



## OIE regional Commission for Europe

### **Sixth meeting of the Regional Core Group (RCG6) for improving countries' participation in OIE activities**

- 17 and 18 December 2018 – Bern / Switzerland -

## Report

### Summary

The RCG7 reviewed the objectives laid down in the regional workplan framework 2017-2020 (transparency and communication; education, capacity and sustainability of veterinary services; control of animal diseases; AMR and One health; animal welfare). A report of the OIE Council activities was provided. It reflected on several strategic issues for the region (ASF, GF-TADs, PVS, One Health implementation). The main points of the reports of the last meeting of the terrestrial and aquatic code commissions were pointed out and discussed. Finally, the RCG was updated on the project of the renewed OIE regional website, and the human resources in the 3 OIE representations of the region.

Several follow-up actions were identified during the discussions. They are detailed in the full report below.

The RCG8 will take place in Madrid, Spain, on 29 and 30 April, while the UK kindly agreed to host the next formal meeting in November or December 2019.

### Opening, introduction and update by the bureau

Maris Balodis (Chair, Latvia delegate) mentioned the regional conference in Tbilisi last September, where the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RCG was held with the presence of the OIE DG. It reflected on several topics: the place of standards vs. guidelines respectively; the importance of the actual implementation of standards, including the observatory; the OIE budget, which should be linked to the OIE priorities and be sufficient for the regional representations (RR) and sub-regional representations (SRR) to implement all the planned activities.

The regional conference also discussed the budgetary issues, GF-TADs activities, the future 7<sup>th</sup> strategic plan, which will logically follow up on the current 6<sup>th</sup> plan. The Chair reminded that contributing to the preparation of the 7<sup>th</sup> strategic plan is clearly a responsibility of the RCG. He also expressed the need for the region to continue being active in the area of AMR, animal welfare (AW), combatting ASF and LSD, etc.

### Session 1 – Regional Work Plan 2017-2020 – activities addressing the Regional Objectives implemented in 2018 and plans for 2019: review of the specific regional objectives

#### • **Objective 2: Establishing trust through transparency and communication (PPT presentation)**

Fabien Schneegans mainly presented the following:

- Situation in the region, including shortcomings, with regards to the timely reporting of diseases: the quality of immediate notifications and weekly follow-up reports should be improved; the average submission time between two weekly follow-up reports is 36 days; on 15 December, 30% and 34% of the countries have still not submitted their 6-monthly terrestrial and aquatic reports respectively regarding the 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2018 (**NB: these 6-monthly reports are urgently needed by the OIE HQ in the context of the development of WAHIS+**); some countries in the region show major gaps in terms of reporting.
- update on the projects WAHIS+ and ADIS: both of them should be operational by next September.

- a state of play of the place of Europe in the networks of OIE reference laboratories (139 are in Europe out of 238 worldwide = 58%) and collaborating centres (18 are in Europe out of 73 worldwide = 25%).
- use of different routes of communication: the webpages of the OIE AW platform, GF-TADs for Europe and regional core group, all managed by the OIE SRR, were mentioned.

#### Discussion

The RCG members agreed on the need to improve the reporting to the OIE, but also stressed the following issues:

- The request to provide weekly follow-up reports after an immediate notification until the case is solved can be very burdensome: i) is it relevant to provide a weekly report when there is no change? ii) once the case is solved, countries cannot close it if all the weekly reports have not been provided.
- Inconsistencies between the Code and WAHIS requirements:
  - o the possibility to declare a case closed in WAHIS, earlier than the timeline provided in the Code to be recognized as free from the disease is very confusing.
  - o The possibility to specify in WAHIS if an outbreak involves the backyard or commercial sector should be based on a definition for these two terms in the Code. NL has already sent some time ago a long Email to OIE HQ to list these inconsistencies. It should be enriched by the RCG and sent again to the OIE HQ by the RCG.
- 6-monthly reports: if some countries didn't provide their 6-monthly reports for a few years it might indicate a problem with their focal points for notification or some difficulties with the document itself.
- The regular reporting by a country should probably be taken into account when it comes to status recognition or recovery.

Follow-up action: to circulate and enrich the NL note on inconsistencies between WAHIS and the Code before sending it to the OIE HQ on behalf of the RCG. Responsibility: Christianne Brusckke, Fabien Schneegans (RCG secretariat) and other RCG members.

