

DISCONTTOOLS

“Development of the most effective tools to control infectious animal diseases”

- Terms of Reference -

1. Background

Based on the Vision, the Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) and on the Action Plan to implement the recommendations in the SRA of the European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health (ETPGAH), the Animal Health Industry launched, on 1st March 2008, the DISCONTTOOLS support action, in the scope of the seventh framework programme (FP7).

The scope and the extent of DISCONTTOOLS will provide a mechanism for focusing and prioritising research that ultimately delivers new and improved vaccines, pharmaceuticals and diagnostic tests.

This project is an initiative of industry and the research community and is actively encouraged by the European Commission services. The DISCONTTOOLS is led by the International Federation for Animal Health – Europe (IFAH-Europe) and integrates all relevant stakeholders at EU and national levels, from academia, research, farmers, veterinarians, industry, consumers, regulators, etc. It will also include stakeholders from international organisations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Office International des Epizooties (OIE), as well as from non-European countries.

The intent of this document is to describe the objectives and structure of the DISCONTTOOLS and to provide an overview of the involved stakeholders.

2. Objectives

DISCONTTOOLS will be carried out over four years. It has three complementary strands for addressing the main objectives of the FP7 call. These strands all contribute to the primary objective of the call which is to enable research to be optimised by public and private funders in a more effective manner to allow new and improved tools to be developed and delivered for the control of the major infectious diseases of animals including zoonoses.

As a first step in achieving this goal it is important to:

- i) prioritise diseases,
- ii) identify the gaps in current knowledge for each priority disease and determine the status of the current control tools and,
- iii) ensure that current and newly developing technological advances are used to maximum effect.

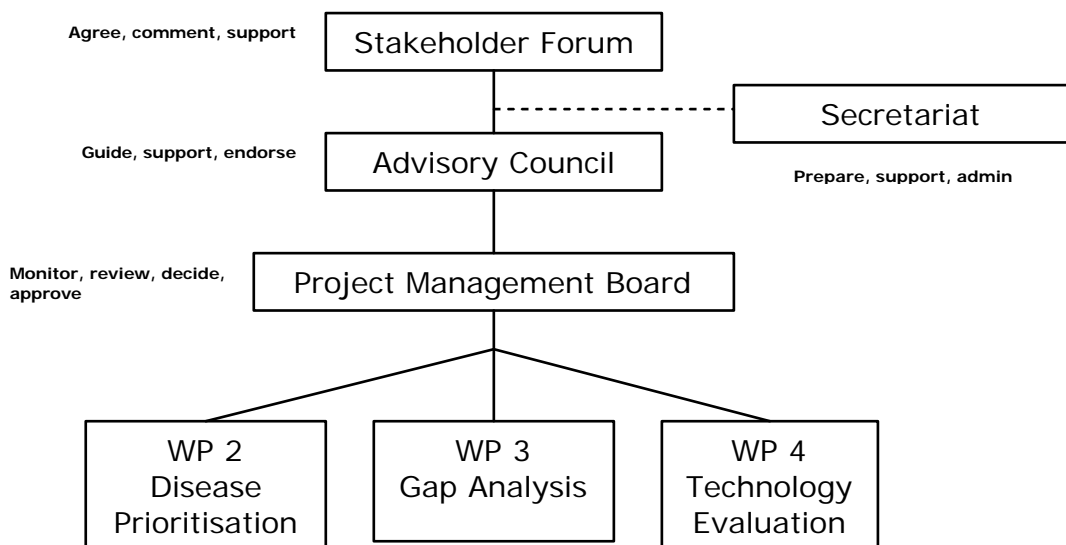
The first two steps i) and ii) have been developed to a certain level by the ETPGAH and reported as recommendations in their SRA and Action Plan. The third iii) to ensure that new and developing technologies are used to maximum effect is currently only a recommendation by the ETPGAH with no additional work to develop this further. The work on technology evaluation will need to be initiated for the first time as part of this project. The aim of this project is twofold. Firstly to continue the developments of i) and ii) from the position currently reached by the work of the ETPGAH. Secondly to initiate and develop the methodology for evaluating and using new technologies in the context of developing new disease control tools.

