applied for a visit in Europe.

From these figures one can only conclude that the status of 28% of the EU schools is unknown and another 16% are at one or more points inadequate. Most frequently observed shortcomings are lack of facilities, lack of staff, lack of clinical training and insufficient caseloads. Especially in countries with high numbers of schools, it happens that schools don't have sufficient budgets and are understaffed. In this context it should also be noted that even where all schools in a member state are approved, this does not guarantee that all veterinarians in working in the country are graduated from an approved school. Because of the freedom to provide services across borders and to establish throughout the community, also graduates from non approved schools can work where they wish to.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Population (Millions)</b>	<b>Number of schools</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Population (Millions)</b>	<b>Number of schools</b>
Austria	8.1	1	Latvia	2.3	1
Belgium	10.4	2	Lithuania	3.4	1
Bulgaria	7.8	2	Luxembourg	0.45	-
Czech Republic	10.2	1	Malta	0.4	-
Cyprus	0.8	-	Netherlands	16.3	1
Denmark	5.4	1	Poland	38.2	4
Estonia	1.4	1	Portugal	10.5	6
Finland	5.2	1	Romania	21.7	4
France	62.1	4	Slovak Republic	5.4	1
Germany	82.5	5	Spain	42.3	12
Greece	11.0	2	Slovenia	2.0	1
Hungary	10.1	1	Sweden	8.9	1
Ireland	4.0	1	United Kingdom	59.7	7
Italy	57.8	13			

Table 2. EU member States, their population and numbers of veterinary schools.

### Future developments

At this moment EAEVE and FVE are striving to improve the transparency and with that the credibility of the evaluation system. Standard Operating Procedures were thoroughly reviewed, and the next objective is to have the system accredited by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Another important wish of both organisations is to get the system recognised by the competent authorities, preferably at EU level. The essential weakness of the system is that although it provides good and reliable information about the quality of education offered by the schools and faculties, this does not necessarily lead to proper actions. In many cases the visitation reports have shown to be very valuable for convincing the competent authorities that improvements had to be made, on the other hand in a number of cases serious deficiencies continue for many years. Competent authorities don't seem to be interested or have other priorities.

For the long term EAEVE and FVE wish to develop the existing systems for visitation, evaluation/accreditation of schools towards a global network of systems mutually recognising each other. This will be indispensable for European veterinarians to obtain equal opportunities as their colleagues from other parts of the world.

### Conclusion

Within the European Union (EU-27), training and licensing of individuals as veterinarians is a Member State competence. The role of the EU is limited to "to contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between member states and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the member states for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity."

EAEVE and FVE together run an evaluation system that provides a reliable and fair view of the quality of veterinary education in the participating schools and faculties. The ongoing process of accreditation of the system through ENQA will contribute to a further strengthening of the quality and credibility of this system.

At this moment 38 out of 71 schools within the EU are unconditionally approved. These schools at least meet the minimum standards and many of them go far beyond that level. They can be reckoned to the group of leading veterinary schools in the world.

It is very regrettable that in a number of cases the outcomes of the evaluations are not used in the way they should be used. Opportunities to improve the quality of veterinary education are not recognised or just neglected by the responsible authorities. There is a need for a rigorous enforcement of the actions needed to remedy deficiencies.

**DIRECTIVE 2005/36/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL  
of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications**

Article 38

**The training of veterinary surgeons**

1. The training of veterinary surgeons shall comprise a total of at least five years of full-time theoretical and practical study at a university or at a higher institute providing training recognised as being of an equivalent level, or under the supervision of a university, covering at least the study programme referred to in Annex V, point 5.4.1.

The content listed in Annex V, point 5.4.1 may be amended in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 58(2) with a view to adapting it to scientific and technical progress.

Such updates may not entail, for any Member State, any amendment of its existing legislative principles relating to the structure of professions as regards training and conditions of access by natural persons.

2. Admission to veterinary training shall be contingent upon possession of a diploma or certificate entitling the holder to enter, for the studies in question, university establishments or institutes of higher education recognised by a Member State to be of an equivalent level for the purpose of the relevant study.