- **Objective 3: Ensuring education, capacity and sustainability of veterinary services (PPT presentation)**

Djane Montabard provided an update on the use of the PVS tools by the countries of the region: 20 have undergone a PVS evaluation, including 3 for which the PVS is older than 5 years; a PVS gap analysis has been requested by 10 countries. Other support activities to the veterinary services include One health bridging workshops (see also session 3), various activities on laboratories, training of veterinarians and para-veterinarians, focal points seminars, and regional capacity building on standards (a seminar was organized in Bishkek last July for the Eurasian Economic Commission, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Russia).

- **Objective 4: Prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases (PPT presentation)**

Fabien Schneegans presented a short update on the GF-TADs in Europe (governance) and its activities (ASF and LSD, possibly rabies in the near future): standing groups of experts, collection and online display of various material, expert missions. He provided a general outlook on the human and financial resources dedicated to the GF-TADs activities, stressing that the activities have been so far essentially funded by the European Commission.

#### Discussion

- Human resources: Budimir Plasvic mentioned that the RR Moscow and SRR Astana could help in the future.
- Financial resources: the European Commission is happy to continue the ad hoc funding of the meetings of the SGE and emergency expert missions. The question was raised whether OIE world fund could be put to contribution as well. In any case it would be useful to have some details regarding the costs of the GF-TADs activities in order to quantify the needs and possible gaps for the future.
- Priorities: Ulrich Herzog mentioned that EuFMD could be looking into PPR and LSD in the future.
- Membership: Budimir Plasvic suggested that the Eurasian Economic Commission could be an interesting player of GF-TADs.
- Standing groups of experts (SGE): Christianne Brusckke regretted the distinction between 'members' and 'observers', stressing that the latter didn't make it attractive to participate. It was explained that the distinction was purely linked to reimbursement issues. The issue could be solved by renaming the positions.
- ASF Handbook recommendation vs. latest EFSA modelling work: they are not consistent when it comes to hunting in the core and buffer zones. Which approach should the countries trust and implement? It was suggested that this issue should maybe be discussed in the next SGE ASF.
- Experts missions: Nikita Lebedev regretted that these missions were organized long after the initial event in a country when they should take place as quickly as possible. However, others considered that the purpose was not to provide an emergency support to the affected countries but to ensure transparency on the sanitary situation.

Follow-up actions:

- To explore the possibility to restructure the vocabulary used for the SGE participation (member vs. observer). Responsibility: Fabien Schneegans (RCG secretariat).
- to prepare a note to the RCG on the costs of the GF-TADs activities. Responsibility: Fabien Schneegans (RCG secretariat).

- **Objective 5: AMR and One Health - policy (PPT presentation)**

Djahne Montabard presented the current activities in the region to implement the global AMR Action plan.

Ongoing 4<sup>th</sup> annual campaign for the collection of data on antimicrobial agents intended for use in animals: the deadline has been extended to 31 January 2019. The information provided by Europe appears very consistent (animals vs biomass). But Europe still needs to improve significantly the rate of providing quantitative data.

National action plans (NAP): there is a lot of activities proposed by WHO to help countries build their NAP. Good progress has taken place between 2016 and 2017 in the answers provided by Europe, but there is still some room for improvement.

WHO will soon send a country questionnaire on the NAP, with a deadline for feedback on 15 February 2019. The online questionnaire will be sent to the Health contact point only. OIE RR and SRR will flag it to the OIE delegates so that they can liaise with the human health colleagues, since it is meant to be filled out at national level with the collaboration of human health, animal health and agricultural sectors.

She also mentioned a very practical manual prepared by FAO and the Swedish Agricultural University, jointly with experts from the OIE, professional associations and farmers, on the prudent and efficient use of AMR in pigs and poultry, specifically designed for Europe.

Discussion

Thomas Jemmi raised a concern over the duplication of questionnaires on AMR (OIE, Codex, WHO, etc.).

Kazimieras Lukauskas raised the item of industry AMR plans prepared by some sectors in some countries, and the fact that they would like to benefit from some expertise. It was suggested that FVE, AVEC (poultry sector) and other sectorial federations could be resourceful and should be contacted by these sectors.