The interaction of the following five synergistic work packages (WP) in the project is essential for the successful delivery of the scientific and technical objectives:

1. To establish and maintain effective management and coordination of the project involving all stakeholders (WP1),
2. To prioritise diseases (WP2),
3. To conduct a gap analysis of the priority diseases to identify those areas where information and knowledge of the disease is deficient and where current tools are lacking, inadequate or could be improved (WP3),
4. To identify and evaluate new technologies (WP4) and
5. To ensure the effective communication and dissemination of information from the project (WP5).

3. Structure

This project will be managed in the most cost effective manner avoiding excessive administration and bureaucracy but ensuring that the stakeholders are properly represented. DISCONTTOOLS is driven by the stakeholders and structured as following:



4. Terms of reference for the Project Management Board, the Advisory Council, Working Groups, Stakeholder Forum and Secretariat

Project Management Board

The Project Management Board (PMB) comprises 9 members selected from industry, users and public bodies. The board will comprise the coordinator from IFAH-Europe who will chair the meetings. There will also be observers from the Commission DG as appropriate.

The PMB will be responsible for the following activities:

- Review and monitor the entire programme
- Decide on strategies within the framework of the project
- Develop the strategies for the exploitation and dissemination of information from the project
- Receive recommendations from the Advisory Council
- Accept responsibility to run the workshops and identify on the advice of the Advisory Council, the participants at the workshops
- Provide regular statements on the implementation of the activities of the project
- Approve all detailed and provisional budgets.

The PMB shall convene quarterly or more frequently if necessary. Meetings will be face to face at least once a year but more generally by teleconference.

Advisory Council

The Advisory Council (AC) is at the core of DISCONTTOOLS. It is a network connecting the project to the major stakeholders and the pool of ideas. The membership of the AC shall not exceed 30 members. The Commission will attend as observers. The Advisory Council will oversee the project in an advisory capacity and will act to move the project forward. It will be the main point of contact for all other stakeholders.

The role of the Advisory Council is to:

- Assist in the development of the project
- Assist in the development of the work packages, chairing groups as necessary
- Improve information sharing and coordination between the stakeholders
- Support and provide expertise for the specific expert or working groups
- Ensure active involvement of the Member States, European institutions and other organizations
- Organize activities as necessary
- Identify appropriate funding from public or private sources.

The AC shall meet physically once a year. Other methods of communication, in particular teleconferences, will be used as appropriate.

Working Groups

In order to develop the WP 2, WP 3 and WP 4, 3 Working Groups (WGs) will be set up of approximately 20 people, in line with the topics identified in point 2. Experts or observers may be invited to participate in the work, where appropriate or necessary. The WGs shall meet in principle in accordance with the timetable set by the AC. A chairperson shall be appointed at the first meeting and should be preferentially a member of the AC. To become a member of the WGs, senior expertise in the field and commitment is required. Scientists from developing countries and other developed countries, as well as from SMEs, shall be included in these WGs.

The WGs will be responsible to:

- Develop the outputs from the WP 2, 3 and 4 in line with the tasks set out by the AC
- Provide regular reports to the PMB on the progress and challenges
- The minutes of the WGs must be taken by one member of the group identified at the start of the meeting
- Organize workshops in cooperation with the secretariat
- Provide the programme and content of the workshops.

Stakeholder Forum

A Stakeholder Forum (SF) shall be established with representation from all those organizations and individuals interested in the aim and objectives of the project. Good communications channels shall be established using electronic methods, as well as an active up to date web site.

Organizations:

- European associations relevant to Animal Health and Welfare and Food Safety ideally representing the farming industry, industry, veterinarians and consumers
- International organizations relevant to Animal Health and Food Safety (e.g. FAO, OIE, ILRI, WHO, etc.)
- European Regulatory Authorities (e.g. Heads of Medicines Agencies, CVOs, EDQM, EMEA, EFSA, ECDC)
- Representatives from the European Research community (Institutes, Universities, Network of Reference Laboratories)
- Members States representation
- Large EU Collaborative Projects with third countries

Individuals:

- Invited experts from International Organizations or NGOs and from Regional Organizations (Asia, Africa, Latin America)
- New applications shall be sent to the PMB for consideration and recommendation to the AC for their endorsement.

