Dea

VETBIONET

Veterinary Bio-contained facility Network for excellence in animal infectiology research and experimentation

Deliverable D5.10

Event targeting Policy makers

Due date of deliverable: M45

Actual submission date: M72

Start date of the project: March 1st, 2017 **Duration:** 72 months

Organisation name: EAAP

Revision: V1

Dissemination level	
Public	**x**
Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including Commission Services)	
Classified, as referred to in Commission Decision 2001/844/EC	

Table of contents

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

Event targeting Policy makers

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

1.1 Description

Deliverable D5.10 – Event targeting Policy Makers was initially planned at M45, but due to Covid-19-imposed restrictions, it was then postponed and reshaped as a Sustainability workshop. The event was held on the second day of the project's final conference.

The workshop was held on February 8th, 2023, at the premises of the Hotel Oceania l'Univers, located in the centre of Tours, France. The workshop was organised as a hybrid meeting, gathering both onsite and online participants and speakers. In total, the workshop was attended by 58 participants: 40 onsite and 18 online (further details available in Annex 1).

The full workshop has been recorded and the videos are available on the project website.

The day started with a brief introduction by Keith Ballingall (MRI, WP6 VetBioNet Sustainability lead) and the presentations by 7 invited speakers representing various research infrastructures or networks in the fields of veterinary infectious diseases and One Health.

Presentations by the invited speakers:

1. ERINHA/ISIDORe – Audrey Richard (ERINHA, Director of Operations)
    - Audrey Richard talked about the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures - ESFRI roadmap launched in 2008, a moment where emerging diseases have demonstrated the need to work on highly infectious pathogens, making it necessary to establish a research infrastructure of high-security laboratories. She then held forth about the birth of the ERINHA research infrastructure from the start until its operational phase in 2018/19. She continued mentioning the operations of ERINHA between 2019-2021 mainly focused on advocacy, expansion of capacities & partnerships. Finally, in 2021 ERINHA became the coordinator of the ISIDORe project, a large EU research infrastructure project (Horizon Europe) assembling 5 of the research infrastructures or networks represented in the VetBioNet Sustainability Workshop (ERINHA, VetBioNet, TRANSVAC, EVAg, Infravec and EATRIS).
2. TRANSVAC – Stefan Jungbluth (EVI, Head of Business Development)
    - Stefan Jungbluth presented TRANSVAC, an infrastructure project with the objective of providing high-value, cutting-edge scientific and technical services and other key expert advice and expertise to accelerate vaccine development. He continued presenting the past and future activities of the project showing different revenue options deriving from the contract development partnerships model and bio-holding model to guarantee future sustainability after EC funding termination.
3. EVAg – Bruno Coutard (AMU, EVAg Coordinator)
    - Bruno Coutard presented the history of the European Virus Archive, dating back to 2009, born from the observation there were no international virus collections at that

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

time. He then continued elaborating on the mission of EVAg, which is to collect, amplify, characterize, standardize and authenticate viruses to develop and maintain the largest active and readily accessible virus archive and also to facilitate easy access to virus, derived products and services to academia and industry. He finally mentioned the functioning of the multiple collections tool through a single-entry point and the EVAg response to the Covid-19 outbreak promoting diagnostics, therapeutics and fundamental research.

4. Infravec – Kenneth Vernick (Institut Pasteur, Infravec Coordinator)

    - Kenneth Vernick presented the Infravec research infrastructure network dedicated to advance research on the control of insect vector-borne diseases. Infravec offers a catalogue of 150 infectious disease vector services including access to live vectors (pathogen-infected vectors, live colonies, field-collected samples), vector research technologies (transgenics, HT screens, insecticide study tools) and epidemiological fields sites (8 sites in Africa/Europe). He then concluded by presenting the geographical extension of the consortium and the Infravec partners worldwide.

5. EATRIS – David Morrow (EATRIS, Senior Scientific Program Manager)

    - David Morrow presented EATRIS, the European infrastructure for Translational Medicine with the mission to provide facilities, resources and services to support cutting-edge biomedical research. Using its vast capacities and expertise, EATRIS supports academia, industry, patients and policymakers. He then described the main activities performed, which are user access research and expert services, development of new research tools, provision of education and training and more. He concluded presenting the consortium and the typical study requests such as regulatory advice, virus protection, in vivo studies, etc.

