

Press Releases from the Dialrel consortium

PRESS RELEASE 05 on Recommendations for Good Practice, 18/10/2010

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The Dialrel project has now ended and we present the final document, [Improving Animal Welfare during Religious Slaughter, Recommendations for Good Practice](#)

(
[pdf](#)

), by Velarde, A., Rodriguez, P., Fuentes, C., Llonch, P.,

von Holleben, K.,

von Wenzlawowicz, M.,

Anil, H., Miele, M., Cenci Goga, B., Lambooij, B., Zivotofsky, A., Gregory, N.,

Bergeaud-Blackler, F. and Dalmau, A.

The present document contains a number of recommendations from the viewpoint of veterinary sciences on practices related to religious slaughter and it is mainly aimed to provide guidelines to slaughterhouses' operators to address the welfare of animals at time of killing. It proposes to focus attention on the most risky aspects of religious slaughter, either performed without stunning or with pre/post-cut stunning, from the point of view of the welfare of animals. These recommendations are based on best available scientific knowledge (at the time of writing) and field experiences of the scientists working on the Dialrel project.

More specifically this document has been formulated on the basis of the review of veterinary science literature presented in the report on 'Animal welfare concerns in relation to slaughter practices from the viewpoint of veterinary sciences' (

[DIALREL deliverable 1.3](#)

), the spot visits in slaughterhouses conducted by members of the project team to assess the procedures currently used for religious slaughter in a sample of countries (deliv 2.2)

and the assessment of this literature and findings as carried out in the scientific workshop on religious slaughter practices held in Girona on the 3rd and 4th of February 2010 with international experts and religious authorities.

The document has evolved through discussion and dialogue with a number of key parties involved in religious slaughter: An early draft of the recommendations has been presented to the Dialrel Advisory Board, then it has been presented for discussion to a broad public of stakeholders, including Muslim and Jewish representatives, NGOs, academics and policy makers in the workshop of the project held in Istanbul on the 15th and 16th of March 2010. After this event the Dialrel team invited the participants to send their written comments for revising the document. A long process of evaluation and assessment of the various comments took place in the following two months and then a new version of the recommendations was presented for final discussion in a two part meeting in Brussels on the 1st and 2nd of June 2010 with a group of Muslim and Jewish representatives

as well as NGOs, experts and stakeholders.

The final document (deliverable 2.4) received a broad range of comments, some positive other negative. Many participants to our discussion expressed a very constructive criticism, other remained sceptical about the achievements of the project. We wanted to give voice to all these subjects and we included in the recommendations' annex the final statements of those who participated to our final meetings.

The vast majority of the participants in our consultation process appreciated the effort made by the Dialrel team members to engage in an open debate on this issue, many also expressed the desire for carrying on the dialogue and for a deeper involvement in the discussion on how to address the welfare of animals at time of killing and how to evaluate religious slaughter's practices. This range of different opinions point to the fact that the Dialrel project raised lots of interest and expectations that went far beyond what were possible to achieve within the remit and the budget of the project itself. It is worth underling that this project was as the first ever initiative in Europe that gathered together representatives of different countries of the Jews and Muslim communities,

NGOs, stakeholders with scientists belonging to different disciplines sensibilities, convictions, and it showed that a dialogue was indeed possible

. Several issues could not be addressed or resolved and in the recommendation we do underline the need for further research in this field. The animated debates around the final recommendations for good practices in religious slaughter have been very important for improving the document itself and all these different opinions will inform further research in this contested issue, we thank the European Commission and DG Sanco for the support and all the participants for their generosity and

engagement.

Mara Miele

PRESS RELEASE 04 on the Dialrel Workshop
ISTANBUL 15th - 16th of March, 2010
[[FR](#)], [[DE](#)], [[ES](#)], [[TR](#)], [[IT](#)]

What's next?