- **Objective 5: Promotion of animal welfare (PPT presentation)**

Budimir Plasvic presented the 2018 activities of the OIE platform: whole journey scenario (Zaborek, Poland), regional stray dog roadmap for Balkans (Belgrade, RS), animal welfare in disaster management (Teramo, IT). In 2019 the action plans are to have an external evaluation of the OIE platform, an awareness campaign on working equids, a seminar for the stray dog roadmap for west Eurasia (location to be confirmed), the next workshop on AW in disaster situation. He also provided an update on the funding of the OIE platform, and a reflection on the best ways to promote animal welfare in Europe.

Discussion

- Governance of the OIE AW platform: Ulrich Herzog insisted that the OIE platform is politically critical. However, there is a feeling that the RCG is not properly informed about its activities, and that the platform process is separated from the other regular activities. The participants to the recent Steering Group (SG) of the Platform (Horsham 4 December) explained that this reflection is ongoing within the SG, with the idea of amending the concept note, e.g. to have a representative of the regional commission bureau chair the SG. It was also noted that the participation of delegates in the recent meetings of the SG, particularly from the beneficiary countries, was insufficient.
- Funding of the OIE AW platform: the members of the RCG made very clear that they want to be informed in advance if there is a need for funding, including in neighbouring regions, to top the 50% cofunding of the EC. The OIE HQ should let the RCG know about activities at risk of being cancelled for reasons of lack of money, including in neighbouring OIE regions, so that additional resources may possibly be found at national level. On the other hand, it was also mentioned the risk that if these countries (Middle East or Africa) don't invest money they will attend without being really interested, and therefore will probably not implement in the end...
- Stray dog roadmap for BY, MO, RU and UA: Nikita Lebedev confirmed that Russia is very interested by this activity. Considering that it is not appropriate to initiate a 3<sup>rd</sup> roadmap (there is already one for the Balkans and West Eurasia), he expressed the willingness of Russia to join the WE roadmap. Suggestion is that the other 3 are also proposed to join the WE roadmap.
- Whole journey scenario (WJS): Ulrich Herzog mentioned the need to organize other WJS in Europe. It was explained that the platform must first reflect and possibly follow up on the outcomes of the first exercise (contact points, route leaflets, etc.). As regards a Europe-Middle East route, it was explained that 2019 will be dedicated to the training of the countries of the Middle East region, a prerequisite before having an inter-region exercise.

Follow-up actions:

- To follow up at the RCG8 in April 2019 with an update on the platform evaluation and initial drafts of the concept note and next action plan. Responsibility: Fabien Schneegans (RCG secretariat).
- To liaise with the OIE HQ so that a timely information can be sent out to the RCG in case AW activities are jeopardized by a lack of funding, including with regards to the neighbouring regions. Responsibility: Fabien Schneegans (RCG secretariat).

## Session 2 – Council activities: report of the Council meeting in September 2018 (PPT presentation)

Christianne Brusckhe reported on the last meeting of the OIE Council in September 2018, which touched on:

- Evaluation of the 86<sup>th</sup> general session: the venue is not ideal, but there is no other option than the Maison de la Chimie if we are to stay in town, which delegations overall prefer. Positive points: access to documents (wifi...); final report; use of social media; the new delegate seminar. Negative points: time management (could some of the agenda points be discussed elsewhere than in the GS?); elections (the voting procedure is not clear, particularly when different positions are opened within one specialist commission, and sometimes there are issues with the electronic voting system).

*Discussion:* regarding the elections, the opinion was that the procedure has been trying to adjust to the voting tool, when it should be the other way around. Regarding the agenda, a solution could be to have parallel sessions. A welcome improvement of the venue would be to offer power plugs in the plenary room.

- 7<sup>th</sup> strategic plan: the modernisation of the OIE should go on; the scientific policy was extensively discussed, including the fact that 1/ the performance of the reference laboratories is not evaluated today; 2/ some collaborating centres only have a vague mandate and an objective evaluation would also be necessary.
- Specialists commissions: a form of evaluation should be established. It was decided that each member individually should have 2 meetings with the DDG during a term, with a feedback sent to the delegate that proposed the member (this point is still under discussion). The term limit is not established in the basic texts, but a procedural note appended to a Resolution adopted in 2017 provides for 2 renewals, i.e. 3 terms.
- Observatory project: its governance was discussed. The project team and the Steering committee should remain in the OIE. On top, the Council should provide the strategic guidance and the reference group the technical guidance.
- Priorities of the OIE: AMR strategy (the creation of a special department in the OIE HQ triggered a question: is it appropriate to create a special unit for every priority of the OIE?), IT systems (confirmation of the importance of their urgent renovation), ASF.  
*Discussion:* the RCG would like to have more detailed information on the the financing of the IT systems – possibly after the February meeting of the OIE council. Also, the OIE often subcontracts and the cost / benefit ratio should be closely monitored.

