



## Third OIE regional workshop on the role of Veterinary Services on animal welfare in natural disasters for Balkan countries (DMAWB3)

9-11 November 2021

### Meeting report

#### Summary

The workshop was organized in the form of a Tabletop Exercise (TTX) that concluded the 3 years pilot project launched by the OIE Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe in 2018 on natural disaster preparedness in the Balkans. The event was attended by 40 selected experts in representation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Greece, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. Prominent international speakers and animal welfare NGOs' representatives also attended as contributors and/or facilitators.

The TTX aimed at testing and validating model Veterinary Service's Contingency Plans (VS-CP) for the management of animal welfare matters in a flooding scenario whilst identifying issues and improvements of protocols and operational procedures employed in managing the event. Romanian, Bulgarian and Montenegro representatives updated the participants on project progress achieved over time and introduced their own contingency plans.

Four working groups were asked to identify and suggest the main elements for improvements of the Romanian model contingency plan to be applied in response to a fictional flood simulation scenario, prepared by the exercise planning team with the support of the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (NSVFSA) experts, and how to embed the lessons learned during earlier emergencies when revising operating protocols or developing new ones.

Preliminary results of the OIE survey on the "Levels of Veterinary Services' preparedness for dealing with animal welfare emergencies during natural disasters" conducted by Lincoln Memorial University in conjunction with the Platform Secretariat were also presented.

Participants noted the importance of strengthening Veterinary Services' awareness on their crucial roles when dealing with natural disasters, where they have proven to be responsive and effective, for a better integration in the Civil Protection mechanisms and the need for organizing more training events and simulation exercises, in order to improve the existing contingency plans and to identify and develop specific operational procedures.

Based on the results of this workshop and the outcomes of the regional needs assessment exercise focusing on Veterinary Services preparedness and capacity levels, geographical scope and possible disaster scenarios, new initiatives will be developed in this area, within the context of the 2021- 2023 Action Plan of the OIE Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe.

## **Introduction**

The OIE Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe (OIE Platform) ([www.rpawe.oie.int](http://www.rpawe.oie.int)) was created in 2013 with the aim of supporting OIE European member countries to take action with regard to animal welfare, in line with OIE standards. Welfare of animals in disasters was identified as a new priority topic for the 2nd Action Plan of the OIE Platform (2017-2019).

The OIE Platform and OIE Collaborating Center IZSAM Teramo (IZSAM) has consequently developed a **3-year stepwise pilot approach on natural disaster preparedness**, which main aim is to assist the European OIE Member Countries build a culture of preparedness among Veterinary Services and relevant stakeholders. This is to encourage the development of Veterinary Services Contingency Plans (VS-CPs) for animal welfare during natural disaster situations and ensure proper livestock, wildlife, and companion animal welfare assistance during and after natural disasters.

The first OIE regional workshop on the role of Veterinary Services on animal welfare in natural disasters, for Balkan countries (DMAWB1), was held in Teramo in November 2018 with the main goal of encouraging countries to engage in preparedness as an essential step for adequate rapid response during natural disasters. The event was mostly attended by representatives from central and local Veterinary Services and civil protection services coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Greece, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, and it supplied basic elements to develop country specific Veterinary Services Contingency Plans (VS-CP) based on the OIE guidelines on Disaster Management and Risk Reduction.

A second meeting (DMAWB2) aiming at presenting the progress made by the participating countries in developing their own VS-CP with regards to animal welfare in case of a flood event, and discussing the main challenges they have to face, was held in Sarajevo in October 2019. On this occasion, representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia presented the progresses made in developing their own Veterinary Services Contingency Plans (VS-CP) with regards to animal welfare in case of flooding and agreed to further refine them in the light of the meeting outcomes. Main challenges have been identified and discussed in a group exercise.

The third and final workshop (DMAWB3), planned to be held in 2020, was later on cancelled due to concerns about COVID-19 and eventually turned into a digital a Table Top Exercise (TTX) organized by the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "G:Caporale" IZSAM/OIE Collaborating Centres on Animal Welfare, and Veterinary Training and Capacity Building, from the 9th to the 11th of November 2021.

TTX are typically discussion-based sessions where team members meet in an informal, classroom setting to discuss their roles during an emergency and their responses to a particular situation. In this case, it was meant at testing and validating model Veterinary Service's Contingency Plans (VS-CP) for the management of animal welfare matters in a flooding scenario whilst identifying issues and improvements of protocols and operational procedures employed in managing the event.

Over 40 experts (**Annex 1**), including the representatives of Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, as well as participants from the Red Cross, the Directorate for Protection and Rescue, Veterinary Faculties and NGOs, attended the event and were asked to identify the gaps, and to propose elements for improvements of the model contingency plans proposed by Romania and Bulgaria, and how to embed the lessons learned during earlier emergencies when revising protocols and operating procedures employed in managing catastrophic events or developing new ones.

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

Preliminary results of the OIE survey on the "Levels of Veterinary Services' preparedness for dealing with animal welfare emergencies during natural disasters" conducted by the Lincoln Memorial University in conjunction with the Platform Secretariat were also presented by prof. Gary Vroegindeweij, Chair of the OIE ad hoc group on disaster management and risk reduction in relation to animal health and AW.

Based on the results of the workshop and the outcomes of and ongoing regional needs assessment exercise focusing on Veterinary Services preparedness and capacity levels, geographical scope and possible disaster scenarios, new initiatives will be developed in this area, within the context of the 2021- 2023 Action Plan of the OIE Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe.

## ***DAY ONE - 9 November 2021***

### **Morning session**

Dr. Daniela Morelli (IZSAM) and Dr. Roberto Balbo (OIE) opened the workshop on behalf of IZSAM and OIE respectively. On behalf of the IZSAM Director General, and in her capacity as the contact person of the IZSAM/OIE Collaborating Centre for animal welfare in Europe, dr. Daniela Morelli welcomed the participants and expressed her satisfaction with the organization of the Table Top Exercise (TTX). The IZSAM is extremely glad for having had the opportunity to co-organize this event thanks to a very constructive collaboration between the OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels, the two OIE Collaborating Centres (on animal welfare and veterinary training/capacity building) and the Romanian National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (NSVFSA). Dr. Morelli warmly thanked the NSVFSA experts who strongly contributed to designing the scenario that will be used over the next three days as the model of the simulated sequence of events, in support to the TTX activities. She also thanked all facilitators and tutors, and in particular the Romanian CVO and OIE Delegate Dr. Robert Chioveanu for presenting the Romanian Contingency Plan for the management and mitigation of risks involving animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health in the event of floods, and for allowing the use of such a model for the scope of the simulation exercise.

This workshop concludes the OIE Platform's triannual pilot project on disaster management and animal welfare launched in Teramo in 2019 and it will draw upon the experience of renewed international experts in disaster management and risk reduction. Knowledge plays a crucial part in our daily professional life. Such an unique opportunity will further enrich our competencies and skills on contingency planning for farm, companion and wildlife animal welfare. Ideally, it would have been better to meet again and have this new exciting experience in presence. However, the ongoing pandemic still does not allow us to cooperate in an optimal manner. Nevertheless, we don't give up and we will not give up. Technology will continue to assist us in communicating and collaborating effectively, until these difficulties will be overcome.

The OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels Dr. Roberto Balbo took the floor, explained the genesis and highlighted the importance of the event. This TTX must be considered a pioneering event as for the first time, and in line with what the platform had agreed upon, a pool of experts will literally evaluating a contingency plan on animal welfare aiming at finding its strengths and identifying areas of possible improvement. This will be only possible thanks to the willingness and openness of the Romanian authorities who excellently supported the two IZSAM/OIE Collaborating centres in the preparation of the flooding scenario, according to the OIE guidelines for animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health simulation exercises for Veterinary Services. Furthermore, the relevance of this event is also based on the presence of other stakeholders coming from the industry and the civil society. Dr Balbo wished that all the participants to enjoy the workshop and formally thanked IZSAM for the constant technical/scientific support to the initiatives of the OIE Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe.

Dr. Tomasz Grudnik presented the background context of the Tabletop Exercise. The OIE in 2016 has developed the guidelines for disaster management and risk reduction in relation to animal health, animal

welfare and veterinary public health with the goal of strengthening the capacity of Veterinary Services in Member Countries. The OIE guidelines use an all-hazards approach to the management of natural and man-made and technological disasters and suggest that a wide range of stakeholders from both government and society take action, adapting their interventions to meet local and regional needs. They advocate the integration of disaster management and risk reduction measures relevant to national Veterinary Services into broader resilience and disaster management and response networks and policies. Following development of the guidelines, the second Action Plan (2017-2019) of the OIE Platform on animal welfare in Europe included the welfare of animals in natural disasters among its five priority topics. The OIE Platform and OIE Collaborating Center IZSAM Teramo (IZSAM) has consequently developed a 3-year stepwise pilot approach on natural disaster preparedness to enhance OIE Member Countries' Disaster Management and Risk Reduction capacity in Europe in line with the OIE Guidelines targeted countries. The implementation of the project is described in the introduction part of this report.

#### **Overview of the agenda in relation to the adopted methodological approach - *S. D'Albenzio, IZSAM***

The Tabletop Exercise (TTX) arises from the application of the OIE guidelines for simulation exercises and aimed at testing and validating model Veterinary Service's Contingency Plans (VS-CP) for the management of animal welfare matters in a flooding scenario whilst identifying issues and improvements of protocols and operational procedures employed in managing the event ([Annex 2](#)).

The training event explored the implications for contingency planning to protect the welfare of livestock, wildlife and guarantee companion animal's welfare assistance during and after natural disasters, using the example of a flooding scenario.

The morning session of the first day was devoted to a series of presentations encompassing the objectives achieved by the pilot project implemented in the Balkan Countries to strengthen the capacity of Veterinary Services, and relevant stakeholders, to ensure adequate support in emergency scenarios for which contingency planning could be necessary, from farm-based to large scale-disasters. In addition, invited experts presented the results of ongoing programs and projects developed at national level and discussed on how the anticipation of possible emergencies helped to reduce the impact of natural disasters on animal welfare and to support post-event reconstruction phase.

The TTX started in the afternoon of the first training day with the round #1 of subgroups activities.

The second training day was devoted to sub-group activities and plenary sessions to progress towards the learning scope of this event. Working in small, diverse groups, participants used an 'incident case' methodology to explore decision-making processes and analytical/ problem-solving skills, while exchanging relevant views and professional experiences.

The third day allowed the finalization of the simulation exercises presenting in plenary the outcomes of the previous training sub-group session.

This briefing, debriefing and panel discussion on lessons learned process led the group towards consensus-based conclusions. An update of the OIE disaster management activities was also provided before conclusions and take-home messages.

#### **Main features of the course virtual platform and general recommendations for an effective and engaging learning experience - *A. Falconi, IZSAM***

The ZOOM Platform is one of the most popular cloud-based video communications application that allows people to set up virtual video and audio conferencing, webinars, live chats, screen sharing, and other

collaborative capabilities. There is no need to have an account to attend a Zoom meeting, the platform is compatible with Mac, Windows, Linux, iOS, and Android, meaning nearly anyone can access it. During the meeting, participants and speakers have access to these features:

- Join Audio or Unmute/ Mute.
- Start Video / Stop Video by turning the camera on or off.
- Rename, that is to change the screen name displayed to other participants.
- Chat (possibility to write private or public messages).
- Share Screen as an easy way to show others the own work. People can be asked to do that during the presentation's session and for the group activities with the relative reports in the plenary sessions.
- Reactions: meeting reactions, nonverbal feedback, and raise hand allow people to communicate issues or feedback to the host or presenter without disrupting the meeting. These reactions are shown on the video panel and next to the name on the participants' panel.
- Breakout rooms which allow to split the Zoom meeting in separate sessions. In the breakout room participants can share contents, talk each other and interact. In case of need, it is also possible to ask for support to the staff clicking on the button "Ask for help".
- Virtual background. It is one of the platform's livelier features, which allows people to display and image or video as personal background during a Zoom meeting. It is also possible just to blur the background.

**Presentation I: The Bulgarian experience in developing the contingency plan: added value of the OIE project, lessons learned, tips for improvements and next steps - *A. Miteva, BFSA***

Dr. Aleksandra Miteva, First Secretary at the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European Union, opened the workshop session on the presentation of the contingency plans developed in the frame of the Platform triannual pilot project.

The Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA) has approved a Contingency plan for animal welfare in the event of disasters since April 2021. The Plan refers to the Bulgarian National Disaster Prevention Plan and is based on the multidisciplinary approach and relationships between institutions in disaster management.

The plan follows the OIE Guidelines on 'Disaster management and risk reduction in relation to animal health and welfare and veterinary public health' and describes the roles and duties of the veterinarians in the OIE recommended processes and procedures that cover all phases of the Disaster Management Cycle: Mitigation/Prevention → Preparedness → Response → Recovery. The veterinarians play mainly a supporting role in the event of a natural disaster, which poses major challenges, much different from those in the case of an animal outbreak. They are responsible to ensure animal welfare and health at any phase of the Disaster Management Cycle.

Although it could be considered that well prepared, trained veterinarians, strong command chain within the Veterinary Service and good cooperation between all stakeholders (institutions, private sector, local organizations) are in place, weaknesses are identified, as well (lack of safety procedures for the rescue of wild animals, insufficient places for evacuation of animals, for instance). The BFSA remains committed to further work on improving crisis communication and cooperation between veterinarians, NGOs, and volunteers.

**Presentation II: The North Macedonia experience in developing the contingency plan: added value of the OIE project, lessons learned, tips for improvements and next steps - *M. Simovikj, FVA***

The Food and Veterinary Agency (FVA) of the Republic of North Macedonia actively follows the OIE Platform activities on animal welfare in natural disasters since the beginning of the pilot project. During the second

workshop held in Sarajevo in 2019, participating countries were asked to report on the current level of definition of their own Veterinary Services Contingency Plans (VS-CPs) to be developed on the basis of a model structure circulated by the Platform Secretariat, and to discuss the main challenges faced while pursuing this objective.

