ELECTORAL MANIFESTO

After being accepted as candidate for the presidency of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) I herewith provide my electoral manifesto in accordance with Article 10 of its Statutes.

My Faculty in Lugo was one of the founder members of EAEVE in 1988 but my first contact with the association through an evaluation process was in 1989, being a junior staff member of the Veterinary Faculty in León. León was one of the first 5 visitations in the frame of the pilot study developed and financed by the European Commission following the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Veterinary Training (ACVT). This pilot study was the embryo of the current European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT) run by EAEVE and FVE. In the 1990s, cross-national peer assessment was totally unknown in Europe and to me, as a young assistant professor, it was a shocking week of evaluation full of demands for information and answers to the innumerable questions about my practicals in Histology and Pathology, asked by the team of experts chaired by professor Bernard Toma.

With this first experience in mind, I fully realized the importance of the evaluation process some years later, while preparing the visitation to the Faculty in Lugo in 1998. At this point I had a stronger responsibility as I was not only acting as a professor and Vice-dean for teaching and quality but also as liaison officer between the Faculty and the team of experts. It was a challenging time for our establishment, working day and night to overcome the 4 major deficiencies (then “category 1”) until the revisit in 2000 and the full approval in 2002 (at that time decisions by the Joint Education Committee, JEC, typically took more than 1 year). The improvement of training in my Faculty after this first visitation was so impressive that I became an unconditional supporter of the system to date. Even after a more traumatic experience with the process in our second visitation in 2008. Not for the result itself which renewed our approval with flying colours, but for the pains I suffered as dean. Deans preparing a visitation know what I mean…

In the last 10 years, my experience with the evaluation process as visiting expert, chair, liaison officer and/or advisor or other to 15 faculties in Europe completed my perspective of the ESEVT. Is it a perfect system? It is not. Is it a valid approach for ensuring comparable high levels of training veterinarians? Unquestionably, yes.

My enthusiastic devotion to the evaluation system runs in parallel with my full respect for EAEVE management. My first experience in EAEVE’s decision bodies started in 2007 when I was appointed delegate of region 2 in the Executive Committee. I had very good discussions during these 5 years, especially with the President Marcel Wanner, who kindly accepted me as Vice-President. Marcel gained my respect for his extraordinary dedication. These years were very important for the professionalization of our association and for the setting of a permanent office. I had also the privilege to work with and serve as Vice-President to László Fodor. His extremely kind nature helped to strengthen the relationships of EAEVE with other pair associations such as FVE, EBVS, RCVS, AVMA and OIE. These years were important too for the preparation of the evaluation by ENQA, a process already started during Marcel’s term.

I continued my experience in EAEVE decision making and strategic bodies by participating in the ECCVT, Ad hoc Committee for the amendment of Directive 2005/36, SOP working group and, more recently in the ECOVE. In any of these groups I had the honour to meet excellent colleagues from EAEVE, FVE and EBVS who demonstrated a
firm interest in improving veterinary education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. I’ve learnt from them and consider them as a mirror.

After introducing you to my experience I want to declare my intentions for the future of EAEVE. As the only candidate for the elections in Murcia, my responsibility for a clear statement of my ideas is even bigger. I don’t want to promise you any specific action since, in my opinion, all proposals from the President have to be discussed and approved by the Executive Committee, as I’ve learnt from former Presidents, Marcel and László, but I’ll try to explain you some of my thoughts that would drive our association to a more effective and competitive corporation.

**EAEVE MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

Any president of EAEVE is obliged to follow the mission and objectives addressed in its statutes. In the case I’ll be elected, I’ll not take our **mission** of applying and promoting the cross-national evaluation/accreditation system as an obligation but rather perceive it as a motivation since I have been enthusiastically working for the evolvement and improvement of the ESEVT for the last 10 years. As a result of the hard work developed by former presidents, Executive Committees and General Assemblies we now comprise 97 members from 34 countries in Europe, Turkey, Israel and Jordan, being part of a solid and reputable organization. It is not easy to deal with such a group of different cultures, interests and needs, but the good news is that this challenge made us stronger. We are better prepared than ever to evaluate diversity applying equality principles. I’m so convinced of the benefits of our evaluation/accreditation system that I’ll promote the adherence of any establishment inside and outside Europe with interest in increasing the quality of training veterinarians.

EAEVE’s objective of monitoring the **harmonization of veterinary training** while keeping minimum standards in the study programme will be also my priority. European Commission prefers a system rather focused in the broad minimum criteria of the EU Directives applying training of regulated professions in Europe (2005/36 and it’s amending 2013/55) but I’m convinced that EAEVE and FVE have to continue setting standards of quality for veterinary training far beyond these minimum criteria. This way, our peer assessment converts into a unique tool for ensuring comparably high levels of training veterinary undergraduates. But my experience says that we need to be careful. There is a risk of being too prescriptive and dogmatic in the cold application of standards that could be perceived as a menace for the faculties. In my opinion we have to discuss and agree upon very many issues related to the study programme, such as the degree of harmonization versus specialization of veterinary curriculum, the use of extramural professional training versus in-faculty training, the adaptation of veterinary schools to new methods and tools to guarantee that the learning process is focused on student’s work and acquisition of competencies and skills (Bologna process), the outcome assessment...

