

To:

Mr Rafael van Grieken Salvador
Consejero de Educación, Juventud y Deporte
C/ Alcalá, 30 – 32
28014 Madrid (Madrid)
c.educacionjuventudydeporte@madrid.org

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FVE/17/corr/006

Subject: Growing numbers of veterinary students and plans to open new Veterinary Education Establishments in Spain.

Dear Mr van Grieken Salvador,

On behalf of the European Coordinating Committee on Veterinary Training (ECCVT) composed by the European Association of Establishments of Veterinary Education (EAEVE), the European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS), and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), we would like to draw your attention for the ever growing numbers of Spanish veterinary students and for plans to open even more Veterinary Education Establishments (VEEs) in Spain.

A main point of concern for the three organisations relates to the quality of veterinary training. The veterinary profession and more in particular EAEVE and FVE have taken responsibility in ensuring the quality of veterinary training in Europe. Together they have established the European System for the Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT)¹, which guarantees that the European VEEs are compliant with the EU Directives on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (Directive 2005/36/EC as amended by Directive 2013/55/EU) and with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015). Furthermore, it guarantees that the graduates from an accredited VEE acquire the relevant knowledge, skills and competences (i.e. Day One competences) required for the entry-level of a veterinarian. Through this evaluation system, more than 90 European VEEs have been visited and evaluated. Out of the 58 VEEs in the western part of Europe, only 5 ones are not approved by the system, and 3 out of these 5 are Spanish VEEs!

In this context we also wish to draw your attention to the fact that veterinary science is a very expensive subject to teach². Opening a new VEE in agreement with the EU Directives requires

¹ The European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) together with FVE have created this professional peer evaluation system of the Veterinary Educational Establishments leading to the EAEVE accreditation.

² <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/what-courses-cost/2019301.article>

huge investments in training and research facilities, animal housing and clinics, adequate personnel, etc. It would therefore be a waste of money to invest in new VEEs that in the end won't be able to reach the required level of quality.

ECCVT³, representing the veterinary profession and education in Europe, is also very concerned about the increasing numbers of veterinary students, both in the currently existing VEEs as well as through the opening of new ones in Spain.

An important concern we have relates to the graduates' prospects for the future. From the 2015 FVE Survey on the Demography of the Veterinary Profession in Europe, we know that Spain already has a very large veterinary profession. Moreover, that veterinary population also is very young. More than 50% of the Spanish veterinarians are younger than 40 years of age with several decades of working life ahead. Increasing the already high number of young graduates joining the labour market will cause a very negative effect on the prospects of all veterinarians.

Out of all the 26 countries included in the FVE Demography Survey, Spain already has the highest percentage of unemployed veterinarians. The average income (adjusted for purchasing power) of the Spanish veterinarians in all age categories is far below the average income of veterinarians in all the other countries that participated in the survey. The disappointment and frustration of new graduates (and their families) when they cannot find a job or earn a living wage, after a five year extensive and expensive course must be enormous.

Any change in the numbers of students entering existing VEEs or the establishment of new ones should only be considered after serious analysis of the needs of the society and in consultation with the profession at both National and European level.

We kindly draw your attention to our concerns and ask for involving the veterinary profession and veterinary education bodies in any decision making process related to veterinary training in your country.

Thanking you for your attention, we remain at your disposal,

Yours sincerely,

Prof Ana Bravo
EAEVE President



Prof Dominiek Maes
EBVS President



Dr Rafael Laguens
FVE President



³ See also www.fve.org/education/eccvt.php