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European One Health programme: Successful balance after five years of joint research

The health of people, animals, and the environment is closely linked in many ways. In order to meet global challenges such as the spread of antibiotic resistance, close cooperation between experts in human and veterinary medicine as well as the environmental sciences is being sought worldwide in “One Health” initiatives – including the One Health European Joint Programme (EJP).

At the beginning of 2018, the One Health EJP was launched with the aim of advancing research (e.g. on food-borne zoonoses, antibiotic resistance, and emerging threats), networking of experts, and expanding collaborations. At the end of September 2023, the programme came to an end as planned. Forty-three partner institutions from 22 countries were involved. Those from Germany included the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), the Friedrich Loeffler Institute (FLI), and the Robert Koch Institute (RKI).

The BfR was involved in a number of projects, including five joint integrated activities. Topics included the design and implementation of One Health surveillance strategies, including the interpretation of data and the provision of new tools as well as the use of these for risk assessment. In several joint research projects, new methods for the detection of zoonotic pathogens, resistances, and emerging threats were developed and the standardisation of these advanced. This was complemented by studies on the control of zoonoses and the transfer of knowledge among One health EJP participants and beyond.

The results and links within the broad One Health network will benefit national and European bodies involved in consumer health protection, policy makers, stakeholders, and consumers in the long term. The scientific findings make an important contribution to food safety and public health as well as animal health and the environment. The BfR advocates the continuation of international cooperation and joint research on topics in the One Health field.

The Final Report of the One Health EJP is available online:
<https://onehealthejp.eu/outcomes/key-documents/ohejp-final-report-2023>

Within the framework of the One Health EJP, the BfR was involved in 14 research projects (including BIOPIGEE) and five integrative projects (ORION, COHESIVE, OH-Harmony-CAP, MATRIX, COVRIN). Some of the activities were also coordinated by the BfR (e.g. the ORION and BIOPIGEE projects). The focus of ORION (One health surveillance Initiative on harmonization of data collection and interpretation) was to share data and information generated by the monitoring, collection, and interpretation of data on health and well-being. The cooperation of 13 institutes of public health and veterinary medicine from seven countries also made it possible to further optimise the collaboration between the institutions. The focus of BIOPIGEE (Biosecurity practices for pig farming across Europe) was the identification of biosecurity measures for European pig farms against *Salmonella* and the hepatitis E virus. For this purpose, researchers from 13 countries and 16 research institutions have made their results available to the general public.

The BfR also led the work package “Science to Policy Translation”. In this, measures were developed and implemented to best transfer the results to national, European (e.g. European Food Safety Authority, EFSA) and international stakeholders (e.g. World Health Organization Europe) active in the field of food-borne zoonoses, antimicrobial resistance, and emerging threats.

Further information on One Health is available on the BfR website
https://www.bfr.bund.de/de/a-z_index/one_health-202162.html

About the BfR

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is a scientifically independent institution within the portfolio of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL). The BfR advises the Federal Government and the German federal states (“Laender”) on questions of food, chemicals, and product safety. The BfR conducts independent research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.

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