Follow-up action: to organize a teleconference of the RCG ahead of the February meeting of the OIE Council. Responsibility: Ulrich Herzog (Austria).

## Session 3 – Information and discussion about specific strategic issues for the region

- **ASF: recent developments and GF-TADs recommendations**

Maris Balodis presented an analysis of the recommendations produced by the successive SGE ASF, which address biosecurity in domestic pigs/farms/backyards; wild boar management; communication and awareness; surveillance; actions at the border. Latvia considers that we still lack a scenario for a way out in case of a persistent infection in wild boar for several years, and how to reduce or keep wild boar populations as low as possible, considering that according to its national experience: 1/ hunting is not very efficient to keep the population low, 2/ basic biosecurity is not enough to stop introduction in domestic pigs. Regarding the latter, Latvia is of the opinion that biosecurity requirements should be raised to a level that makes them impossible to be met in the backyard sector (“backyard and ASF are not compatible”). Also, ASF should be made higher priority for customs and border guards, and the level of controls of travellers is way too low.

*Discussion:* Valentin Almansa stressed the usefulness of active surveillance, on top of passive surveillance, to keep up the awareness of the veterinarians, the farmers, etc., and also because at some point the virus may become less pathogen and not kill anymore, therefore less susceptible of being detected by passive surveillance.

- **GF-TADs global steering committee**

Moritz Klemm explained that the meeting took place in the FAO headquarters on 13 and 14 November in Rome, for the first time in 2 years (information and all presentations available at <http://www.gf-tads.org/events/events-detail/en/c/1151593/>). It was attended by senior officials from OIE and FAO, the presidents of the regional steering committees and their secretariat, donors (FR, IT), WHO, EuFMD, etc.

The main topic was the discussion on the outcome of the 3<sup>rd</sup> external evaluation of the global GF-TADs (report at <http://www.fao.org/3/CA1957EN/ca1957en.pdf>). The issues identified were about the funding, the global secretariat (only 1 person half time), the need for OIE and FAO to invest more in this initiative. A draft action plan addressing the identified deficiencies was discussed and is to be finalised. It calls in particular for a proper staffing and funding of the global secretariat and proposes that there is more flexibility in terms of hosting the global and regional secretariats – OIE proposed to host the global secretariat and dedicate 3 staff. Europe and its SGEs was presented as a model region, while no GF-TADs activity took place in some regions (e.g. Africa). The global FMD and PPR control programmes as well as the rinderpest post-eradication activities were identified as the global priorities, while the regions will be allowed to define a limited number of additional priority diseases (e.g. ASF and LSD in Europe); major zoonoses (rabies, AI) will be addressed under the FAO/OIE/WHO Tripartite Agreement. Global and regional workplans as well as terms of reference of the steering committees will be updated. Raising the visibility of GF-TADs is also critical in order to secure appropriate funding.

*Discussion:* Ulrich Herzog expressed the view that raising the visibility and awareness about the OIE was more important than about the GF-TADs, and doubts about the added value of the global secretariat. Graeme Cooke was disappointed that no activity happened in the past years in Africa; however there is hope for the future, considering that an agreement was just recently found on AU-IBAR chairing the regional steering committee for Africa.

- **PVS outcome of the discussion among the EU CVOs (WORD document)**

Ulrich Herzog presented the outcome of the reflection conducted by the EU CVOs during the Austrian presidency of the EU Council. It is laid out in the following document “Working Document: Preparation for an EU position on a future strategy concerning the support of the OIE PVS Pathway initiative”.

The EU supports the further development of the PVS within the OIE core activities, while the funding of PVS activities should remain in the remit of the world fund. Participation of countries should remain voluntary.

Use of the PVS by EU Member States: some elements of the PVS are not part of the EU country profile, to which they could be added. It is proposed to establish a joint working group of experts to work on the integration of certain elements of the OIE PVS into the EU country profile system. The group should include representatives of the OIE, the EC, 5 EU member states – including MS which have already done a PVS self-evaluation (FR, BE, IE) and others which do not have this experience. It should start working in the coming months. The agreement within the EU Council working group of CVOs is that until the outcome of this joint group no EUMS will ask for a PVS evaluation; they may however go for a self-evaluation. How to better combine the country profile and the PVS could also be an interesting outcome for other regions. Draft ToR for this working group are being prepared by SANTE Directorate F and will be shared soon with the OIE. They will also reflect on the way to improve the country profiles.