European Technology Platforms:

- European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health (ETPGAH)

When appropriate other platforms will be invited to participate where there are areas of mutual interest, e.g. Animal Breeding, Innovative Medicines, Development Programmes.

Secretariat

The daily work of the DISCONTTOOLS shall be coordinated via a secretariat, which is lead by IFAH-Europe, located in Brussels (IFAH-Europe, Rue Defacqz 1, 1000 Brussels, DISCONTTOOLSsec@ifahsec.org). The secretariat works in close collaboration with the PMB.

The secretariat will be responsible to:

- Prepare the agenda for the PMB meetings and conference calls
- Prepare the minutes of the PMB meetings and conference calls
- Prepare the agenda for the AC meetings and conference calls
- Prepare the minutes for the AC meetings and conference calls
- Ensure circulation of relevant documents and information pertaining to the specific groups
- Keep the contacts of the stakeholders updated
- Prepare the agenda for the SF meetings
- Prepare the minutes for the SF meetings
- Support the WGs and organize workshops in cooperation with the chairs
- Manage the DISCONTTOOLS web site
- Manage the logistics of the DISCONTTOOLS
- Receive and allocate the grant from the European Commission
- Administer the overall budget, refund in agreement and under the control of the PMB
- Assist in reporting to the European Commission.

5. Working Packages

The work of the DISCONTTOOLS will be as follows:

• Working Package 1 – Project Management and coordination

The project co-ordinator shall be responsible for the overall management of the project. This will include all administrative, financial, scientific and technical, coordination and communications aspects.

• Working Package 2 – Disease Prioritisation

- Conduct a review of current world wide prioritisation methodologies
- Identify relevant criteria for disease assessment and the scores and the weighting to be allocated to each of the criteria used in the model. Peer review by a working group
- Develop an interactive web site based for entry, review, analysis and agreement of the disease prioritisation information

- provide an evidence base for each disease by the collection of information using a standard questionnaire which can be converted into scores. Experts in their fields shall be asked to complete the questionnaire electronically
- Score each disease against the criteria. Validate individual scores by experts then peer review by a working group
- Develop the prioritisation model (initially paper based but later IT based)
- Develop an IT based prioritisation decision support tool using in house IT specialist or contractor
- Produce an interactive tool to help with prioritisation for research funding
- Feedback to identify better focused research into those areas where new tools and methods for control have a priority

• **Working Package 3 – Gap Analysis**

- Identify and agree the relevant criteria for gap analysis
- Develop a peer reviewed methodology for gap analysis
- Electronic collection of information for the gap analysis of each of the priority diseases in a standard format using the same system as for the disease prioritisation information
- Subject the results of the gap analysis to peer review in order to have agreement on the priorities for targeting research funding
- Identify the gaps in knowledge for each of the diseases
- Produce a disease summary for each priority disease listing the gaps and identifying research required to develop new and improved methods of control (specific control measures - surveillance, treatment, vaccines and diagnostic tests)

• **Working Package 4 – Technology Evaluation**

- Review current methods used by stakeholders to identify and evaluate technologies and build on these as appropriate
- Develop an acceptable methodology to identify current and newly developed technological innovations which can be used in the development and deliver of new tools
- Establish a system for use at any time to point or scan for new concepts
- Review new technologies through literature searches, workshops and conferences and the establishment of networks. Develop a lateral thinking process to identify technologies in other life sciences which could be relevant
- Map technology development of relevance to the project
- Evaluate potential of new technological developments
- Monitor the availability of proof of concept new technologies
- Disseminate the information to research funders, research workers and development groups in the industry

• **Working Package 5 – Communication and dissemination**

- Arrange printing and distribution of reports
- Ensure good communications with stakeholders in general as well as the various expert working groups operating within the project
- Creation, management and upkeep of an interactive web site with facility for discussion forum, feedback, access to database and disease information

- Provide documents on all aspect of the project which can be easily downloaded
- Ensure that information on the project, ongoing and future activities and news is made available in an easily digested format to enable easy retrieval. Publish electronic newsletter
- Regular updating of the web site throughout the life of the project
- Share information and expertise on prioritisation, gap analysis and technology evaluation with all stakeholders
- Develop a communication strategy for using and disseminating the information gathered during the project with an initial draft which will be updated as the project progresses
- Develop real time communication between working/expert groups and stakeholders utilising modern technology for video links and teleconferences