The “Dialrel Stakeholders’ Workshop”, held in the charming city of Istanbul on March, 15th and 16th, 2010, organised with the great support of the local team of the Veterinary Association, Istanbul Turkey, headed by Tahsin Yesildere,

was a very successful event that saw the participation of over one hundred delegates from many European countries as well as Israel, Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey. It was originally conceived as the last meeting before the end of the three year project, but it represented the beginning of a whole new set of important activities and it opened up opportunities for future important developments: “

Now that preliminary Dialrel specific research activities have been concluded a true dialogue can start, I feel that we are in the middle of a troubled river, let's gather our energy to reach the other side together

” (Bruno Fizon, Grand Rabinat de France, during the general discussion and the feedback on recommendations from the workshop).

This workshop was one of the activities aimed at communicating the findings of the project and at promoting a dialogue between religious authorities, NGOs, industry and other stakeholders in the Halal and Kosher supply chains. The aim of the workshop was twofold: Firstly, it provided an opportunity to present the outcomes of the research carried out in the past three years. Special emphasis was given to the living document “Guide to good practices during religious slaughter”, where the recommendations for best religious slaughtering practices were presented in the form

of a draft for discussion. These recommendations contained a list of suggestions for achieving best practice. It is important to note that the Dialrel project is a scientific consortium that has no legal objectives, but rather it works within the current EU legal framework that grants exemption from stunning in the case of religious slaughter. As such the project considers religious slaughter without, as well as with stunning. Secondly, the meeting aimed to be a forum for discussion, where the delegates had opportunities to give their feedback on each part of the research results and their input to the team of scientists who developed the 'draft recommendations'. The animated, but always friendly, discussion that took place over the two days of the meeting led to the decision of inviting all the workshop participants and all the members of the

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to send their written comments on the project's recommendations to the project coordinator

[Mara Miele](#)

. These comments will be used for revising the current draft recommendations. Moreover, the dialogue will continue in further meetings with religious authorities, industry and NGO representatives, in order to complete the recommendations with as much further consultation as possible.

The workshop started with a welcome by the project coordinator Mara Miele from Cardiff University, who gave an overview of the project structure and rationale. Her presentation was followed by three presentations on the outcomes of the investigations carried out by different project participants.

On the first morning three key topics were discussed: Lill Vramo (SIFO, Norway), Rossella Bottoni (Catholic University, Italy) and Joerg Luy (Freie Universitaet Berlin, Germany) focused on public debate, legislation on religious slaughter and ethical tools for addressing the issue of religious slaughter within the European Union. This was followed by presentations on religious rules and requirements by Haluk Anil (Cardiff, UK) and Ari Zivotofsky (Israel). James Kirkwood (HSA, UK) chaired the first session and conducted the vibrant, but polite, final discussion.

After lunch, in the marvellous terrace of the Taxim Hill Hotel, the afternoon session, chaired by Bo Algiers (SLU, Sweden) introduced new themes: Florence Bergeaud-Blackler (IREMAM, Université de la Méditerranée, France) presented the results of an investigation carried out in Belgium, France, the UK, Israel, the Netherlands, Germany and Turkey, which examined Halal and Kosher consumers' attitudes and opinion towards religious slaughter. John Lever (Cardiff University, UK) gave an overview of recent developments in the supply chains of both Halal and Kosher food in the UK, France, Germany, Turkey and Norway. Antonio Velarde (IRTA, Spain) and Haluk Anil (Cardiff University, UK) gave an overview of the results of the investigation on the current slaughtering practices in several European countries. The discussion that followed, which was indeed lively, focused on technical aspects of animal welfare and gave the

opportunity to a large number of participants with technical backgrounds (animal welfare experts, veterinarians, physicians) to make comments. The first day of the meeting ended with a boat trip on the İstanbul Boğazı, also known as the Bosphorus, along with a chance to view the magnificent sights, was a great opportunity to share ideas in a relaxed and informal environment.