- **One health policy implementation in Europe (PPT presentation)**

Djahné Montabard presented the national bridging workshops, which build on the similarities between the approaches of the OIE PVS tool and the WHO JEE: OIE Code / international health regulation, PVS process / IHR monitoring and evaluation framework. The objective of the workshops is to promote the “one health” approach and dialogue between veterinary services and human health services. The presentation describes the various sessions of these workshops and how they eventually enable to identify where there is a lack of cooperation between human and animal health. A main outcome of these workshops is the drafting of a roadmap to improve collaboration between veterinary services and human health services. Bridging workshops were organized in 2018 in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Albania. Plans for 2019 may include Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Armenia and Serbia.

A meeting on zoonosis (Echinococcosis, rabies and brucellosis) took place in November 2018 in Kazakhstan with the participation of 9 countries of West Eurasia and Caucasus (ARM, AZE, GEO, KAZ, KGZ, RUS, TJK, TKM, UZB). The outcome of the meeting was a series of recommendation as regards actions to be implemented by the countries on the one hand, and by WHO/OIE on the other hand.

*Discussion:* it was clarified that the bridging meetings are funded by WHO and OIE, and that the countries need to build on their annual IHR self-evaluation and PSV report (a PVS self-evaluation seems also acceptable).

## Session 4 – OIE terrestrial and aquatic codes

Moritz Klemm provided a feedback of the report of the terrestrial and aquatic Code commissions of last September. The comments of the countries are expected by 4 January regarding the aquatic Code, and 14 January regarding the terrestrial Code. All countries are strongly encouraged to send comments, even if on a limited number of chapters.

### Terrestrial Code

The report includes 25 annexes. It is now also available on the public website of the OIE.

The comments of the EU member states have been coordinated in a series of meetings and finalised at the EU Council meeting of the CVOs last week. They have been sent to the OIE and are available on the website of DG SANTE at [https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/international\\_affairs/standard\\_setting\\_bodies/oie/eu-comments\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/international_affairs/standard_setting_bodies/oie/eu-comments_en).

- Part A (chapters for adoption next May, after a further revision at the meeting of the Code commission in February 2019). According to the European Commission, the following are the most significant chapters for Europe:
  - Animal health surveillance, following more than 2 years of discussion.
  - Rabies: reviewed in the light of the objective of eradication of dog mediated rabies by 2030, with new provisions on country freedom, import requirements, control program, etc. The EU does not support the proposed reduction of the 4 months waiting period between vaccination and importation from an infected country.
  - ASF: this chapter was already updated in 2017 but will be proposed again with the deletion of one sentence which is of significant concern particularly to China, with regards to the safe trade of products from a country infected with ASF in wildboars only. However, since the principle will remain despite the deletion of this particular sentence, the EU can agree with the proposed amendment.
- Part B (chapters for adoption in 2020 or later) - most significant chapters for Europe:
  - Definition of "captive wild animals" in the glossary: the proposed definition would eventually lead to consider that all wild boars in Europe are captive because they are 'managed' (e.g. some feeding) and hunted. The EU has sent a strong comment against this proposal.
  - New chapter on the animal welfare in laying hens.
  - Thorough review of the CSF chapter, along the line of the recent revision of the ASF chapter.
  - Avian influenza: the proposed revision aims at refocusing the chapter on HPAI. The monitoring of LPAI should remain necessary, but with notification of LPAI cases in the 6-monthly reports only and not as immediate notifications to avoid irrelevant reactions and subsequent trade consequences. For the same reasons, poultry raised and used only in the household should be excluded from the definition of the term 'poultry', and therefore be exempted from notification in case of HPAI confirmation. Finally, the period to regain freedom after an HPAI outbreak should be reduced from 3 months to 28 days.

### Aquatic Code

Most of the chapters will be proposed for adoption, usually with only minor changes. Main documents of interest:

- Annex 13, which is a discussion paper on the different ways to demonstrate country or zone freedom.
- A new chapter on biosecurity in aquaculture.