On that occasion, the FVA representatives contributed with a presentation describing all the elements needed or already in place for the finalization of the North Macedonian plan for crisis management during natural disasters, rigorously based on the template proposed by the OIE Platform to guide the participating countries in this effort. As requested, they also shared detailed information and several insights about the VSs experience made during the management of the massive flood occurred in Skopje in 2016.

So far, the FVA is engaged in a cooperation agreement signed in 2020 with the Red Cross for the provision of emergency services during or after catastrophic events, and it is currently participating in drafting the 2022 - 2025 National Strategy for the Protection and Rescue as active member of the Appointed Standing Group on disaster management.

The main cornerstone of contingency planning for animal diseases in North Macedonia is the Decision 13-216/1 of 2017 which led to the adoption of a set of contingency plans and operational manuals but did not provide any basis for the adoption of specific plans for the management of AH/AW issues during natural disasters.

In October this year, the enactment of such plan has been finally included in the Decision 10-2430/1 that provides the criteria for the organizational structure of the Operational Units, the decision-making process and functioning of the chain of command, and it prescribes the maintenance of a high level of preparedness and professionalism, through the organization of regular trainings and simulation exercises. The mechanism for the official declaration of emergency is also described along with the active role of the Veterinary Services.

The new decision envisages the preparation of contingency plans in accordance with the new EU legislation for disease control as well as for emergency measures to be taken in the case of catastrophic meteorological events. It also foresees the transformation of the National Centers for Disease Control into National Operational Centers for Emergency Situations (NCDC-NOCIS) and the conversion of Local Centers for disease control in Local Operational Emergency Centers (LCDC-LOCES). The new centers will remain in the previous locations and they will make use of the same facilities, equipment and clothing for personal protection. Differences in the staff composition of the expert groups will depend on the type of emergency, either disease or weather related. So far, three LCDC (LOCES) have been established in Skopje, Stip and Prilep. The first one is responsible for the Skopje Northeast and Polog region, the second for the Eastern, Vardar and Southeast region and the last one for the Pelagonija and Southwest region.

In 2021, the FVA started negotiations with the Crisis management Centre for joint of the FVA to the NICS (Next Generation Incident Command System). The NICS is a special software system allowing for simplified coordination of disaster response services. Commanders and responders can add information onto a shared incident map, upload photos and videos from the scene-field, send messages, and check-in with other responding agencies in real time.

For those objectives, it was agreed to organize training of FVA staff to use this web-based application, including most official veterinarians working on issues related to animal health and welfare.

Given the situation with COVID 19, the trainings that were planned to start were postponed from December 2021 to 2022. When the process of introductions of NICS finished completely, the FVA could have the opportunity for more efficient and effective cooperation and inter-agency interoperability in conditions of emergencies and disasters. As well, FVA could contribute to the NICS upgrade, through integration with ISAHV (Food and Veterinary Agency Information System).

Significant floods in Macedonia have historically provoked major damages to buildings and agricultural areas, with serious consequences on the local livestock farming system and local communities.

Together with other serious emergencies caused by military conflicts, thunder strikes and electrical blackouts, these catastrophic events have repeatedly ravaged vast urban and rural areas over the last 20 years. North Macedonian VSs were therefore repeatedly involved in the management of these events and were primarily engaged in farm animals rescue and assistance, water and feed supply, transport and relocation, carcass disposal, identification, and economic compensation procedures. Private veterinarians were also involved in emergency clinical examinations and critical care treatments, disinfection, disinsection and deratization (DDD) interventions, and identification and registration (I&R) procedures.

The FVA is still in the process of drafting a contingency plan for the protection and rescue of animals in case of weather/catastrophes. In the light of the experience gained so far in these important public veterinary health areas, the improvement of digital communication channels with public target audience (FVA web page), internal and external communication and coordination tools, the implementation of operating procedures and templates are identified among the most challenging steps to be taken. The need for efficient stakeholders' consultation mechanisms, better media communication, stronger cross-border communication, and regional cooperation (i.e., availability of rendering plants for carcasses disposal) and increased communication with international organizations (support, funds, donations) is also seen as a priority, along with disaster managers' professionalization as the basis for licensing and credentialing the volunteers operating on the ground.

In 2021, the preparation of a procedure for organizing and conducting a simulation exercise began. The document is in the final stage and preparation is based on:

- WHO Simulation Exercise Manual – A practical guide and tool for planning, conducting and evaluating simulation exercises for outbreaks and public health emergency preparedness and response (WHO/WHE/CP/2017)
- Guidelines for simulation exercises - World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

The document plans to develop a calendar for simulation exercises. The calendar will also include simulation exercises to test the contingency plan in the event of a natural disaster that threatens the health and well-being of animals as soon as it is completed.

### **Presentation III: The Romanian experience in developing the contingency plan: added value of the OIE project, lessons learned, tips for improvements and next steps – Robert V. Chioveanu, NSVFSA**

Dr. Chioveanu (OIE Delegate and National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (NSVFSA) President) described the Rumanian situation with regard to the level of VSs' preparedness and involvement in the management of natural disasters, an area which is still not covered by any specific national legislation, and outlined the structure and scope of the Romania's contingency plan (CP) for the management and mitigation of risks involving AH/AW and veterinary public health in the event of floods ([Annex 3](#)).

To date, the Romanian Competent Authorities operate within the context of a National System for the Management of Special Emergency Situations according to a national legislative framework. As EU Member Country, Romania is required by, the EU Directive 2007/60 of 23 October 2007 to increasingly reduce the adverse impact of floods on human health, the environment, cultural heritage, and economic activities and to contribute to the establishment of a framework for the assessment and management of hydrogeological risks in the Community. To date, the most relevant normative act at national level is the Romanian Government Decision no. 94/2014 and Government Decision no. 557/2016 that provides for the involvement of several public institutions in the management of emergency situations. Within this legislative framework, the National Committee for Special Emergency Situations is headed by the Deputy Prime Minister for National Security and

is coordinated by the Ministry of the Internal Affairs. In the particular cases of floods, the Ministry of the Environment, Water and Forests play the main intervention role.

The NSVFSA and its subordinated structures has only the responsibility to provide support functions, according to the particular field of activity. At the same time, it plays a main role in case of epizootic diseases/zoonoses by setting up the legal and procedural framework for interventions in “peace time”, supplying information on the animal populations composition and distribution in the areas at risk (farms/animals databases + GIS systems) and the list of human and material resources to be deployed in case of floods. The NSVFSA also prepares instructions on animal capture, transport, sheltering and animal-owner reunion, in collaboration with the National Agency for Zootechnics (both authorities handling animal identification and registration).