The morning session of the second day started with a presentation by Beniamino Cenci Goga (Perugia University, Italy), who presented the results of a consultation with a local Muslim community in Italy on the acceptability of different slaughtering practices. Moreover, Beniamino Cenci Goga illustrated how the design of certain slaughterhouses negatively affect the practice of slaughtering both in terms of animal welfare and in terms of workers' safety. Karen von Holleben (BSI Schwarzenbek, Germany), Antonio Velarde (IRTA, Spain) and Haluk Anil (Cardiff University, UK) illustrated the scientific background to the project and the data collected during 'spot visits' to slaughterhouses in several countries in Europe and Turkey, furthermore they presented the draft recommendations for improving the animal welfare during religious slaughtering. Claudia Terlouw (INRA, France) chaired this session and she needs to be congratulated for keeping the discussion within the time limit, given the extremely high number of questions, comments and constructive criticisms.

Some of the members of the Advisory Board (Bruno Fizson, Grand Rabinat de France; Ahmet Yazici, European Halal Certification EHZ Germany; Nancy De Briyne, FVE; Zeev Noga, UECEB, Cees Vermeeren, AVEC; Michel Courat, Eurogroup for Animals) commented on the recommendations in a round table discussion. They all showed great interest in the results produced and gave a great contribution to the debate, both underlining the different religious requirements and their commitment to exploring possible strategies for improving the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter that would be consistent or acceptable with their religious requirements. The afternoon session was dedicated to a plenary discussion, admirably chaired by James Kirkwood. Many members of the Advisory Board pointed out the need for more transparency in meat supply chains and for better information to consumers and to the general public about religious slaughter and certification processes. The meeting ended with the keynote address of Denis Simonin (DG-SANCO) who explicitly congratulated the Dialrel team for the good outcomes and the interesting data provided.

The meeting ended with an invitation from the project coordinator Mara Miele to send comments concerning the recommendations provided by the Dialrel team to (<http://www.dialrel.eu/dialrel-results>). The intention is that the current draft recommendations will serve as a 'living document', which will be updated and modified in accordance with the feedback received. Mara Miele also outlined a future agenda full of further actions, starting with the imminent Spring meeting with members of the Advisory Board, external experts and religious leaders.

A Note on Dialrel

DIALREL is a European project funded by the European Commission (N°: FP6-2005-FOOD-4-C). It is coordinated by Dr. Mara Miele at Cardiff University and it sees the collaboration of 11 partners both in Europe, in Turkey, in Israel and in Egypt. The project aims to promote best practices of slaughter, both conventional and religious, and to establish a dialogue among religious authorities and market operators about Halal and Kosher certification (see www.dialrel.eu).

Within Europe there are remarkable differences in slaughtering practices (both in terms regulation and actual practices), and the [new EU reg. 1099/2009](#)

, that shall apply only in 2013, will encounter challenges for a homogenous implementation and enforcement. Moreover religious slaughter is a complex topic that encompasses animal welfare, freedom of religion and national sovereignty issues in the European Union member states. It has recently gained more prominence in public debates due to the great expansion in the demand for Halal foods in Europe and globally. This theme has led to a public debate on certification processes for products obtained by means of religious slaughter. However, data on animals slaughtered according to religious rules are limited and not systematically collected and one of the objectives of the Dialrel project is to provide an overview of current regulations and practices in a sample of countries in Europe as well as tracing some of the major changes in the Halal and Kosher supply chains and consumer demand for these products.

The DIALREL project aims to gather this information but most importantly it aims at encouraging a dialogue among religious authorities, veterinary authorities in Europe and stakeholders in the supply chains for addressing the problem of the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter.

The DIALREL project consists of five areas of investigation or workpackages: the first workpackage is aimed at reviewing information concerning the development of current legislation, religious rules and scientific welfare concerns. The second workpackage is dedicated to evaluating the current state of slaughtering practices, both conventional and religious, by examining, analysing and discussing the evidence from observed or reported incidences of optimum and adverse practices of religious slaughter techniques including Shechita and Halal methods. Workpackage three is dedicated to investigating the concerns and the level of information about religious slaughter of consumers of Halal and Kosher products in a sample of EU and associate countries. The fourth workpackage is dedicated to addressing the concerns, knowledge and information of the general public in Europe relating to religious slaughtering practices and to assess the degrees of transparency in the meat distribution system for Halal and Shechita products. Finally, workpackage five is devoted to promoting a dialogue between the involved parties and to identifying communication strategies between participants. A key part of this activity has been the setting up of an Advisory Board with stakeholders and other interested parties.