6. AQUAEXCEL – Marc Vandeputte (INRAE, AQUAEXCEL Coordinator)

    - Marc Vandeputte presented the AQUAEXCEL 3.0 project – Aquaculture infrastructures for excellence in European fish research 3.0. Aquaculture represents a big challenge being the fastest-growing animal production in the world and nowadays it produces more than 50% of the food for human consumption. The main goal of the project is to integrate and open the key aquaculture research infrastructures in Europe, covering all EU aquaculture systems and competencies. He continued mentioning the type of activities performed such as Transnational Access, Networking activities and Joint Research activities.

7. EUP AH&W – Hein Imberechts (Sciensano, CWG AH&W Coordinator)

    - Hein Imberechts gave an overview of the Candidate European Partnership Animal Health & Welfare (EUP AH&W), starting from its objectives: better control animal infectious disease and reinforce the preparedness of all actors and place animal

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

welfare at the foreground of animal production. He continued presenting the strategic research agenda based on the development of diagnostic procedures, methodologies and tools to support the surveillance of animal health.

After this series of stakeholder presentations, Sascha Trapp, the VetBioNet Coordinator presented the outline and achievements of the VetBioNet project. He recalled that the project is financially supported within the action H2020 – INFRAIA – 2016 -2017 Integrating and opening research infrastructures of European interest, with a total EU funding of €10M. He described the consortium, and then he talked in detail about the transnational access call (TNA) that provided free-of-charge access by the project partners with the final result of 50 TNA projects granted (55 services, 14 access providers, 22 installations, €3,5M EU funding).

Sascha Trapp then described the Networking activities (NA) performed during the project, with the respective specific aims:

- Promoting and facilitating Transnational Access to the infrastructure resources of the network (WP1, WBVR)
- Enhancing the preparedness of the major European BSL3 research infrastructures to respond to (re)emerging epizootic and zoonotic disease outbreak (WP2, FLI).
- Harmonizing Best Practices and promoting the use of global standards in European BSL3 infrastructures (WP3, APHA).
- Ensuring high ethical standards and clarifying the social impact of VetBioNet research work (WP4, UNOTT).
- Disseminating VetBioNet outputs and providing training opportunities in project-related disciplines (WP5, EAAP).
- Developing and implementing a Sustainability Plan for the network to continue beyond the project's life (WP6, MRI).

Sascha Trapp finally spoke about the project's JRAs - Joint Research Activities, through which the VetBioNet partners seek to improve the scientific and technical standards of the services provided by the infrastructure network. VetBioNet JRAs are designed to develop or optimize infection models for a number of high-impact epizootic and zoonotic diseases (WP7) and to advance the state-of-the-art of the current analytical (WP8), telemetric or imaging approaches (WP9) in animal infectious disease research**.**

Martin Groschup, leader of WP2, was in charge of the next VetBioNet presentation focusing on the project's Preparedness Plan (WP2). Martin went through the description of each task within WP2:

- Task 2.1: European animal BSL3 facility integration module (M1-M60)

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

- Objective of the task: Veterinary Emerging Threat Response Group (VETRG) formation and drafting of a preparedness plan

- Task 2.2. European emergency module (M1-M60)
  - Objective of the task: Plan for the use of the Emergency Fund

- Task 2.3. International collaborations (M6-M60)
  - Objective of the task: Fostering collaboration between the major European research organisations and/or infrastructures in the field of emerging epizootic and zoonotic diseases.

- Task 2.4: Policy implications/stakeholders' involvements
  - Objective: Defining research priorities in the case of (re)emerging infectious disease outbreaks and relaying the alert to policy makers and funding bodies if additional research needs are identified.

  Martin Groschup concluded with the statement that preparedness needs practice at peace times, stressing the importance of activities to be put in place before the advent of crises, such as existing standby infrastructures (technical personnel, facilities), expertise (scientific personnel, ongoing studies, resources), interactions between the scientific institutions (scientific networks at managing scientific directors and acting scientist levels), running transnational projects, scientific evaluations.