According to the Romania's CP for the management and mitigation of risks involving animal health and welfare and veterinary public health during floods, the NSVFSA is requested to establish prophylactic measures to avoid mass illnesses and to prevent the spread of pathogens to humans in the case of zoonoses, to carry out animal decontamination by chemical or radioactive substances; to control water and feed safety; to identify means for the rendering dead animals and to ensure the transport of risk animal products with the support of county/local Emergency Committees. Specific animal welfare and protection rules to be observed before, during and after the flood response are also set, and anyone responsible for an animal must take reasonable steps to make sure the “5 freedoms” principles are met. In order to do so, farm and companion animals that have been rescued from flooding should be housed in a temporary location respecting minimum standards, until the infrastructure and resources in the original flooded areas are restored or new housing is found for them.

Human and financial resources to be deployed in the case of natural disasters shall be provided from the state budget and/or local budgets. Regarding preparedness and capacity level, the County Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Directorate's staff, directly involved in providing flood emergency management support, is meant to take part in training and simulation exercises organized by the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations. The results of monitoring of interventions and lessons learned shall be assessed through a post-event analysis.

Romania is historically prone to several different types of natural disasters, and it has been hit by heavy floods, forest fires and landslides over the last ten years. Unfortunately, thousands of animals suffered the consequences of these catastrophic events, but many others were rescued. Despite the current limited role of the NSVFSA in the management of natural disasters. Today we can say that the Romanian National System for the Management of Special Emergency Situations has progressively strengthen its capacity to assist and protect companion and farm animals involved in these events, thanks to an empowered collaborative workforce of almost 800 official and 2000 private veterinarians.

One of the most important aspects taken into consideration by the Romanian Veterinary Services is the data correlation between the existing animal populations and strategic food/feed objectives and the areas at a high risk for floods and other types of natural disasters. This is extremely important so that the emergency rescue services, and the supporting institutions can prepare the necessary human, technical and logistical resources, during “peace time” for an adequate intervention, in order to minimize the losses in terms of animal lives, food and feed. This involves the full integration of the VSs' CP into the national legislation that lays down the national intervention plan in case of natural disasters, with the important mention that the attributions and contributions of each relevant institution should be harmonized in this national plan. Moreover, the importance of a good collaborative effort with NGOs specialized in animal rescue and welfare is crucial.

### **Update of the OIE disaster management activities - *D. Donachie, OIE***

*Dr Daniel Donachie, Programme Manager, OIE Preparedness and Resilience Department* presented an overview of the joint OIE-FAO-INTERPOL “Building Resilience Against Agro-Crime and Agro-Terrorism” Project supported by the Weapons Threat Reduction Programme of Global Affairs Canada. This project aims to foster collaboration and cooperation between Law Enforcement and Veterinary Services to sustainably strengthen capacities to animal health emergencies arising from crime and terrorism. The project includes international and regionally targeted activities in the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia however its outputs are relevant to all OIE Members. Through assessment studies and tools developed by the three organisations, the project aims to identify gaps and weaknesses in emergency management to implement fit-for-purpose capacity building for their Members, including through multi-sectoral workshops and simulation exercises. The importance of taking a multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach to emergency management was raised and workshop participants were invited to share their experiences of planning for emergencies. Specific questions posed to participants are listed below. Participants are welcome to contact Dr Donachie at [d.donachie@oie.int](mailto:d.donachie@oie.int).

- Have you worked with Law Enforcement before in your role?
- Have you had any challenges working with Law Enforcement?
- Have you had experience of preventing and responding to agro-crime?
- Are there any areas where you think Law Enforcement and Veterinary Services could work better together in?
- Are you aware of any tools, models or approaches in emergency management in your country which could be useful for other countries?
- Would you be willing to share your contingency plan to publish on the OIE website?

### **Keynote presentation: preliminary results of the OIE/LMU survey on VS's preparedness on DMRR in 53 European MCs - *G. Vroegindewey, LMU P. Dalla Villa, OIE***

Dr. Dalla Villa briefly introduced the survey aiming at providing an overview of Veterinary Services' preparedness to animal welfare emergencies during natural disasters - flood, landslide, drought/extreme heat, forest fire, snowstorm/extreme cold, earthquake, volcanic eruption - and other non-epidemic events in Europe. A web based Qualtrics survey on Animal Welfare in Natural Disasters was conducted by Lincoln Memorial University in conjunction with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe. The survey was emailed to 53 OIE European Member Countries with reminder emails to complete. Survey results were compiled and tabulated, and only aggregate data are meant to be presented, in order to respect the anonymity of the responses received.

Professor Vroegindewey (chair of the OIE ad hoc group on disaster management and risk reduction in relation to animal health and AW) took the floor and presented the preliminary results. Specific objectives of the survey were to assess and quantify the level of the OIE MCs' capacity to respond to natural disasters in general with a focus on animal welfare issues, to determine the types of disasters encountered and the level of education, training, and exercising initiatives taken or available at regional level. The questionnaire also allowed to identify gaps in capacity and specific needs of participating Countries.

Forty-nine countries responded to the survey for a 92% completion rate. Floods, earthquakes and fire were the three most commonly encountered disasters. Fifty-two percent indicated they incorporated animal welfare into their disaster planning. Thirty-one percent indicated they had no or limited legal authority to manage animal emergencies in natural disasters. The species covered in national response plan ranged from laboratory animals at 17% to livestock at 48%. Eighty-two percent had no or limited standard operating procedures and 73% had no training to respond to animal welfare in disasters. Budgets, trained personnel, equipment/supplies and legal authority were the most frequently identified gaps.

The survey demonstrated there is a wide range of European Member Countries capacity to respond to animal welfare in natural disasters. This provides the baseline for the OIE Platform for Animal Welfare Europe to provide focused and actionable support to Member Countries. All the information provided will be later on reported and disseminated in academic publications, meetings and conferences.

**Presentation IV: Stakeholders' role in disaster management and animal welfare - J. Wijnker, VPH Consultancy**

Several historical and more recent events such as massive floods, earthquakes or tropical storms have clearly shown the difficulties and challenges regarding the evacuation of livestock. Due to the developing climate changes the expectations are that these large-scale natural disasters will occur more and more often. In order to be better prepared regarding the evacuation of livestock there is a clear need for information management and systems that support the decision-making processes in case of an emergency. This could result in fewer uncertainties which are not compatible with the limited time available during which an evacuation should take place.

In 2020 and 2021, the Farm Evacuation Assessment (FEA) was developed, as a strategic tool in livestock evacuation and field-tested in a pilot project in various areas in the Netherlands, under potential threat of flooding. The FEA includes 39 different (digital) parameters on livestock management, herd composition, health status, geographical location and means of self-reliance. The pilot project was done as a public-private-partnership involving The Netherlands Agricultural and Horticultural Association (LTO-NL), the Safety Region Utrecht (VRU) and VPH Consultancy and co-financed by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture.

The outcome of this FEA pilot project clearly showed the beneficial effects of having a detailed analysis on evacuation options per farm available, prior to the onset of a major natural disaster. Less time for the decision-making process is needed (prioritisation done by Safety Regions), limited available time during the crisis is used more efficiently to save livestock and the threatened or affected farmer will have a better understanding and perspective of its own possibilities and actions. Improved resilience will help those farmers and their families to return to a near-normal situation after the water has receded.