Other objectives such as to reinforce cooperation and exchange of information, teaching materials and staff between members are also on my mind. They have been historically listed in our statutes, however, they have been traditionally neglected on account of the prioritization of more urgent or important duties and, most probably, by the overlapping of functions with other exchange programmes in higher education in Europe such as **Erasmus** and Leonardo. It is time to use our knowledge of the faculties derived of the application of the ESEVT to benefit the cooperation between members. My idea is to settle a working group with volunteers aiming at compiling of information from the member schools to make public the offers and opportunities in education at undergraduate and postgraduate level; in research to be better prepared for applying to European funds and projects; as well as in services and job calls. It is important to integrate FVE in this working group in order to reinforce the flow of information between our graduates.
THE EVALUATION/ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Simplification of the SOPs. From the first official document of the European Commission applying to our evaluations in 1990 two more new SOPs -2000 and 2009- with substantial modifications came into existence. I have no doubts about the usefulness for the evaluation process of the current SOP which introduced the principles and procedures of evaluation (stage I) and accreditation (II). I recognize its value for the group of visiting experts, but for the faculties and public in general it is a too long document with some standards difficult to understand in the preparation of the SERs. I think we all would agree on the need of a document easier to read and apply which will allow the schools and experts of a set of specific and clear standards to fulfil and apply, respectively. The SOP working group is in the process of preparing a new document, closer to the procedures and standards of other cross-national peer assessment bodies (RCVS, AVMA). As a member of this working group, I’m actively involved in the updating of the SOPs. In my opinion, to achieve a better document we have to consider the problems encountered in the application of the current SOP 2009 during the last 5 years by analysing the feedbacks from both the group of experts and the schools.

Establishment of standards for accreditation. The evaluation process (stage I), even with some problems in its application, has a list of quality standards, summarized in the ratios, which help the experts to apply equality principles during visitations. Accreditation process (stage II) try to follow the European guidelines for quality assessment settled by ENQA with some dysfunctions pointed out in its recent evaluation report. Unfortunately, our accreditation process (stage II) lacks any standard of the kind used in stage I. This situation is detrimental to the objectivity of the decisions taken by the experts in stage II and the ECOVE. I know that the SOP working group experts in stage II are about to propose a list of standards to be applied in future accreditations. As in the case of the standards for stage II, we all have to approve these minimum standards to guarantee the liability of future accreditations.

As stated in ENQA evaluation report, we also need to improve the quality of our visiting experts for stage I and stage II. If elected, I’ll promote the establishment of training courses with the participation of our most experienced experts and with, at least, one evaluator from ENQA to gain its official recognition.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE FROM EAEVE TO EAEVE

Development of a medium and long-term strategic plan. As the ENQA evaluation report pointed out, we have to face the challenge of designing a strategic plan to improve our association. As usual, we first need to evaluate our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). The report from the ENQA evaluation and the recommendations by CIQA are apt to act a starting point to design our strategic plan, but we have to go beyond. As an example, I think one of our most important weaknesses is that a substantial number of our member establishments are not approved or even evaluated for the time being. After 29 years of applying the ESEVT it would be acceptable to have still a low percentage of faculties accredited but almost 100% of the schools ought to be approved by now. And yet, without counting those establishments with expired approval, only 59% of our member schools are currently approved. Following our own rules, non-approved faculties cannot have visiting experts inside the establishment to guide them in the process; so, in my experience, very many of them face the evaluations almost blind to the requirements in facilities, equipment, biosafety and biosecurity, design of mobile clinic, isolation units, etc. These important items constitute the majority of the new major deficiencies in the last years. If we want to change this situation, it is imperative not to decrease the quality of our standards but to implement corrective measures to help our members to achieve them. And the first step is knowledge. To this purpose it would be useful to establish a working group to define a
proposal with those minimum requirements in modern veterinary establishments. To avoid any future problems, all proposals to apply for evaluations have to be approved by the General Assembly.

FROM EAEVE TO OUTSIDE
Reinforce our relationships with pair organizations. Not only in Europe but worldwide there is a culture of quality and evaluation of almost any human activity, especially at University level. Considering our leading history of evaluation of veterinary training in Europe, we have to strengthen our contacts with other associations developing cross-national peer assessment in veterinary training (RCVS, AVMA). It is also crucial to participate in all meetings of the Accreditors Global Working Group and in all global accreditation site visits in order to maintain our status of a prestigious and recognized evaluation/accreditation body. It is important also to be recognized by ENQA. I do hope that the appeal prepared by President László Fodor and approved by the Executive Committee will have a positive outcome in the ENQA board meeting on April 24th.

Strengthen our cooperation with other organizations dealing with veterinary education (FVE, EBVS, VetCEE, OIE,...). In my experience as a member of the ECCVT I have had the opportunity to become familiar with the excellent work developed by these organizations. With our relationships being good, especially with FVE as our partner organization in the development of the ESEVT, I want to follow the way paved by former presidents and continue participating in the respective General Assemblies voicing our determination to collaborate with them.

All these are important challenges for the future. I offer you my experience and strong will to compromise my time, capabilities and efforts to deal with them. To the purpose, if finally I’m elected, I’ll have to work close with the office, Uschi Deimel and Zsuzsi Nagy, with whom I have very good relationships, the new director of the evaluation/accreditation programme, Pierre Lekeux, who I had the privilege to work with in the Executive Committee, as well as with the delegates from the 8 regions. I have very good experiences of working in groups driven by motivation rather than obligation. I wish to continue with this principle. Finally, I want to finish thanking everybody who will support me with a vote next May in Murcia. If elected, I’ll ask also for your help because working together is the best way to succeed.

Lugo, 14th April, 2014.

Ana Mª Bravo del Moral