PRESS RELEASE 03- 15th February 2010

Press Release on Dialrel project, Cardiff, 15th of February, 2010

DIALREL is a European project funded by the European Commission (N°: FP6-2005-FOOD-4-C). It is coordinated by Dr. Mara Miele at Cardiff University and involves in the [DIALREL consortium](#) the collaboration of 11 partners based throughout Europe and in Turkey, Israel and Egypt. The project aims to promote best practices of slaughter, both conventional and religious, and to establish a dialogue among religious authorities and market operators about Halal and Kosher certification (see www.dialrel.eu).

Within Europe there are remarkable differences in slaughtering practices (both in terms regulation and actual practices) and this will present challenges for the homogenous implementation and enforcement of the new EU reg. 1099/2009, which is due to be implemented in 2013. Moreover religious slaughter is a complex topic that encompasses issues of animal welfare, freedom of religion and national sovereignty and it has recently gained more prominence in public debates due to great increases in the demand for Halal foods both in Europe and globally. This has led to a public debate on certification processes for products obtained by means of religious slaughter, however data regarding animals slaughtered according to religious rules is limited and not systematically collected. One of the objectives of the Dialrel project is to provide an overview of current regulations and practices in a sample of European countries. The project also aims to trace some of the major changes in the Halal and Kosher supply chains and to examine consumer demand for these products.

The DIALREL project aims to gather this information but most importantly it aims to encourage a dialogue about the welfare of animals at slaughter among religious authorities, veterinary authorities and key stakeholders working within the supply chain.

The DIALREL project consists of five areas of investigation (or 'workpackages'): the first workpackage reviews the development of current legislation, religious rules and scientific welfare concerns around animal slaughter. The second workpackage evaluates the current state of slaughter practices, both conventional and religious, by examining observed or reported incidences of optimum and adverse practices of slaughter techniques. Workpackage three investigates the concerns of Halal and Kosher consumers and the level of information available about religious slaughter in a sample of EU and associate countries. The fourth workpackage addresses the concerns, knowledge and information of the European public relating to religious slaughter practices and assesses the degrees of transparency in the meat distribution system for Halal and Shechita products. Finally, workpackage five is devoted to promoting a dialogue about religious slaughter between different groups and to identifying effective communication strategies. A key part of this activity has been the setting up of an Advisory Board consisting of key European stakeholders and other interested parties.

As part of the activities aimed at promoting a dialogue between different stakeholders in the Halal and Shechita supply chains, on **December 9th 2010 the Dialrel project (in collaboration with the EU DG Sanco) organised a meeting in Brussels with the**

representatives of the project's Advisory Board

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meeting started with a welcome from the project coordinator

Dr. Mara Miele

(Cardiff University) and from

Dr. Andrea Gavinelli

(Head of the Animal Welfare Unit of DG-SANCO). Then

Dr. Denis Simonin

(DG-SANCO) illustrated the main aspects of the new EU regulation. This was followed by a series of presentations regarding the results of the DIALREL project by team members.

Dr. Florence Bergeaud-Blackler (IREMAM, Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, Aix-en-Provence, France), coordinator of workpackage three, presented the results of the focus group discussions conducted with consumers of Kosher food in Belgium, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Israel. From this investigation it emerged that, despite little knowledge about the actual conditions of slaughter in industrial slaughterhouses, liberal, conservative and orthodox participants of focus groups showed a strong attachment to the Shechita method of slaughter. Amongst the reasons that participants offered for preferring this slaughter method, related to their belief that it minimized the pain experienced by animals. As a consequence focus group participants did not question the shekhita method but rather were inclined to question the welfare, economic or political motives behind introducing any stunning methods.