In order to be well prepared for such a life-threatening event, all stakeholders have a shared responsibility in the disaster management and protection of animal welfare. A national approach for the implementation of the FEA should be considered and next to the actual evacuation of animals, also the recipients of these animals in safe areas must be considered. An important role is foreseen for the management (24/7 availability, accuracy) of all the information gathered and required in order to have the FEA operational and accessible. A dedicated national animal crisis center could be considered as a valid choice, focusing not only on kept animals / livestock, but also taking into account companion animals and wildlife. All are affected during natural disasters and all groups have their own possibilities and limitations, requiring specific strategies for evacuation.

Being well organized and prepared allows you to manage expectations realistically. Not all animals can be saved during these massive disasters. However, based on the means available, a best effort is possible, and this can be clearly communicated to all people involved. Equally important, a clear and timely decision process, will reassure those people involved (being rescued / as rescuers) that all is done to save and protect as many animals as possible.

## Afternoon session

### **Introduction to the Crisis Preparedness Simulation Exercise and presentation of the working documents - S. D'Albenzio, IZSAM**

The working groups activities will be divided in 3 phases, the first one related (round 1/part I) to the group exercise on preparedness, a second one (round 1/part II) to the group exercise on response and the last one (round 2 -parts I and II) to the group exercise on recovery.

Participants were invited to read and consult prereading materials distribute in preparation to the group exercises, and in particular the simulation scenario ([Annex 4](#)) prepared by the ANSVSA experts, the OIE guidelines on disaster management and risk reduction related to animal health and welfare and veterinary public health ([Annex 5](#)), the OIE communication handbook for VSs with particular attention to the crisis communication aspects ([Annex 6](#)) and the OIE guidelines for simulation exercises ([Annex 7](#)). Particular attention should be paid to the most relevant sections to be used in the different phases of the working groups activities. More detailed scenarios will be also shared in preparation to the different working group activities, along with templates to be used for reporting back in the plenary sessions. Tips on how to improve risk communication will be also available.

The key guiding document will be anyway represented by the draft Romania's contingency plan for the management and mitigation of risks involving animal health and welfare and veterinary public health in case of floods being the main training document to be tested and discussed with remarks and suggestions for improvement.

Following to Dr. D'Albenzio's introduction, participants to the (round 1/part I) group exercise on preparedness were divided in 4 subgroups, each supported by 3 facilitators, in order to facilitate the sharing of information and transfer of good practices and lessons learned throughout the region.

#### **1.1 SUBGROUP SIMULATION EXERCISE (Round #1 part I) on PREPAREDNESS - All tutors facilitate**

Participants to the first (Round 1/part I) group exercise on preparedness were tasked (1) to discuss on how to communicate to the population about the crisis, the possible risks for humans and animals, and the ongoing preparedness actions implemented by the Veterinary Services to protect humans and animals. A TV interview was simulated and recorded during the exercise, to be presented and commented during the plenary session, and (2) to discuss the organisational structure of the command chain to be used in the case of a major incident affecting livestock, companion, and wild animals - based on a fictional case study of a flooding scenario prepared by the ANSVSA experts - and to specify who and when should direct the interventions to be prioritized in the preparedness phase.

The **flooding scenario** was presented by Dr. Adrian Ardelean from the Permanent Representation of Romania to the EU. Such a fictional case study provides the participants with all the elements pertinent to the management of the imminent threat of a massive flooding in a Romanian County and data needed to assess the potential impact of such an event on the local population of domestic and wild animal welfare. Information on the species and number of animals at risk; the areas where they could be relocated; the epidemiological situation and related risk reduction measures in place; the type and localization of existing infrastructure, commercial establishments (i.e., collection centers, NGO shelters) and industrial sites; the operations related to live animals' export and trade; the level of VS (Veterinary Services)' and emergency Authorities involvement in the management of the disaster; veterinary triage and humane killing protocols are detailed in the document. The mechanism of implementation of existing VS-CPs and the opportunity to amend and integrate them in the light of the simulation exercise experience were also commented. Further details were provided of the geomorphological features of the area at risk characterized by the presence of a national park and

several natural reservations. Thousands of wild animals populate this territory, there are an estimated 2.000 wild horses plus wild boars, jackals, and red foxes. Industrial major accident hazard sites are also located in this area at major flooding risk, along with a strategic commercial harbor for the export of animals to North Africa and the Middle East.

## **1.2 PLENARY PRESENTATION OF THE SUBGROUP EXERCISE OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION - R. Balbo (OIE) facilitate**

The **Sub-group 1** (facilitated by P. Dalla Villa, A. Dobrinescu, L. Lelanchon, C. Bienvenu) rapporteur commented on the learning experience of the simulation TV interview prepared after being given the scenario. Experience shows that regular interaction with the media forges a link between the public and emergency organizations, and it is essential to maintain an effective flow of information for effective working relationship before, during and after a disaster. A structured plan with a set of reliable information to be disseminated in the anticipation of emergency, to plan evacuations and other hazard-mitigation interventions should be in place. Sub-group 1 considered it relevant to inform the public about the low infectious disease risks both for animals (given the existence of specific surveillance plans) and for public health, if animal owners and keepers will be in the condition to keep dogs under control and timely communicate their loss/dispersal. The emergency management mechanism of veterinary crisis can rely on a well-structured traceability system, and it holds precise on time data on livestock population number, composition, and distribution. Wildlife population estimation numbers and home range information are also available. Municipalities are aware about public health risks to be managed and rescue teams composed by experience and trained local veterinarians have been already alerted and ready to intervene. They know very well the territory and are equipped with boats to reach flooded areas. To date, it remains difficult to estimate the possible consequences of a potential flood, but there are sufficient resources to compensate water quality and shortage issues, along with feed, water, and donation distribution protocols. Veterinary Services are therefore ready to assist animals and will to cooperate and share information with other stakeholders concerned about their conditions. Unfortunately, many animals will die but many others will be saved and assisted. Carcasses will be removed and disposed to minimize public health as well as water and soil contamination risks. Periodic details about the emergency progression will be released and media will have opportunities to document the rescue and assistance activities, within the limits of the safety measures to be applied in this situation.

The **Sub-group 2** (facilitated by R. Balbo, A. Miteva, D. Terzievski, J. Zee) focused the exercise on the organization of the command chain for the protection of livestock, companion, and wild animals. A crisis centre, managed by the Ministry (normally of Agriculture) in charge to deal with veterinary matters, should be established at central level for issuing public veterinary health orders and compensation measures. A Regional coordination centre should be also activated to manage the emergency in coordination with local centre(s) that will ensure the implementation of operational activities like feed and water supply; evacuation, sheltering and animal transportation; animal carcasses, waste, and milk disposal; emergency culling and euthanasia; animal ID and traceability; veterinary triage protocols; catching, sedation, transport and sheltering of lost or stray animals. A strong collaboration with municipalities, private practitioners and local NGOs/volunteers will be essential. Support to wildlife protection activities should be carried out in coordination with central and local environmental authorities.

