

## **EU Commissioner Potočnik welcomes Action Plan for future animal health research**

**Brussels, Belgium, 14 November 2007:**

**European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik welcomed the launch of the Action Plan as the third phase of the European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health (ETPGAH) on 14 November 2007. With the Action Plan, the ETPGAH enters into its implementation phase to develop medicines for current and emerging animal diseases.**

The Action Plan consists of a list of concrete measures that are necessary to facilitate and accelerate the development of tools for the control of major animal diseases. It also proposes key areas for EU funding for animal health research in the next ten years to help prevent and treat diseases for which no product is currently available. The Action Plan reflects the views of a wide range of stakeholders including the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the European Medicines Agency (EMA), national governments, academia, veterinarians, farmers and the animal health industry.

European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik said: “The European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health constitutes an excellent forum for discussion of research in this field. The Action Plan will be a very valuable document for setting priorities not only for European research programmes but also for national authorities and industry.”

With increasing trade, movement of people and the influence of climate change new diseases are arriving in Europe, with avian influenza and bluetongue as recent examples. The European Union needs to develop a stronger framework for animal health research to be able to respond rapidly to the threat of these new animal diseases.

A key feature of the plan is a disease prioritisation model that will list diseases by their impact for society, based on parameters such as its relevance on human and animal

health, the ability of the disease to spread and food security, amongst others. The collection of disease information will help to predict the possible impact of new diseases such as zoonoses, i.e. those diseases that are spread from animals to people, of which West Nile Virus and Rift Valley Fever are potentially fatal.

“We have seen the importance of a strategic approach for research on animal disease in the case of both avian influenza and bluetongue.”, said Declan O’Brian, Managing Director of IFAH-Europe. “The ETPGAH had predicted the emergence of bluetongue as a major threat to Europe a year before the diseases reached Central and Northern Europe in 2006.”

He added: “With the Action Plan, we are providing a better framework within which we can develop solutions for existing diseases and can prepare more effectively for new diseases. We are attempting to foster the necessary cooperation between key stakeholders in animal health on the EU as well as the national level”.

-Ends -

**Notes to Editors:**

IFAH-Europe (International Federation for Animal Health-Europe) is the organisation representing manufacturers of veterinary medicines, vaccines and other animal health products in Europe and comprises 16 Member Companies and 19 National Associations throughout Europe. For further information on IFAH-Europe, please visit <http://www.ifaheurope.org>.

The European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health (ETPGAH) is a joint initiative of industry and the research community and is actively encouraged by the European Commission services. The platform is led by IFAH-Europe and integrates all relevant stakeholders at EU and national levels.

For further information the platform and the action plan, please visit the website: <http://www.ifahsec.org/Europe/EUPlatform/Platform.htm>.

***For further information on the issues covered by this press release, please contact Bernd Halling, Communications Director.***

IFAH-Europe  
Rue Defacqz, 1  
B-1000 Brussels  
Tel.: +32 (0) 2 543 7575  
Fax: +32 (0) 2 537 0049  
E-mail: [b.halling@ifahsec.org](mailto:b.halling@ifahsec.org)