WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE EU REFERENCE LABORATORY (EURL) FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA, 2012

I. LEGAL FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES

1. The functions and duties of EU Reference Laboratory (EURL) for avian influenza are specified in Annex VII of Council Directive 2005/94/EC (Official Journal of the European Union of 14.1.2006, No L 10 p.16).
2. Detailed rules for the granting of EU financial assistance to the EU Reference Laboratory for avian influenza are laid down in Commission Regulation (EC) No 1754/2006 (Official Journal of the European Union of 29.11.2006, No L 331 p.8).

II. OBJECTIVES FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2012

1. Characterise viruses submitted to the EURL by Member States and by third countries listed in Commission Regulation (EC) No 798/2008 on import conditions for live poultry and poultry products. This will, at the request of the European Commission or the submitting National Reference Laboratory for avian influenza (NRL in the following) or at the discretion of the EURL, include:

    a. Determining the intravenous pathogenicity index (IVPI);
    b. Antigenic typing of viruses and both haemagglutinin and neuraminidase subtypes;
    c. Determining the amino acid sequence at the haemagglutinin cleavage site of H5 and H7 subtype viruses;
    d. Limited phylogenetic analysis to assist in epidemiological investigations.

2. Maintain and distribute virus repository and reagents necessary for virus characterisation. Prepare and distribute standard antigens to Member States for use in the annual poultry and wild bird surveillance under EU approved programmes.

3. Analyse data of cross year avian influenza surveillance in poultry and wild birds implemented and carried out by Member States during 2011 and previous years in a descriptive manner and from an epidemiological point of view.

4. Draw conclusions and make recommendations for the improvement of sampling procedures and diagnostic methods, data gathering and reporting of results of surveillance in poultry and wild birds including assistance to the further development of the Commission's online reporting system.

5. Compile an annual report by 31 July 2012 based on the results reported by Member States for surveillance in poultry and wild bird during 2011 on the analysis mentioned in point 3 above.

6. Conduct enhanced epidemiological data analyses to inform and advise on further improvements to the guidelines for surveillance in poultry and wild birds, as appropriate.

7. Prepare and distribute antisera, antigens and reagents for the inter-laboratory conventional virological and serological comparison tests.

8. Assist Member States on the use of PCR techniques and organise the inter-laboratory comparison tests for molecular detection and characterisation.

9. Analyse results submitted by National Laboratories for the inter-laboratory comparison tests.

10. Conduct work to evaluate reported problem areas in diagnosis.

11. Support by means of information and technical advice NRLs and the European Commission during epidemics.

12. Maintain close awareness of developments in diagnostic methodology, propose if required, updates of the EU diagnostic manual and report and advise, as relevant, to the Annual Meeting of NRLs.

13. Prepare the programme and working documents for the Annual Meeting of NRLs.

14. Collect and edit material for a report covering the Annual Meeting of NRLs.

15. Ensure genetic data of avian influenza viruses is accessible to all NRLs.

16. Provide targeted training in the light of developments for new diagnostic methodology.

17. In the light of the occurrence of influenza in birds and other animals keep under review the possible zoonotic impact arising from the risk of reassortment between influenza viruses.

18. Formally liaise with Public Health Laboratories to ensure rapid flow of information and viruses as appropriate.

19. Where appropriate develop collaborative programmes of investigation with NRLs to address laboratory issues as relevant to this work programme including moderation of the FLULABNET network.

20. Prepare and publish articles and reports associated with the above work.

21. Submit to the Commission a financial and technical report on the operation of the laboratory no later than 31 March 2013 (Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 1754/2006). In case the time-limit is not respected, the financial assistance shall be reduced by 25% on 1 April, 50% on 1 May, 75% on 1 June and 100% on 1 July.

It is understood that the above mentioned objectives are not exclusive to other work of more immediate priority which may arise during the given period.