**Sub-group 3** (facilitated by S. D'Albenzio, T. Grudnik and A. Ardelean) addressed the issue of communication during crisis and discussed the structural organization of the command chain. To date in Romania, the horizontal decisional level (NSVFSA - National CA; Veterinary Departments for AH/AW; Directorate for animal diseases; Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Ministry of National Defence) interact at vertical level with regional authorities that communicate with police, military, environmental protection agencies (for wild animals). Local

Authorities are supported by veterinary practitioners in charge of animal health and welfare under the contract with NSVFSA. Farming cooperatives, commercial stakeholders, farmers, hunters' associations, animal keepers (dog shelters for stray/abandoned animals) along with local NGOs and volunteers are also part of the emergency management system. Private enterprises are also meant to provide infrastructures and technical equipment to help humans and animals. Communication is a critical aspect to be managed at the very beginning of the emergency, both at local as well as at national and international level. Better dissemination of disasters warnings helps people and farmers to be better prepared to respond. Providing information and advice to victims assist in stimulating effective disaster relief and enhancing the emergency management system accountability. Regional crisis centres should activate dedicated help desk free telephone lines. The coordination mechanism should be strengthened to increase the famers' resilience by adopting a bottom-up approach. Nevertheless, critical decision should be made on time and legal measures should be also improved to empower both decision makers and operators. To date, many countries do not have legislative measures to create pressures on stakeholders to play an active role during veterinary emergencies. However, effective communication can help mobilizing relief and strengthening emergency response capacity.

**Sub-group 4** (facilitated by D. Morelli, A. Superanu, J. Wijnker) also discussed the critical role of communication to be managed at National Crisis Centre level. Veterinary issues related to the disasters should be presented to the public either by the Chief Veterinary Officer or by a trusted, well informed non-political spokesperson. Weather services should deal with more specific subjects such as meteorological forecasts and flood warnings. Daily newscasts (at 9.00hrs and 16.00hrs depending on daylight available) should be delivered via TV or radio, considering that catastrophic events can easily disrupt power distribution lines (in Montenegro local mayors activated a door-to-door service to inform the citizens). The clearest possible description of the disaster should be made and available details on the timeline of the flooding progression, the extension of the area at risk of flood and on the available options to move and relocate animals will be given. Clear, truthful, objective data should be shared with stakeholders an interested parties to increase the level of preparedness and resilience. Efforts should be made to save as many animals as possible. However, not all of them can be realistically saved. Indicate safe areas where animals can be transported and kept, shelters must be prepared in advance to receive animals. Safe-areas sufficiently large should be equipped to accept different animal species, avoiding mixing remains fundamental. This will entail financial investments in peace time. Provide timeline on when to transport so-called priority animals (depending on genetical or economical value, epidemiologic situation/disease-free status). People tend to move all together when disaster is approaching, animal movements and transport should be organized according to road practicability. The Ministry of Internal Affair normally takes the ad in the occasion of natural disasters. It remains of utmost importance to cooperate with the animal rescue and assistance services in "peace time" in strong connection with the Ministry of Defense. Building capacity takes time and resources, but Veterinary Services should be able to use specific equipment and become skilled in the rescuing of animals, drills and simulation exercises still are of crucial importance.

During a disaster, communication with farmers, and the community at large, becomes especially critical, especially when it regards animal health and welfare matters that impact on response and recovery. Well-conceived, timely and effectively delivered emergency messages can help ensure public safety, protect property, facilitate response efforts, elicit cooperation, instill public confidence, and help families reunite. Building resilience of farmers and industries is essential. Farmers should be therefore aware of the risk posed by natural hazards; they need guidance and support, but they also must be proactive and not just waiting to be rescued. In Montenegro, the ministry of internal affairs and the Dept. for Protection and Rescue, are in charge of controlling and persuading the industries to develop and implement their own contingency plans, and farmers are also obliged to have contingency plans. All potential threats should be included in the contingency plans: Political support remains essential but developing strong and trustful public/private

partnership remains important to achieve the long-term sustainable goals of any emergency management system.

## ***DAY TWO - 10 November 2021***

### **Morning session**

#### **2.1 SUBGROUP SIMULATION EXERCISE (Round #1 part II) on RESPONSE - All tutors facilitate**

The second (round 1/part II) group exercise works on response were focused on how to organise (1) the evacuation of animals at risk in the flooded area (2) the sheltering and veterinary assistance of rescued animals, and how (3) to assist, rescue and shelter the animals still alive in the vessel. The subgroup (SG) 1 was tasked to focus on dogs and wildlife, the SG 2 on cattle, SG 3 on poultry and the SG 4 on pigs. In the light of the previous activities, subgroups 2 and 4 were merged to stimulate the discussion, share information, and to promote innovative ideas.

#### **2.2 PLENARY PRESENTATION OF THE SUBGROUP EXCERCISE (Round #1 part II) on RESPONSE, OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION - R. Balbo (OIE) facilitate**

The **Sub-group 1** (facilitated by P. Dalla Villa, A. Dobrinescu, L. Lelanchon, C. Bienvenu) started by envisaging the evacuation of owned **dogs**, whose number is estimated at 1.000 animals. Breeding facilities and pet shops should be also considered, along with an estimated number of 400 free roaming stray dogs to be evacuated and sheltered. A large NGO shelter with the capacity of 900 dogs is located at the margins of the interested area and it would be essential to know how many spaces are available to host temporarily evacuated animals. Distinction should be made between owner with one or two dogs and larger number. Pet ownership has been often regarded as a risk factor associated with evacuation failure. Owners with one or two dogs can be fostered or relocated in tent cities, hotels, pensions, shelters, empty buildings, outside of the impact zone. However, it should be verified if they are pleased with the new accommodation. If not, other temporary solution should be found like containers and mobile/modular kennels to be built or procured. Veterinary triage would be extremely important, medical/surgical assistance and nursing should be preferably guaranteed by private practitioners, NGOs staff or qualified volunteers. NGOs will play fundamental role in assistance to owners with multiple dogs in need of temporary (adoption/fostering) or permanent housing, but it would be necessary to have info on the types and timing of such alternative options. The catching of stray dogs could be extremely difficult in these circumstances; special equipment and very skilled personnel should be involved (transport by boat, sedation), and it might be necessary to look for fellow government agencies support. Source of reliable information will be identified in other stakeholders (media, other governmental agencies, local authorities, private sector, NGOs). The Ministry of Environment is normally in charge to build wildlife resilience, it might ask Veterinary Services support to deal with possible natural disasters. Close communication and coordination between environmental authorities and Veterinary Services is therefore essential. Hunters' associations, wildlife rescue centres, zoos, and NGOs can provide special equipment and veterinary expertise. Considerations should be made in relation to wildlife categories that represent disease risk for humans or domestic species (wild boars/ASF). Catching, transport and relocation or slaughter might not be practical options and the humane killing for emergency purposes might be considered. Mobile equipment/slaughter might be used near to the impacted area. Wild animals will find anyway higher grounds on their own. This will increase the population density and different measures should be taken (i.e., feeding sites for racoon dogs, jackal control plans. VSs should prioritize the level of field assistance in collaboration of rescue centres/NGOs. Also in this case, sources and key shareholders must be identified and different audiences must be given priority to assess the impact of the disaster, the needs of the population, and the effectiveness of the response measures being taken. So far, no dogs are reported to be on the capsized boat, but special assistance will be provided in the case of unmet needs for companion animals.

