

ECCVTⁱ Statement

Harmonisation of veterinary education: fundamental for establishing EU citizens' trust in veterinary services

***EAEVEⁱⁱ and FVEⁱⁱⁱ provide the Standard for undergraduate veterinary education
The European System for the Evaluation of Veterinary Training is the tool***

Directive 2005/36/EC as complemented by Directive 2013/55/EC provides the legal framework for the recognition of professional qualifications. For veterinary surgeons, the list of competencies is amended in line with the latest developments concerning the profession and included in Annex V. However a [Study on Transposition of the Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications^{iv}](#) conducted on behalf of the Commission in 2009 clearly indicated that ***“the Member States lack trust in each other’s educational systems and it is important to establish this trust if the Directive is to work properly”***.

In order to address these concerns, the veterinary profession has shown unique responsibility and has established the **European System for the Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT)** that has been running successfully for nearly thirty years. EAEVE together with FVE have created a professional peer evaluation system for veterinary educational establishments leading to the establishments' "Approval" or "Accreditation". ESEVT is based on the principles of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and it is the only Europe-wide, profession-specific evaluation system. It sets the standard and promotes harmonisation of veterinary training in the European Union and beyond. That way it provides assurance to the public that they can trust the quality of graduating veterinary surgeons and the services they deliver.

The veterinary profession's core competences include the protection of animal health, animal welfare and public health. Many issues, such as the prevention and control of animal diseases, including zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted to people, food safety, fighting antimicrobial resistance, and safe interactions with companion animals, hinge on the involvement of well-trained veterinarians. That is of particular importance in the EU, where the free market requires the same quality of veterinary services in all member states and inevitably the same minimum level of training.

It is essential that scientific development of veterinary medicine, research-based education and evidence-based medicine are fundamental quality aspects of all schools in the EU. That, in principle, requires appropriate university-owned facilities, equipment, staff and procedures for education and research in all subjects of the core professional curriculum to provide the undergraduate students with a sound university-structured environment and clear links between education and science. EAEVE/FVE standard operating procedures (SOP) and evaluations of veterinary schools (ESEVT) support harmonisation of veterinary education and in that way improve trust in veterinary services throughout the European Community.

The three ECCVT members - EAEVE, EBVS^v and FVE - closely supervise veterinary education in Europe. They all recognise veterinary education as the cornerstone for achieving the same level of veterinary competence and ensuring animal health, animal welfare and public health throughout Europe. Therefore the requirement for the same quality of training throughout the European Union is a matter of crucial importance. A minimum standard for undergraduate veterinary education has to be compulsory, as well as a mechanism for the evaluation and validation of veterinary training. It is now in the hands of legislators to act on the responsibility to recognise the standard and the tool provided by the veterinary profession in the EU legislation.

Function of ESEVT in practice

Background information^{vi}

The Evaluation System for Veterinary Training was conceived as a peer assessment programme, started and financed by the European Commission on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Veterinary Training (ACVT). Technically, the first evaluation made with ACVT involvement was to the Utrecht Faculty in 1985.

In 1989, the first Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the evaluations were established as an official Commission document (Doc III/D/5056/5/89). In 1994, the system started to run on a self-financing basis by EAEVE although it continued to be under the Commission's supervision. In 2000 FVE joined EAEVE in the responsibility of running this evaluation system successfully, which has evolved now into the **European System for the Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT)**.

Approval/ Conditional Approval – Accreditation/ Conditional Accreditation

EAEVE and FVE regularly update the SOPs, every 1-2 years, in order to ensure compliance with developments in veterinary science and EU law.

In 2000 a Joint Education Committee (JEC) of EAEVE and FVE was established as an independent body responsible for taking the final decision on each evaluation report. Since 2008 new Standard Operating Procedures^{vii} have been in place and the European Committee of Veterinary Education (ECOVE) has been established, as the successor to the JEC.