Keith Ballingall (WP6 leader) then took over and concluded the first part of the morning session, talking about the VetBioNet Sustainability Plan. His presentation comprised three key elements: a review of the progress of the Network Sustainability; a presentation of the roadmap for the completion of the remaining WP6 activities; and an introduction to the future VetBioNet European Research Group (ERG). Keith Ballingall came back to the first stakeholder workshop in Brussels (Nov 2017) that was able to identify a number of VetBioNet activities that were of interest (such as finding mechanisms for the exchange of valuable samples, provision of guidelines on ethics and good practices, etc.). Finally, he discussed options for mid and long-term network sustainability, including the creation of the VetBioNet ERG and ongoing or future collaborations with other EU research infrastructures (within or outside of the ISIDORe project) and the EUP AH&W that has recognised VetBioNet as a key stakeholder and potential contributor in its strategic research and innovation agenda.

The morning session was concluded with a round table on Research Infrastructure /Network Sustainability –with a focus on VetBioNet sustainability.

Below is a summary of the comments that were brought up during the discussion:

Kenneth Vernick highlighted that, to understand sustainability, it is important to consider the foundation of the INFRAIA projects. Scientists are running most of the sophisticated rare and unique academic RI facilities. They were mostly working at full capacity already with output to internal and

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

external users, did not need new “business”, and had their own externally funded research to support labs & personnel, usually with institutional supplemental support to the facility. So, what was the basis of integrating them into an RI consortium? He stated that integrating activities are the important glue, Joint Research & Networking Activities. The integrating activities led to strong partner buy-in and engagement. The JRA and NA budgets produced large output of strengthening the TNA, joint publications, generating new TNAs, networking and dissemination. Moreover, the integrating activities JRA and NA funds generated high value for the cost.

On ISIDORe, he stated that it does not have the resources nor the mission to assure the sustainability in the same way as INFRAIA projects. Therefore, there could be a risk of low partner commitment and lack of consortium cohesion when the provision of TNA at actual cost is the only activity funded. He went on to say that the structure is suitable for "professional" PIs with funding streams, but not so much for academic PIs that have to justify their efforts on the basis of external funding. He concluded that the establishment of a legal entity is a way to commercialise the activities that partners undertake, but this time at a margin and that a balance point is the attractiveness for partners to continue to provide services at real cost without a budget versus participating in a legal entity that generates profits.

Stefan Jungbluth added that, in his opinion, being a legal entity with the same activities as before (with EU project funding) with a margin of 20% more is not a good solution, because demands will drop. It is therefore important to have sustainable services and infrastructures, but it is not so easy to develop the same activities with only a small margin. It is therefore fundamental to come up with sustainability and business plans to overcome the reduction in public funding.

Kenneth Vernick agreed and added that this is a huge challenge and there is no guarantee at all that it will succeed, thus sustainability and existence of the temporary Infravec project seems essential to ISIDORe. The ISIDORe catalogue without services on animal disease, insect vectors, social science, vaccines, and viruses would have difficulty to convince the European Commission and to satisfy user needs.

Sascha Trapp then asked Stefan Jungbluth about the TRANSVAC motivation to establish a legal entity and their experience from a transitional phase with no funding; how they have dealt with that situation?

Stefan Jungbluth clarified that they are not a legal entity yet, still pending. The lack of funding reduces activities almost to zero. For him, being sustainable means being independent of public funding, but from the perspective of the European Commission, this can mean moving away from their funding, but to other public funding (governmental funding for example).

David Morrow added that according to the EATRIS experience, the service provision makes up 5-7%.

Sascha Trapp was asked to briefly explain the contour of the VetBioNet ERG. He explained that the ERG is not a legal entity, but that its activities will include:

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

1. Networking activities: best practices in biocontainment facilities, harmonisation, teams meeting chat—sharing contents, bioethics;
2. Activities centred on facilitating TNA or research services;
3. Continue to update the VetBioNet service catalogue;
4. Joint funding bids within the VetBioNet network or together with other research infrastructures;
5. Training activities;
6. Maintain a minimal management structure.

Kenneth Vernick asked if VetBioNet ever considered a Cost Action that could help supporting training and networking activities. Infravec has considered it, and could be a good fit.

Sascha Trapp agreed, it is something to keep in mind, as Cost Action can be useful for certain activities. He stated that it was previously discussed between the VetBioNet and Infravec Coordinators to create a joint ERG and that Infravec or other research infrastructures and/or their partners would be welcome to join the VetBioNet ERG.

Stefan Jungbluth added that Cost Action is extremely bureaucratic and with limited funding, hard to manage. Regarding the ERG, not being a legal entity prevents the network from applying for grants and different ways of funding.