3. Training as a veterinary surgeon shall provide an assurance that the person in question has acquired the following knowledge and skills:

- (a) adequate knowledge of the sciences on which the activities of the veterinary surgeon are based;
- (b) adequate knowledge of the structure and functions of healthy animals, of their husbandry, reproduction and hygiene in general, as well as their feeding, including the technology involved in the manufacture and preservation of foods corresponding to their needs;
- (c) adequate knowledge of the behaviour and protection of animals;
- (d) adequate knowledge of the causes, nature, course, effects, diagnosis and treatment of the diseases of animals, whether considered individually or in groups, including a special knowledge of the diseases which may be transmitted to humans;
- (e) adequate knowledge of preventive medicine;
- (f) adequate knowledge of the hygiene and technology involved in the production, manufacture and putting into circulation of animal foodstuffs or foodstuffs of animal origin intended for human consumption;
- (g) adequate knowledge of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions relating to the subjects listed above;
- (h) adequate clinical and other practical experience under appropriate supervision.

**DIRECTIVE 2005/36/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL  
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**ANNEX V.4. VETERINARY SURGEON**

**5.4.1. Study programme for veterinary surgeons**

The programme of studies leading to the evidence of formal qualifications in veterinary medicine shall include at least the subjects listed below.

Instruction in one or more of these subjects may be given as part of, or in association with, other courses.

- A. Basic subjects
  - Physics
  - Chemistry
  - Animal biology
  - Plant biology
  - Biomathematics
- B. Specific subjects
  - a. Basic sciences:
    - Anatomy (including histology and embryology)
    - Physiology
    - Biochemistry
    - Genetics
    - Pharmacology
    - Pharmacy
    - Toxicology
    - Microbiology
    - Immunology
    - Epidemiology
    - Professional ethics
  - b. Clinical sciences:

- *Obstetrics*
- *Pathology (including pathological anatomy)*
- *Parasitology*
- *Clinical medicine and surgery (including anaesthetics)*
- *Clinical lectures on the various domestic animals, poultry and other animal species*
- *Preventive medicine*
- *Radiology*
- *Reproduction and reproductive disorders*
- *Veterinary state medicine and public health*
- *Veterinary legislation and forensic medicine*
- *Therapeutics*
- *Propaedeutics*

*c. Animal production*

- *Animal production*
- *Animal nutrition*
- *Agronomy*
- *Rural economics*
- *Animal husbandry*
- *Veterinary hygiene*
- *Animal ethology and protection*

*d. Food hygiene*

- *Inspection and control of animal foodstuffs or foodstuffs of animal origin*
- *Food hygiene and technology*
- *Practical work (including practical work in places where slaughtering and processing of foodstuffs takes place)*

*Practical training may be in the form of a training period, provided that such training is full-time and under the direct control of the competent authority, and does not exceed six months within the aggregate training period of five years study.*

*The distribution of the theoretical and practical training among the various groups of subjects shall be balanced and coordinated in such a way that the knowledge and experience may be acquired in a manner which will enable veterinary surgeons to perform all their duties.*

<sup>1</sup> Council Directive 78/1026/EEC of 18 December 1978 concerning the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in veterinary medicine, including measures to facilitate the effective exercise of the right of establishment and freedom to provide services

<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 78/1027/EEC of 18 December 1978 concerning the coordination of provisions laid down by Law, Regulation or Administrative Action in respect of the activities of veterinary surgeons

<sup>3</sup> Council Decision 78/1028/EEC: of 18 December 1978 setting up an Advisory Committee on Veterinary Training

<sup>4</sup> DIRECTIVE 2001/19/EC of 14 May 2001 amending Council Directives 89/48/EEC and 92/51/EEC on the general system for the recognition of professional qualifications and Council Directives 77/452/EEC, 77/453/EEC, 78/686/EEC, 78/687/EEC, 78/1026/EEC, 78/1027/EEC, 80/154/EEC, 80/155/EEC, 85/384/EEC, 85/432/EEC, 85/433/EEC and 93/16/EEC concerning the professions of nurse responsible for general care, dental practitioner, veterinary surgeon, midwife, architect, pharmacist and doctor

<sup>5</sup> Directive 2005/36/ EC of 7 September 2005 of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications

<sup>6</sup> Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 of 29 April 2004 laying down specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.eaave.org/fileadmin/downloads/sop/SOP\\_Approved\\_neu.pdf](http://www.eaave.org/fileadmin/downloads/sop/SOP_Approved_neu.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> For a complete overview please visit [http://www.eaave.org/fileadmin/downloads/establishments\\_status/establishments\\_status.pdf](http://www.eaave.org/fileadmin/downloads/establishments_status/establishments_status.pdf)