**Sub-groups 2 and 4** (facilitated by R. Balbo, A. Miteva, D. Terzievski, J. Zee, D. Morelli, A. Supeanu) addressed the organization of the evacuation of cattle and pigs at risk in the flooded area. Presently, the cattle number is estimated at 2.000 heads and pigs at 5.000. A Crisis Emergency Center should closely coordinate with the Ministry of Agriculture and local authorities to manage the evacuation of the animals and contact transporters, slaughterhouses, and farmers. Army, NGOs, private veterinarians, associations, volunteers could be also involved. Based on the AW legislation the farmers of backyards/commercial holdings should have in place an evacuation plan. The decision to rescue or kill/slaughter the livestock should be based on the epidemiological situation (i.e., pigs/ASF), the type/dimension of the farms (intensive, familiar/backyard) and cost-effectiveness of the different options. Effective communication with NGOs and media would be important once killing or slaughtering will be considered opportune. Qualified veterinary assistance and proper sheltering should be ensured to the animals. Temporary shelters fenced areas or other available structures/building/facilities should be identified based on animal categories and species. Fodder, feed, water, straw, animal guarding or formal security of animals, daily AH/AW checks and related biosecurity issues must be considered. Private practitioners should be involved to ensure veterinary assistance. No comments were made in relation to the measures to be taken in favour of pigs and cattle animals still alive in the capsized vessel.

**Sub-group 3** with poultry rescues and assistance. At the moment, the population of domestic birds is estimated at 150,000 animals. It would be also important to get information on the number of backyard farms at risk. The flood evacuation timeline should also consider the level of accessibility to the flooded areas (by truck/boat etc), the number and category of animals per location (laying hens, chicks etc) and the technical and human support readily available. Considerations about the importance of maintaining the business continuity of the poultry sector and the roles played by women in the rural economy should be made. Animal evacuation and relocation could be considered as a possibility, providing the possibility to transport them to slaughterhouses or suitable shelters outside the flooded area. In alternative, humane killing of chickens should be favoured by using humane techniques (cervical dislocation/CO<sub>2</sub>) and considering public health risks due to exposure to carcasses (biosecurity/avian influenza). If relocated, animals should be not separated in mixed flocks in the new shelter, considering the epidemiological situation, health status and disease status. As for the assistance of the animals in the capsized boat, contingency plans should be in place for this type of accident. The safety of emergency workers at scene of accident should be also duly considered and immediate saving of livestock should be done by professionals to reduce the stress of handling and transportation, in coordination with other key actors in response efforts (i.e., divers). Vets should take over patients for further care building on the experience from other countries (specialist teams). Specific first-aid equipment humane killing methods should be used on board. Weather forecasts, water conditions and tidal range should be considered for the planning of rescue operations. Animals will be exposed to a cold environment and weighted down by soaked feathers, support vessels to bring animals onshore should have sufficient capacity (from 100 to 1000 animals). Being aware that any decision will be not without controversy, it will be important to prepare a list of information that the international media demand most frequently and to broadcast (TV/radio) periodic updates about the evolution of the emergency.

## Afternoon session

### **3.1 SUBGROUP SIMULATION EXERCISE (Round #2 part I and II) on RECOVERY - All tutors facilitate**

The third (round 2/part I and II) group exercise works on recovery was focused on (1) making decisions regarding wild, domestic and companion animals temporarily sheltered or kept in the safe zones/shelters - Poultry, pigs, cattle, and sheep in the vessel (2) communication via Twitter about the situation during recovery to reassure the population as concerns animal welfare issues. Participants were also asked to (3) assess the contingency plan and make suggestions improvements (4) make recommendations about emergency

management protocols/operating procedures to complement the contingency plan in flooding scenarios. In the light of the previous activities, subgroups 3 and 4 were merged to stimulate the discussion, share information, and to promote innovative ideas.

## **DAY THREE 11 November 2021**

### **3.2 PLENARY PRESENTATION OF THE SUBGROUP EXERCISE (Round #2 part I and II) on RECOVERY, OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION – T. Grudnik (OIE) facilitate**

**Sub-group 1** (facilitated by P. Dalla Villa, A. Dobrinescu, L. Lelanchon, C. Bienvenu, T. Grudnik, A. Supeanu) discussed the decisions about the animals temporarily sheltered or kept in the safe zones/shelters. Efforts should be made to reunite lost animals with owners and to promote the adoption of stray dogs. Owning a dog involves responsibilities, monitoring the observance of legal requirements (identification and registration) should be part of public awareness campaigns on rabies vaccination and reproduction control, in line with One Health approach. Like domestic animal disease surveillance, wildlife disease surveillance programs should be strengthened. The Veterinary Service active role of preparing for and implementing disaster management and risk reduction measures with the objective of protecting wildlife should be valued and better integrated in the disaster management systems. Social media accounts offer an opportunity to rapidly distribute critical information. Two Twitter messages were proposed to manage public expectations and encourage proactive behaviours (1) Dogs - YOU can BE THE HERO for a Romanian dog, please give him a new family and contact ngo#innocentsouls (2) Wildlife - 1000 wild boars assisted in the Danube Delta by the #VeterinaryServices in collaboration with the @hunterassociation to protect humans, animals and the environment.

According to the **Sub-group 2** (facilitated by: R. Balbo, A. Miteva, D. Terzievski, J. Zee, D. Morelli, S. D'Albenzio, J. Wijnker, A. Ardelean) rapporteur, media can be instruments of criticism and scrutiny in situations where controversial decisions could be taken (I.e., evacuation/relocation vs killing/slaughter) about the livestock destination. Consideration about the risk for the spreading of animal diseases, the possible need to put non-identified animals in quarantine and other economic implications should be duly considered. Financial support measures and a legal basis for compensation to cover the direct and indirect losses suffered as a result of the disaster should be also foreseen. Communicating with the public during emergencies is still essential. In Romania, an NSVFSA free emergency hotline (000000007) is available to report any dead animals and it allows animal owners from the flooded areas to timely report the status of their properties.

Finally, participants were asked to make suggestions for possible improvements of the contingency plan used as a basis for the TTX works and to identify a set of operating procedures for possible incorporation into future revisions of the document.

**Sub-group 1** highlighted the importance of communication between institutions and stakeholders as key element to access to public sources for information before and during natural disasters and to mitigate their impact on urban and rural communities by influencing public reactions. Operating procedures should be developed to provide clear guidance on the processes that should be followed to ensure coordination and timely response to emergencies in a consistent and accountable manner. Disaster mitigation activities should be funded, financial resources and compensation measures to support household actions (I.e., stockpiling of equipment and supplies), governmental strategies and community efforts (training, equipping and simulation exercises) should be available, in order to reduce economic losses and guarantee the business continuity. Joint planning, coordination and capacity building are essential to maximize resources, improve the effectiveness of responses, and foster trust between stakeholders. It remains crucial to define the set of tasks and activities that different actors would be expected to perform, according to their role.