### Discussion

- About the rabies chapter :
  - Lasha Avaliani raised the difficulties that non-EU countries can face when pets from an EU member state are presented after a temporary stay outside the EU, but with no titration in the EU before leaving the EU. They are then stuck for 4 months before being allowed to travel back to the EU.
  - The proposed reduction of the 4 months waiting period between vaccination and importation from an infected country apparently stems from a SCAD report which says that an animal is protected as soon as the titre is  $>0,5$  IU/ml.
- Lasha Avaliani proposed a revision of the 'case definition' in article 1.4.1. (chapter on Animal health surveillance) to be used in the countries: a 4 stages definition – including 'suspicion', in line with CDC and WHO practices. The proposal definitely raised some interest and explicit support from Switzerland while the Netherlands considered that it could unfortunately decrease the clarity of the Code. Georgia was eventually encouraged to send directly a comment to the OIE, with copy to the RC secretariat which will then forward it to all members of the RCG.

Follow-up actions:

- Other comments on the proposed chapters to be sent directly by the countries to the OIE, copy to the RCG Secretariat which will circulate them to all the members of the RCG. Responsibility: RCG members and Fabien Schneegans (RCG secretariat).
- after the February meeting of the Code commission, the latest version of following chapters – part A: Animal health surveillance, Rabies and ASF; part B: glossary (definition of “captive wild animals”), animal welfare in laying hens, avian influenza - should be sent for translation in Russian by VGNKI. Responsibility: Fabien Schneegans (RCG secretariat) and Nikita Lebedev (Russia)

## Session 5 – administrative items

- **Information about the future renewed OIE regional website (PPT presentation)**

Djahne Montabard presented the current situation regarding the OIE regional websites. The OIE will develop 5 regional websites to be centralized in a single platform with harmonized layout (OIE visual identity), centralized maintenance, etc. The regional website for Europe will be the first one to be developed during the 1<sup>st</sup> trimester 2019, thanks to the funding provided by Switzerland in particular. It should be bilingual, English and Russian.

The RCG confirmed the critical importance of the future regional website, which must be robust and professional.

- **Update on the staff of the regional offices (PPT presentation)**

Since last April (RCG5 in Moscow) significant movements of staff affected the SRR Brussels. The same will be true for the RR Moscow and the SRR Astana as of January 2019. Future plans include the possible reinforcement of the RR Moscow with a Russian deputy Representative, of the SRR Astana with a new officer, and of the SRR Brussels with an officer seconded by Italy and with an administrative assistant.

Kazimieras Lukauskas will formally retire at the end of 2018 but will serve for some time as a part-time adviser to Budimir Plasvic, the new regional Representative in Moscow.

## Next meeting of the Regional Core Group

Spain volunteered to host the eighth meeting of the RCG on Monday 29<sup>th</sup>, starting in the afternoon, and Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019. The United Kingdom offered to host the subsequent meeting in November 2019.

Initial suggestions of topics to be discussed at the RCG8 in Madrid:

- Animal welfare: follow up of the discussion on the OIE AW platform with a view to enhance the participation of the RCG in the governance of the platform, e.g. via the chairing of the Steering Group of the platform by a member of the RCG. Responsibility: Fabien Schneegans (SRR Brussels).
- Possible financial gaps regarding OIE activities of interest for the regional commission for Europe, including the regional website, animal welfare activities of neighbouring regions with an impact on AW in transportation from Europe, etc. Responsibility: Fabien Schneegans (OIE SRR Brussels).
- Outcome of the meeting of the terrestrial and aquatic Code commissions in February 2019 and possible common positions of the regional commission for Europe. Responsibility: Moritz Klemm (European Commission).
- Outcome of the OIE Council meeting of February 2019. Responsibility: Christianne Brusckhe (the Netherlands).
- Upcoming elections in the regional commission and the OIE council. Responsibility: TBD.
- Presentation of the Switzerland-Georgia partnership as an example of a bilateral support initiative within the region. Responsibility: Lasha Avaliani (Georgia) and Thomas Jemmi (Switzerland).
- Update on the development of the new regional website. Responsibility: Djahne Montabard (RR Moscow).

Any other suggestions for the agenda of the RCG8 should be sent to the RCG secretariat by 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

Follow-up actions:

- to suggest topics for the agenda of the RCG8 by 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Responsibility: all RCG members.
- to prepare the RCG8. Responsibility: Fabien Schneegans (RCG secretariat) and Valentin Almansa (Spain)

## Acknowledgements

The Members and Secretariat of the Regional Core Group would like to address their deep thanks to the government of Switzerland for their warm hospitality.