

CNA – MIRROR GROUPS

Minutes of the 1st meeting held on 27 February 2008 in Brussels, Belgium

Attendance

Danish Mirror Group

Veterinærinstituttet/[Kristian Møller](#)
VIF/[Anne Birgitte Lundholt](#)

Dutch Mirror Group

Ministry Landbow/[Albert Meijering](#)

French Mirror Group

SIMV/[Jean-Louis Hunault](#)

German & Austrian Mirror Groups

BfT/[Martin Schneidereit](#)
Merial/[Dieter Schillinger](#)

Italian Mirror Group

AISA/[Paolo Predieri](#)
Università di Bologna/[Alessandra Scagliarini](#)

UK Mirror Group

NOAH/[Phil Sketchley](#)
VMD/[Jack Kay](#)

ERA-Net

DEFRA/[Alex Morrow](#)

CNA representatives

APIFARMA/[José Carapeto](#)

IFAH-Europe Secretariat

[Bernd Halling](#)
[Hervé Marion](#)
[Declan O'Brien](#)
[Florentina Pardo](#) (reporting)
[Telmo Valinhas](#)

Discussions and Conclusions

1. Welcome and introduction

Declan O'Brien opened the meeting by welcoming the participants to the first meeting of the Mirror Groups.

2. The ETPGAH and its interaction with ERA-Net, other platforms and the Mirror Groups

Declan O'Brien briefly [presented](#) the structure of the ETPGAH and its links with the ERA-Net and the Mirror Groups. The ETPGAH aims at controlling animal diseases of major importance by developing tools (DISCONTTOOLS) that will identify and priorities these diseases. The ERA-Net is the European Research Area Network that aims at coordinating research by establishing collaboration between the funders of across the European countries. The animal health ERA-Net focuses on emerging threats, infectious diseases and surveillance. The main aims of the Mirror Groups are to communicate the ETPGAH initiative and link it to national research ensuring that funding is focused on the ETPGAH action plan. To conclude its presentation Declan O'Brien presented some suggestions to maintain the dialogue between the Mirror Groups.

Declan O'Brien gave the floor to Telmo Valinhas, Project Manager who will develop the [DISCONTTOOLS](#) starting in March for a 4 year period. Telmo Valinhas described the background to the project which will deliver an essential part of the ETPGAH action plan. He went on to review the objectives, work plan, structure and timetable of the project. DISCONTTOOLS will create a database gathering information on diseases. In a second step a gap analysis will identify the areas on which research should

focus to control diseases. At the end of the process, diseases will be prioritised by joint decision of the stakeholders. The model is aimed at research but may be used for other purposes.

The Management Board of the DISCONTTOOLS is in the ETPGAH Advisory Council mirroring what is done in the ETPGAH. As far as the link between the DISCONTTOOLS and the Mirror Groups (MG) is concerned, though MG representation in the stakeholders' forum is not foreseen in the statutes of the ETPGAH, the MG leaders could be invited individually. The coordination of these bodies will be made through the ETPGAH. As it moves forward, the ETPGAH will be funded by the stakeholders. This will ensure ongoing ownership of the ETPGAH by the stakeholders.

With regard to prioritisation, DISCONTTOOLS will identify the major diseases and a work package dealing with prioritisation should include criteria ensuring that minor diseases will also be considered, as appropriate. It was commented that animal welfare should be taken into account in the prioritisation process.

3. Presentation of the National Mirror Groups

French Mirror Group

Jean-Louis Hunault presented the developments of the [French Mirror Group](#) which had its launch conference in October 2007. The Mirror Groups has created a specific website www.rfsa.net which includes details on the Steering Committee composition and reports on the launch conference. The MG stakeholders include academia, authorities, veterinarians, farmers and industry. The group has created 3 WGs on bluetongue, product gap analysis (developed by veterinarians and farmers) and coordination of French stakeholders in terms of access to FP 7 funding. The next actions will concentrate on the development of an action plan which will be presented in May and on Bluetongue. The MG secretariat is held by SIMV in close collaboration with INRA/AFSSA. The MG secretariat is currently self funded but costs are relatively limited as most of the meetings are held by teleconference.

Italian Mirror Group

Alessandra Scagliarini presented the background for the creation of the [Italian Mirror Group](#), the ITPGAH. She explained that research in Italy was fragmented (funding split between different bodies) and that public-private partnership was limited. She indicated that the two major Italian research funders which are involved with the ERA-Net are hesitating to be part of the ITPGAH which was initiated by the University of Bologna. The ITPGAH held its launch conference in February 2007 and has created a [website](#) including the conclusions and presentations at the conference. The website explains the structure and objectives of the group. The University holds the secretariat whilst industry chairs the group. The current stakeholders include universities, research centres, associations, industry (including small & medium). Membership is open to any interested parties through a form available on the website. The ITPGAH has adapted the ETPGAH action plan to the Italian situation focusing its priorities on diseases specific to the region especially for MUMS. It will identify criteria to develop a specific prioritisation model and will work at options to harmonise regulatory requirements.