Participant suggested to complement the CP with the following operating procedures on.

- ✓ activation of the command chain

- ✓ administrative steps to be taken for buying/acquiring equipment or materials
- ✓ veterinary triage
- ✓ humane catching methods
- ✓ killing/euthanasia (I.e., ASF)
- ✓ carcass disposal (I.e., ASF)
- ✓ management of the donations (if under the responsibility of VSs)
- ✓ biosecurity and disinfection
- ✓ dog reunion/adoption

According to the **Subgroup 2**, the **legal authority and roles of VSs** in the management of natural disasters should be defined in legislation. National CPs for outbreaks of disease should be linked with the action plans designed for protecting animal welfare in other types of emergencies. **Memorandum of Understanding** between Competent Authorities will help in strengthening the areas of preparedness, response and capacity building. **Private practitioners and volunteers should be actively involved**, trained and integrated in the Disaster Management mechanisms, under the supervision of VS. In addition to the operating procedures proposed by the subgroup one, it would be important to **standardize training and simulation exercises** and after-action reporting. Communication must be clear and consistent in preparation and during emergencies, operating procedures addressing **risk communication and media communication needs** should be integrate in the proposed CP.

#### **Debrief of the simulation exercise: insights gained/lessons learned - *P. Dalla Villa, OIE***

Paolo Dalla Villa expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved at the end of the pilot project and outlined the main conclusions of the workshop.

Positive points included a growing interest for the topic, as confirmed by the strong support received in preparation to the event and the active participation of the delegations; the TTX allowed to strengthen Veterinary Services awareness on their crucial roles when dealing with natural disasters, where they have proven to be responsive and efficient; the simulation exercise offered additional elements to improve the existing VS-CP and to develop new ones; the global OIE network on veterinary emergency EmVetNet is in the position to provide technical assistance for future work in this area and should be actively involved by the participating countries.

Topics for further reflection included: multi hazard intersectoral contingency planning should aim at strengthening the resilience of local communities and maintaining business continuity while recovering from disasters; all livestock production sectors, including smalls scale farming systems and other animals (zoo) should be considered; contingency planning should be aligned with the need to coordinate crisis management efforts and mitigate the impact of disasters in a One Health perspective.

Dr. Daniela Morelli took the floor and expressed her satisfaction with the results of the TTX and confirmed IZSAM/OIE CC commitment to further OIE regional initiatives in this area, highlighting the importance of prevention as the main aspect of disaster management activities. Rumanian representatives welcomed the initiative drawing attention to the friendly and collaborative working atmosphere. They also confirmed the full support of the OIE Delegate to the Platform activities and their personal will to continue to work in this direction. Dr. Wijnker thanked the organizers for having engaged the stakeholders in an open and proactive way. Veterinary Services have clearly showed what needs to be done during emergencies, and how to handle them. This OIE initiative is a solid basis on which to continue building the disaster risk management process at European level and must be taken as a unique opportunity to transform ideas into actions. The Romanian representatives Dr. Adrian Ardelean and Dr. Alexandru Supeanu also rewarded the organizer's dedication and successful efforts through a congratulation statement.

## **Conclusions and closing words from the OIE - R. Balbo, OIE**

Dr. Balbo expressed his satisfaction over the outcomes of the simulation exercise, to be welcomed as the very first OIE experience of this kind. A new a training methodology based on real life experience has been applied in a successful manner. The Romanian Delegate strongly supported the event, but he was not the only one as also Bulgaria and North Macedonia contributed with providing drafts of their contingency plans. Excellent colleagues have been involved in the preparation to the TTX and actively took part by sharing respective experiences with regard to risk prevention and management as well as post-disaster emergency interventions. The Romanian Contingency plan remains of great relevance as it is the first complete one in Europe and fully linked to the national Legislation.

Unfortunately, Covid has made us work in a completely different manner, it has eliminated the magic of working together, looking at each other's eyes, expressing our own very vivid sentiments. In spite of being divided by a screen, participants and organizers should be proud of having been able to recreate the atmosphere of live events. This is an amazing result and certainly the most tangible sign of how successful this experience has been.

The OIE Delegates have selected excellent participants, this is now up to them to continue working in this direction by relying on the OIE network of Collaborating Centres in order to strengthen their competencies and skills on contingency planning for farm, companion and wild animal welfare. Developing new contingency plans and constantly improving the existing ones remains a priority.

Last but not least, we also achieved an incredible result obtaining a clear picture of the state of the art of what the other countries are doing to strengthen the level of VSs' preparedness to animal welfare emergencies during natural disasters, by reaching almost 100% of respondent to our questionnaire and for this result, the OIE thanked the Lincoln Memorial University for the great support, tangible example that inter Regional cooperation is a key element for success, as well as for the strong participation and support provided by the NGOs and private industry. This theme if very much at heart of all citizens.

The conclusion of the OIE Platform's triannual pilot project on disaster management and animal welfare in the Balkans is only a first step for the widest implementation of the OIE Guidelines on disaster management and risk reduction in the European context. Other events of this kind will follow, Veterinary Services should maintain a proactive attitude toward contingency planning and be prepared where risks for natural disaster are greater and where communities and animals have fewer resources to mitigate, survive, and recover from different kinds of disasters.

### **Proposed next steps:**

<b>April 2022</b>	<i>Distribution of the TTX report and didactic material</i>
<b>July 2022</b>	<i>Submission of a paper on the result of the survey on the "Levels of Veterinary Services' preparedness for dealing with animal welfare emergencies during natural disasters".</i>
<b>November 2022</b>	<i>Follow up initiative to the triennial pilot project cycle (i.e., One day seminar with EmVetNet; Appreciative enquiry summit on animal welfare in flooding scenarios – TBC)</i>

## **Commitments:**

The participants were expected to

- remain committed.
- contribute to the final conclusions while disseminating the message at home.
- continue preparing or revising draft Veterinary Services Contingency Plans with regards to animal welfare in case of a flood event.

On the other hand, the OIE Platform secretariat and the IZSAM/OIE Collaborating Centres in Teramo remain committed to follow up and provide support when necessary.

Finally, a customer satisfaction assessment was conducted at the end of the training, using a specific form addressed to the group of direct beneficiaries. Results are reported in the [Annex 7](#).

## **List of annexes**

Annex 1 - List of participants

Annex 2 - Agenda

Annex 3 - Romanian contingency plan

Annex 4 - Simulation scenario

[Annex 5](#) - OIE guidelines on disaster management and risk reduction in relation to animal health and welfare and veterinary public health

[Annex 6](#) - OIE communication handbook

[Annex 7](#) - OIE guidelines for simulation exercises

Annex 8 - Satisfaction assessment