New animal health strategy for the European Union (2007-2013)

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The Council adopted conclusions welcoming the Commission’s communication and the proposed strategic approach to the development of future EU animal health policy, which takes into account other policy areas. It welcomes a future establishment of a single, clear Community general legal framework and emphasises the importance of consistency with the OIE standards without undermining the establishment of higher Community standards in line with the WTO SPS agreement.

The Council highlights the importance of: i) continuous efforts to improve the health status of animals in order to achieve a high level of animal health throughout the Community; ii) further evaluation of the rules for co-funding (including the scope for efficient cost and responsibility- sharing schemes); iii) consideration to be given, under a preventive policy, to the improvement of better bio-security measures and the use of vaccination, when appropriate. It also reiterates that veterinary policy is both a cross-sector and cross-border responsibility and welcomes the involvement of the Chief Veterinary Officers in providing strategic advice on animal health policy, in close cooperation with the Commission.

The Council recognises that progress on a sustainable animal and public health policy can only be achieved and maintained if the veterinary services, as a public good of general interest, are consistent with OIE standards in all Member States. Therefore, resources should be made available for the achievement of this objective in order to protect public health and the global economy. It also recognises the need to further evaluate the priorities and criteria for the funding of science and innovation, consistent with the Community Animal Health Strategy and to consider making available a flexible mechanism for funding EU research in emergency situations.

The Commission is invited to:

- to present an action plan, as envisaged in the animal health strategy;
- to propose a legal framework for the Animal Health Law, establishing the general principles, defining the roles and responsibilities and stressing the prevention and control of disease, consistent with other relevant Community policies;
- both reflecting clear strategic objectives and including performance indicators;
- to propose the definition of priorities for a more effective use of resources and to envisage the prioritisation of EU action based on a transparent and scientific assessment of risks to health, including categorisation of animal diseases. Furthermore, the possibilities for effective implementation by the Member States should be assessed and taken into account;
- to establish and clarify the role of the "Advisory Committee" in order to identify and improve its consultative role involving the different stakeholders at a very early stage and allowing for the sharing of responsibilities and costs;
- to further evaluate the EU funding schemes' sources, rules and priority criteria, including in emergency situations. Sufficient resources should be devoted according to the objectives of the policy;

- to further evaluate the priorities and criteria for the funding of science, research and innovation and to consider making available a flexible mechanism for funding EU research in emergency situations.