Kenneth Vernick concurred, stating that a Cost Action can be very bureaucratic but allows for exchanges, short visits, and networking activities and should not be completely dismissed.

Kate Miller (UNOTT, VetBioNet) affirmed that the Cost Action is a good instrument according to her experience. On the ERG, she pointed out that the formation of such a group contributes to a narrative of belonging, highlighting synergies, shared goals, etc. with the complementary benefits of sharing goals, seeing activities together, and solving problems together. Finally, it provides a sense of identity.

Sascha Trapp mentioned the JEDI (Joint European Doctorate to fight Infections, HORIZON-MSCA-2022-DN-01-01) proposal, which brings together various VetBioNet partners and represents a good example how continuous network exchanges around VetBioNet topics may lead to joint funding bids.

David Morrow came back on the Cost Action and highlighted that the submission dead line is in October and it is worth paying attention to it.

Audrey Richard added that managing a RI is time-consuming, especially because people are not fully dedicated to managing the infrastructure. Human resources dedicated to long-term management are crucial.

Bruno Coutard indicated that EVAg has identified the key activities they want to keep alive for long-term sustainability. A management team was dedicated to maintenance of the website and

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

maintaining communication between members and users. Fundamental activities were identified and funding was sought to secure these activities. They calculated that 500k€ was required per year to keep their network running. A Cost Action would clearly not cover this amount.

Norbert Stockhofe (WBVR, VetBioNet) came back to the ERG and asked if discussions were underway for the future of ISIDORe and thus concerning the involvement of VetBioNet which is only partially represented in ISIDORe. Indeed, not all fields, especially veterinary topics, are covered, thus losing an important part of the expertise represented in VetBioNet.

Audrey Richard replied that the idea is that VetBioNet, Infravec and others effectively operate as research infrastructures even if they are not RI. Ideally, VetBioNet should become a legal entity in the future, so that all of its activities can continue and the European Commission would certainly support this.

Coming back to funding sources, Sarah Arnaud (Infravec/Sonar-Global, Project Manager) added that the EC is supporting RI development less and less. The work being focused on public health, she thinks it is a role of the government to take over, but it is very difficult to identify funding.

Jonathan Ewbank (ERINHA DG, ISIDORe Coordinator) stated that this topic represents an evolving landscape, and much will depend on what will be decided to do with non-permanent research infrastructures in ISIDORe in the future. ISIDORe will aim to integrate sustainable elements into a broader preparedness solution.

To complement, Audrey Richard came back to the objective of the ISIDORe JRAs for which an internal call for proposals is in preparation and whose aim is to improve the TNA catalogue but also to promote interactions between RIs. This should contribute to a better integration of the networks in a coherent and comprehensive manner and should help ensure the continuity/stability of the partner RIs.

Norbert Stockhofe asked Hein Imberechts about the putative role of VetBioNet in the EUP AH&W. He replied that the activity profile of VetBioNet and its infrastructure capacities are clearly of interest to the partnership. It is conceivable that the EUP AH&W would delegate certain activities (e.g. infrastructure services) to VetBioNet or its partners –many of which will also participate in the partnership. Being a legal entity would definitely help VetBioNet to formalise its putative activities in the EUP AH&W, apart from a simple informal recognition of the network's contributions.

Overall, it was concluded that the creation of an ERG will allow VetBioNet to sustain the key elements of its networking activities, and that this sustainability model will certainly help to identify or create new funding opportunities. However, to truly become sustainable, VetBioNet should consider two options for the short- to mid-term: transforming the network into a legal entity or joining another permanent research infrastructure.

After the lunch break, the ISIDORe project - Integrated Services for Infectious Disease Outbreak Research - was presented by Claire Connellan, Claudia Filippone (ERINHA) and Maria-Isabel Thoulouze (INRAE, VetBioNet Co-Coordinator). Claire Connellan presented the main scope of the project, the governance structures, the TNA calls for proposals and the past and present preparedness calls. Maria-

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

Isabel Thoulouze talked about VetBioNet's contribution to ISIDORe TNA (co-leading WP11 "Cell models" and WP14 "In vivo models" together with ERINHA) and the interactions with other WP11/WP14 participants, namely TRANSVAC, Infrafrontier, EMBRC, EVAg and Infravec. Claudia Filippone concluded the ISIDORe session talking about the TNA application process, the process of independent evaluations of research proposals (VetBioNet/ERINHA procedure) and the implementation of the internal call for proposals for Joint Research Activities (JRA).