6. Transparency and Communication

The Commission gives clear guidance that the work and activities of the funded projects should be conducted openly in order to increase public awareness, understanding and acceptance of the technologies concerned. Therefore priority should be given to dissemination and communication of their objectives, activities and progress. This will be done through a specific web site where agendas, minutes and relevant documents, including the list of members, will be posted. In addition, a workshop will be held to which all stakeholders will be invited. Any interested party can make comments on the DISCONTTOOLS activities.

7. Link to technology platforms and networks

Where possible one or several Advisory Council members will monitor and participate in relevant Technology Platforms or Networks to ensure synergy.

8. Financing

The activities of the DISCONTTOOLS will be financed over a four year period by the European Commission through a Coordination Support Action (CSA) amounting for 978 660 Euros. This will finance some of the meetings, incl. travel of the different groups and the secretarial activities. In kind support will be provided by the industry.

In principal the meetings will be held in Brussels. For 2008 the following meetings are planned: at least 1 physical Project Management Board meeting, 1 physical Advisory Council meeting, 1 working group meeting for the WPs 2 and 3. The stakeholders will be consulted electronically and, if finance permits, a meeting will be organized.

Annex 1: DISCONTTOOLS Membership of the Project Management Board

Chair:

- Declan O'Brien, *Managing Director and Project Coordinator, IFAH-Europe*

Members:

- ???
- ???
- ???
- ???
- ???

Secretariat support:

- Telmo Valinhas, *Project Manager, IFAH-Europe*
- Sophie Frederickx, *Executive Assistant, IFAH-Europe*

Consultant to the Project Management Board:

- Jim Scudamore

Commission contact points:

- Isabel Minguez-Tudela, *Commission DG Research*
- Eric Marin, *Commission DG Sanco*
- Philippe Steinmetz, *Commission DG DEV*
- Martin Terberger, *Commission DG ENTR*

Annex 2: DISCONTTOOLS Membership of the Advisory Council

	Category	Organization	Representative	Alternate	Boards
1	Agricultural Industry				
2	Animal Health Industry	<i>IFAH-Europe</i>	Dr. Declan O'Brien		Chair AC, PMB
3	Bio Tech Industry				
4	Coordinated Action and Reference Laboratories				
5	Coordinators networks of excellence				
6	Coordinators networks of excellence				
7	Coordinators networks of excellence				
8	CVOs				
9	CVOs				
10	CVOs				
11	CVOs				
12	International				
13	International				
14	International				
15	International Research				
16	Other academic and research organization				
17	Other industries				
18	Regulator				
19	Regulator				
20	Regulator				
21	Research				
22	University				
23	University				
24	Veterinarians				

Jim Scudamore: Consultant to the Advisory Council

Annex 3: Action Plan and time table of the DISCONTTOOLS activities

Group	Date	Action	Comments
Stakeholder Forum	September 2008	1st SF meeting	Discussion of the project, structure and themes
Interim Board	May 2008	1 st Interim Board meeting	Terms of Reference, prepare composition of WGs, working rules and procedures
Advisory Council	June 2008	1 st AC meeting	Confirm the PMB and set tasks of WGs, Endorse DISCONTTOOLS
Secretariat	August 2008	Web site activated	Access to web site
Working Group	November 2008	1 st WP 2 WG meeting	Tasks, working rules and procedures
Working Group	November 2008	1 st WP 3 WG meeting	Tasks, working rules and procedures
Working Group	March 2009	1 st WP 4 WG meeting	Tasks, working rules and procedures
Secretariat	March 2009	Preliminary database for disease	Database available

Annex 4: Relevant Sources and Documents

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- DISCONTTOOLS website:
<http://www.ifah.be/Europe/EUPlatform/DISCONTTOOLS.htm>

- ETPGAH website:
<http://www.ifah.be/Europe/EUPlatform/Platform.htm>

- Technology Platforms:
<http://www.cordis.lu/technology-platforms>