

VISEGRAD VET PLUS POLICIES ON COVID-19

8th - 11th July

Conclusions

The V4 and Balkan countries' VET institutions representatives convened in Herceg Novi, Montenegro, between 08-11 July 2021, on the occasion of the conference entitled “**Visegrad VET+ policies on Covid-19**”. The meeting was organized by Rasmus Association in cooperation with MeOut Group and funded by the International Visegrad Fund (IVF).

Delegates from more than 15 Central European and Western Balkan countries were addressed by the Ambassador of Hungary to Montenegro **József Négyesi**, the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Montenegro **Aleksandar Stijović**, the President of the Municipality of Herceg Novi **Stevan Katić**, the President of the Veterinary Chamber **Ratko Ralević**, and prof. **Dr Slaven Grbić**, President of UEVH and Chairman of the Conference. The President of the World Veterinary Association, **Rafael Laguens**, also spoke at the meeting.

The focus of this conference was on strengthening ties and cooperation between professional organizations from V4 and the Western Balkans countries.

Given that the world has become a global village and that we are increasingly connected, there are severe assumptions that infectious diseases in the animal world can affect humans. Covid-19 pandemic, as the SARS and MERS viruses, have set a point in the story of cooperation between the vet doctors and the human doctors in modern health care sectors. For these reasons, it is crucial to keep this cooperation alive and functioning, to give a signal to the research, education and policy sectors.

The conference was an occasion to deepen the knowledge on the research status in general, specifically about the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact in the veterinary sector in the

different countries and strengthen and increase the cooperation between the involved institutions and participating states.

As final remarks of the meeting, the delegations from the partner countries agreed on the *following*:

- I. It is essential to support and demonstrate the importance of the veterinary service, strengthen the sector and encourage the Veterinary doctors work and visibility.
- II. It is essential to unify the efforts of the European Union and the Western Balkans institutions, civil society and public sectors to
 - a) join forces and develop joint research objectives,
 - b) increase the quality standards,
 - c) homogenize the regulations,aiming to protect the health of the population in all national territories.
- III. Several common challenges involve the vet research field, which has to be discussed by all representatives. It is necessary to inform the sector's experts to create the base for a discussion to foresee joint statements.
- IV. A particular focus was on the Covid-19 crisis. It was underlined how sharing results and developing a scientific opinion on the implications of COVID-19 for animal health and vet public health is relevant to creating more cohesion in the sector.
- V. The delegates plan to meet every year with the board members of the involved partner organizations from the Central European Countries and the Western Balkan States. The conference was an occasion to confirm the next meeting, which will be held in **Albania in 2022.**

As reported in the speeches of the local authorities and leading representatives of the participating organizations, the conference is one of the most significant symposia concerning veterinary medicine, food and animal protection and human safety.

As it happened for other health crises, the conference was a stable meeting point to discuss the latest development related to the Covid-19 crisis, its effects and assumptions to be considered for the future.

It was a confirmation that by strengthening the cooperation and networks, it is possible to contribute to the development of the single states and all the regions involved.

At the end of the conference the participants expressed their gratitude to the organisers and to the International Visegrad Fund.

Herceg Novi, 10 July 2021