STRATEGIC PLAN

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, like all other similar Italian Faculties, have for some time been facing a deep crisis, due in part to the relatively recent reforms introduced by the legislator, to the reduction of the Ordinary Functioning Fund and of external resources. With the single budget and the introduction of the economic and asset accounting system, the Faculties / Departments no longer have budgetary autonomy, but only that related to the financial management of the funds allocated to them by the University and from outside. This has led to greater uniformity in the management of resources, but also the risk of a lack of dynamic procedures. The election of the Dean is part of this particular scenario which is certainly not promising and therefore it is necessary to set an agenda for the next three years, which aims to improve the positions acquired at a national and international level (both in teaching and research) as well as for the third mission with the purpose of strengthening entrepreneurship in the livestock and agri-food and social sectors (Animal Assisted Interventions) without neglecting pets and non-conventional animals.

Given this background, it is easy to understand how the challenges that await us, in line with the innovations introduced by the 2010 reform and the consequent ministerial measures, require a complex strategy based on quality. On the basis of this perspective, it is necessary to prepare achievable and decisive programmes and solutions for the qualification of our Faculty. The Faculty cannot ignore a vibrant collaboration between teachers, staff and students and an effective osmosis between these three parts. This relational union contributes to the creation of “extraordinary products”, i.e., veterinarians, veterinary technicians and the specialists in sustainable animal production, specialist and not generalist job profiles.

The job profile of veterinarian might seem like a traditional profession. It is not so, if we think of professionals who, in addition to animal care, become mentors of food safety through the Environment-Health combination; these issues are handled by veterinarians, therefore they become innovative professionals projected towards the third millennium, just as modern are the figures of veterinary technicians and specialists in sustainable animal production – professionals strongly wanted by this Faculty. Hence, this Faculty is well placed not only at a national level, but we would even say at a European one; the three years ahead will involve laborious work to model teaching, research and third mission – three aspects that are typical of a University in line with the labour and production market in harmony with technological innovations.

EAEVE

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Teramo obtained quality certification from the European supranational body, i.e., the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), after their visit on 21-23 September 2010.

The certification obtained ten years ago, for which the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine committed itself with an extraordinary long-lasting effort, both as to teaching organization and structures, was absolutely crucial and decisive for the future of the Faculty itself. This effort was carried out, please let us say, even with some hindrance from central apical organs, not realizing the opportunity for the Single-Cycle Degree Programme in Veterinary Medicine. In fact, the Ministry of the University, with a resolution issued in 2010, decided to use, starting from 2013, the EAEVE approval as an evaluation criterion of all the Italian Faculties of Veterinary Medicine for the purpose of assigning fresheres. The visit by the EAEVE commission is less than a year away and the list of structural and functional requests have already been sent to the competent academic bodies through the governing body of the Faculty.
**Teaching**

Given the three arguments of the University’s mission, teaching has been the most mistreated. A tangible proof is its weight, we would say zero, in the comparative evaluations for academic career. It is necessary to think of new methodologies for knowledge transfer to students. The training of veterinary medical professionals cannot ignore the potential of the network, cannot neglect teaching with animal models or simulators and the involvement of students in the daily activities carried out in the Veterinary Teaching Hospital or during external educational visits.

From what above said, it is necessary to reflect on the appropriate teaching methods for training in step with the times and with market needs. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Teramo has numerous postgraduate courses scientifically and educationally valuable, but they often stem from the initiative of individual groups of teachers and little supported by an efficient University structure. Postgraduate courses could become an important driving force for integrating our students in the labour market.

**Research**

In recent years, research has received particular attention even if not adequately funded. Academic careers are based only and exclusively on the evaluation in terms of scientific production, a way of working that creates a misalignment especially for the recruitment of professionals employed in Teaching Hospitals or in the University Clinical Hospitals; it would be natural to say “in medio stat virtus”, i.e., the right position is in the middle. Fundraising policies should be promoted both on competitive calls and on national and local initiatives that collect financial resources in addition to the ministerial ones that are insufficient for international competitions and challenges. This Faculty, through the University, could play a facilitator role both with the Region and other bodies.

**Third Mission**

**Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH)**

Since 2014 the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Teramo has equipped itself, in line with the EAEVE directives, with a Teaching Hospital accredited by the Abruzzo Region. It is believed that it is the right time to request the inclusion of the Teaching Hospital in the National Health System, an objective politically shared by the Conference of Directors / Deans of the Italian Faculties of Veterinary Medicine as well as by the veterinary management within the Ministry of Health. Here it is superfluous to recall that the unexpected and sudden closure of the Molinari premised, with the transfer of some branches of veterinary medicine (pathological anatomy, infectious and parasitic diseases, food inspection, part of anatomy and embryology) has subverted the paths of the hospital and occupied some / many spaces already dedicated to the clinics. A list could be made of both structural requests (provisional module for the second anatomical room, the *Fenice* computerized system, permanent storage of special waste, external spaces for animal shelters, hoists, etc.) and functional ones (biological paths, etc.) which this complex and Chiareto teaching farm need to face the EAEVE visit. It has to be highlighted that the VTH, despite being an integral part of the Faculty, has put in place virtuous strategies to support the team of academics who carry out basic and specialist health care on a daily basis. We have always been supporters of the administrative autonomy of the VTH through the creation of a proper cost centre to support the teaching activities of the Faculty. Not being able to respond to the growing demand of the market for specialists in the various fields of veterinary medicine only with academic staff, an “open” VTH was conceived for well-known freelance colleagues recruited on contracts, grants to support teaching activities, etc., funded both by
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the profits of the clinical activity and by resources made available by the University. These strategies should be implemented to reduce the relationship between teacher and student during the training activities with animals. Even new teaching staff recruitments have been designed as a support to clinical activities without neglecting the research activity which must be an integral part of a university teacher. It is plausible to think of a hospital where both the academy and “hospital veterinarians” coexist, the latter not as temporary employed but with a permanent job position, especially in some key sectors of the hospital. Always bearing in mind the student as a user of hospital services, an attempt is being made to direct the computerized system of medical records (Fenice) and electronic prescriptions both as a function of the EAEVE visit and as an educational innovation available to students.

Third Mission
Together with teaching and research, third mission is an institutional goal of the Italian universities and is achieved through the transfer of research to the territory. To this end, agreements, memoranda of understanding, third party activities that can be signed with institutions and companies operating in the area should be promoted. Third mission could become a facilitator to attract resources and encourage both the provision of services on an ongoing basis and foster multidisciplinary research in a sort of virtuous circle, also representing an important job opportunity for our young graduates.