Dutch Mirror Group

Albert Meijering presented the background to the creation of the [Dutch Mirror Group](#) initiated by the CVO to reply to the ETPGAH request for input on its action plan. The initiative was also aimed at addressing the need for greater collaboration between industry, academia and authorities, the need to strengthen the vet research infrastructure and to respond to recent innovations in vaccines developments. The MG secretariat is held by industry and the current stakeholders include academia, authorities and veterinarians. The MG has identified a clear need of improved collaboration between the vet and human sectors (the Ministry of Health and the Human Health Institute are part of the project) and favours the existence of a European Centre for Epidemiology and Infectious diseases. It also supports activities towards a consistent European approach to regulatory issues.

UK Mirror Group

Phil Sketchley presented the structure and developments of the [UK Mirror Group](#). The VMD acts as the MG secretariat while NOAH is chairing it. Additional stakeholders include academia, farmers and the CVO. The structure ensures a good link with the ETPGAH and ERA-Net. He explained the process put in place to establish a list of priorities of endemic, exotic, zoonotic diseases linking these to the UK centre of expertise. The MG has also established a list of additional diseases and issues of importance to the UK to be kept under review and to be prioritised. The MG will meet in April to define a work programme, consider communication at national level and discuss how to influence national funding.

Phil Sketchley indicated that the MG was looking at possible collaboration with research centres outside the UK. He also mentioned the suggestion discussed at IFAH-Europe and IFAH to create an international platform in parallel of the ETPGAH. Declan O'Brien commented that he would meet the OIE shortly to discuss their possible leadership in the creation of such a group. It was suggested that FAO and WHO which have a major interest particularly in emerging diseases should also be part of the project.

Danish Mirror Group

Anne Birgitte Lundholt gave a brief overview of the activities of the Danish Mirror Group whose founding partners are the CVO, the Ministry and industry with VIF holding the secretariat. Additional stakeholders have joined the MG (two main universities, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Veterinary Association).

The Danish elections have postponed the availability of funds which the Ministry of Science has available to support the activities linked to the MG. The MG should receive confirmation of such funding at the end of March.

German Network Animal Health & Austrian initiative

Dieter Schillinger presented the developments of the [German Network Animal Health and Austrian initiative](#). The German network was launched in December 2007 with academia, the Ministry of Food & Agriculture and industry as founding members. Other stakeholders joined the initiative including the national CVO, the national ERA-Net representative, and veterinarians. Dieter Schillinger mentioned the EMIDA ERA-Net meeting held in January which agreed on research priorities. The Vet School in Hannover is acting as the MG secretariat.

4. Presentation of the ERA-Net and SCAR (Standing Committee on Agricultural Research) CWG on European Animal Health and Welfare Research

Alex Morrow presented the activities of the [SCAR CWG](#) aimed at better coordinating research across the European Research Area in the field of animal health including emerging threats, infectious diseases and surveillance. The Collaborative Working Group will identify common research programmes on infectious diseases of livestock with the support of the ERA-Net project and exploit synergies between these programmes to avoid fragmentation. The EMIDA (Emerging and Infectious Diseases of Livestock) project (proposing the creation of an ERA-Net) focuses on emerging and major diseases of production animals and threats to human health. It includes 26 partners from 19 countries having annual research budgets of 270 million EUR. EMIDA will enable a better sharing of information, coordination of research and common research agendas, and possible joint calls for research with joint funding. The project will develop a [database](#) mapping research across Europe. The ETPGAH expressed concern that not all research funding organisations were included, as in some countries there is considerable fragmentation with involvement of different government ministries including Agriculture and Health.

It was suggested that as the ETPGAH and the ERA-Net were working on common issues there should be mechanisms to ensure that both work in collaboration rather than in parallel. It was noted that the ERA-Net governing structure foresees input from the ETPGAH and representatives from the ERA-Net are involved in the governing structure of the ETPGAH. It was agreed that the national ERA-Net representatives should be invited to be involved with the MG if this is not already the case. A close link will be established between the ERA-Net and DISCONTTOOLS databases.

5. Recommendations for the establishment of Mirror Groups and their coordination

The group was extremely satisfied with the meeting as it had enabled a fruitful exchange of information on the developments of the MG and on other initiatives linked to research. It agreed on the following:

- the ETPGAH website should be used to provide updated information on the developments of the MG. Links to the existing MG websites will be established.

- the MG chairs should keep in regular contact to update their colleagues on new developments of their respective MG.

- the MG should meet on a regular basis (1 or 2 times per year).

6. Closure

The group agreed to schedule the second meeting after the next CNA on Tuesday 2 December from 13.00 hrs to 18.00 hrs in Brussels followed by a dinner.