According to the SOPs, each veterinary school has to go through an evaluation that in general includes the following steps for each stage:

- The preparation of the Self Evaluation Report (SER) by the school.
- The examination of School's Self Evaluation Report by a team of experts.
- The evaluation visit of the establishment and report to ECOVE by that team of experts.
- The final decision by ECOVE on the status of the school.
- "Approved" and "Accredited" establishments are included in the EAEVE official list. The complete visitation report is published on the Website of both EAEVE and the visited Establishments.

Evaluation assesses whether an establishment conforms to the inputs required by Directive 2005/36 as complemented by Directive 2013/55 and if so recommends "*Approval*". In the case of one major deficiency ECOVE may assign '*Conditional Approval*'. When an establishment is achieving the generally accepted and appropriate academic standards and appropriately quality-assures and enhances the learning opportunities provided for students to an acceptable quality, ECOVE recommends "*Accreditation*".

ESEVT success story

The outcomes of the evaluations not only give an interesting overview of veterinary training quality and its development in European veterinary education; they also illustrate the upward influence the system has. Speaking in numbers^{viii}:

- EAEVE members number 97 veterinary schools and faculties in 33 European countries. Over 80% of them have been visited at least once.

- 77 of the veterinary schools and faculties are established in EU member states, Norway and Switzerland.
 - Out of these 77 EU establishments, 73% are “Approved” or “Conditionally Approved”.
 - Additionally 8 schools have already passed the Stage-2 Evaluation and have been “Accredited”.
- During 2014 EAEVE completed the evaluation or re-evaluation of seventeen (17) veterinary schools. Nineteen (19) more visitations of schools are currently scheduled in 2015^{ix} and 2016^x.

Even though the system is not legally binding, the number of schools that strive to meet the requirements and go through the EAEVE evaluation increases year by year showing the wide acceptance of ESEVT in the European veterinary educational community. Similarly the number of approved and accredited veterinary schools in and beyond the EU is steadily increasing.

EAEVE/FVE Standard promotes trust in veterinary services in the Community

EAEVE, FVE and EBVS work together in the European Coordination Committee for Veterinary Training (ECCVT). They all recognise quality assurance in veterinary education as fundamental for assuring the health and wellbeing of people and animals. It is also crucial for establishing trust in veterinary services, for the legislation to be well implemented and for the free market to function properly throughout the EU.

References

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- ⁱ The European Coordination Committee for Veterinary Training (ECCVT) was created in 2004. Through this committee the three founding organisations the “European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education” (EAEVE), the “European Board of Veterinary Specialisation” (EBVS) and the “Federation of Veterinarians of Europe” (FVE) aim to coordinate their views on veterinary education. ECCVT is supervised by the organisations’ executive committees/boards. www.fve.org/education/eccvt.php
- ⁱⁱ EAEVE - European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education: www.eaeve.org/about-eaeve/history-and-aims.html
- ⁱⁱⁱ FVE – Federation of Veterinarian of Europe: www.fve.org
- ^{iv} Study on Transposition of the Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications: www.ordemengenheiros.pt/fotos/editor2/eng.civil/recognitionofprofessionalqualification_ep.pdf
- ^v EBVS - European Board of Veterinary Specialisation: www.ebvs.org
- ^{vi} The Evaluation System - background information: www.eaeve.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-system.html
- ^{vii} Standard Operating Procedures: www.eaeve.org/evaluation/standard-operation-procedures.html
- ^{viii} Status of Veterinary Schools in Europe: www.eaeve.org/fileadmin/downloads/establishments_status/Establishments_Status_2014Oct.pdf
- ^{ix} EAEVE/FVE Visitation Programme 2015: www.eaeve.org/fileadmin/downloads/Visit_Programme/2015mod20141211latest.pdf
- ^x EAEVE/FVE Visitation Programme 2016 : www.eaeve.org/fileadmin/downloads/Visit_Programme/2016mod20150105latest.pdf