The last talk of the day was given by Keith Ballingall on the creation of the VetBioNet European Research Group – ERG.

Keith Ballingall introduced the ERG, discussed the progress and the current status of drafting the VetBioNet ERG agreement. In summary, the ERG is a contractual structure with specific governance, a simple co-operation instrument without legal personality, formed between the parties, in principle for a period of 4 years or more. It is tailor-made by the members who define its content, with no need for a financial contribution from partners for the creation of the ERG, it can operate with in-kind contributions and seconded staff from the members.

He then presented the last stages of the implementation of the VetBioNet ERG and prompted all VetBioNet partners (beneficiaries and associated partners) to take part in the finalisation of the agreement and to specify their contribution to the ERG.

1.1 Annex 1 – Participants list

Due to privacy reasons, only affiliations are shown.

Participant	Affiliation	Presence
XX	IZSVE, Italy	Onsite
XX	INRAE, France	Onsite
XX	ERINHA, France	Onsite
XX	ERINHA, France	Onsite
XX	CISA-INIA-CSIC, Spain	Onsite
XX	EATRIS, NL	Onsite
XX	INRAE, France	Onsite
XX	INIA, Spain	Onsite
XX	INRAE, France	Onsite
XX	EAAP, Italy	Onsite
XX	IZSVe, Italy	Onsite
XX	University of Parma, Italy	Onsite

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

XX	Sciensano, Belgium	Onsite
XX	Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), UK	Onsite
XX	BPRC	Onsite
XX	Erasmus MC, NL	Onsite
XX	IRTA-CReSA, Spain	Onsite
XX	University of Nottingham, UK	Onsite
XX	MRI, UK	Onsite
XX	Anses, France	Onsite
XX	Noldus Information Technology BV, NL	Onsite
XX	Noldus Information Technology BV, NL	Onsite
XX	INRAE, France	Onsite
XX	Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Germany	Onsite
XX	Erasmus MC, NL	Onsite
XX	INRAE, France	Onsite
XX	Wageningen Bioveterinary Research, NL	Onsite
XX	Animal Health Research Centre (CISA-INIA-CSIC), Spain	Onsite
XX	EAAP, Italy	Onsite
XX	The Pirbright Institute, UK	Onsite
XX	Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), UK	Onsite
XX	ErasmusMC, NL	Onsite
XX	Anses, France	Onsite
XX	INRAE, France	Onsite
XX	Moredun Research Institute, UK	Onsite
XX	APHA Weybridge, UK	Onsite
XX	ILRI, Nigeria	Onsite
XX	INRAE Transfert	Onsite
XX	IRTA, Spain	Onsite
XX	University of Copenhagen, Denmark	Onsite
XX	University of Zaragoza, Spain	Online
XX	IRTA, Spain	Online

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014

XX	University of Aix - Marseille, France	Online
XX	ERINHA, France	Online
XX	ERINHA, France	Online
XX	ERINHA, France	Online
XX	CiRAD, France	Online
XX	Institut Pasteur, , France	Online
XX	EVI, Switzerland	Online
XX	ERINHA, France	Online
XX	WUR, NL	Online
XX	WUR, NL	Online
XX	Anses, France	Online
XX	MRI, UK	Online
XX	INRAE, France	Online
XX	Institut Pasteur, France	Online
XX	INRAE, France	Online
XX	INRAE, France	Online

1.2 Annex 2 – Agenda

#	Day 2 - Wednesday February 8th - VetBioNet Sustainability Workshop	Indicative time
1.	Registration (15 minutes)	08:45 - 09:00
2.	VetBioNet Sustainability Workshop - Introduction	09:00 - 09:15
3.	Presentation of invited stakeholders	09:15 - 10:00
4.	WP2 & WP6 - VetBioNet Preparedness & Sustainability	10:00 - 10:50
	Break (Coffee, 20 minutes)	*10:50 - 11:10*
5.	Round Table on RI/network sustainability	11:15 - 12:15
	Break (Lunch, 75 minutes)	*12:15 - 13:30*
6.	ISIDORe - VetBioNet partner activities	13:30 - 14:30
7.	VetBioNet ERG	14:30 - 15:30

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°731014