Dr. Adrian Evans (University of Cardiff, School of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff), drawing on the research of Dr. Vramo Lill (SIFO, Norway) presented the results of a study of the media coverage of issues related to religious slaughter and Halal and Kosher food in a sample of European countries (Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Norway). It emerged that whilst there was a lack of coverage of these issues within traditional media sources (e.g. newspapers), this was to some extent compensated by the availability of information through new media sources (in particular via the internet). Questions and issues concerning diversity and integration were part of the media debate in all study countries. The expanding market for halal was a very prominent theme, especially within the UK. Debates regarding kosher were, for various reasons, largely omitted from media debates within the four study countries.

Dr. John Lever

(University of Cardiff, School of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff), presented the first results of interviews with key actors in the Halal and Kosher food supply chains. He indicated that there are some major changes taking place, with a great expansion of the Halal market and a greater presence of these certified foods in major European supermarkets.

Dr. Rossella Bottoni (Milan University) presented an overview of the differences in religious slaughter legislation across Europe.

Dr. Karen von Holleben(BSI, Beratungs und Schulungsinstitut für schonenden Umgang mit Zucht- und Schlachttieren, Schwarzenbek, Germany) presented the areas of concern for the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter from a veterinary point of view. She focused attention on both 'conventional' slaughter practices, in which 'stunning' is performed before the cut of the neck, and on religious practices, in which stunning is either performed in a reversible fashion, performed after the cut of the neck, or not performed.

Then **Dr. Antonio Velarde** (Animal Welfare Unit, IRTA, Spain), **Dr. Haluk Anil** (formerly in the Veterinary faculty of Bristol University, UK) and

Prof. Beniamino Cenci Goga

(Veterinary Faculty of Perugia University) presented the results of a recent questionnaire survey regarding the incidence and scale of current religious slaughter practices and of 'spot visits' (visits to slaughterhouses to examine current practices) in a selected sample of EU countries. These results highlighted great variations in current slaughter practices and, in certain cases, indicated the low level of enforcement of current regulations. Moreover, Dr. Antonio Velarde informed the Advisory Board about a recent scientific workshop, held in Girona, Spain on the 3rd and 4th of February, where recommendations for improving the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter were thoroughly discussed with a group of scientists from Halal, Shechita and conventional animal science backgrounds. The recommendations generated from the discussions in this workshop will form part of the overall recommendations of the Dialrel project to the EU Commission for further initiatives in this area.

The members of the **Advisory Board**, which included representatives of the Muslim Council of Britain, Halal Food Authority, Shechita UK Board, Shechita France, FVE, Eurogroup for Animals, AVEC, EHZ (European Institute of Halal Certification) and UECBV (European Livestock and Meat Trade Union), showed great interest in the results produced and gave a great contribution to the debate, both underlining their different religious requirements and their commitment to explore possible strategies to improve the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter that would be consistent or acceptable with their religious requirements. Many members of the Advisory Board also pointed to the need for more transparency in meat supply chains and better information for the general public about religious slaughter and certification processes. The meeting ended with an invitation to continue this dialogue at the final Dialrel Workshop (due to take place on March 15th and 16th in Istanbul, Turkey) where the final recommendations of the project will be presented.

PRESS RELEASE 02- 4 November 2009

Meat for a ritual , NewScientist, 4 Nov 2009 by Mara Miele

I read with interest Andy Coghlan's article on recent research findings about the pain experienced by animals when slaughtered without stunning (17 October, p 11).

I head a project in Europe called Dialrel, which aims to improve welfare at slaughter by finding more common ground between what science tells us about slaughter and what procedures are found acceptable by religious traditions. We know that both Muslim and Jewish authorities are concerned about the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter; however many of them interpret the practice of stunning as incompatible with their religion. Reaching compromise is complex. Wide variations in slaughtering practice already exist within faiths: for example, the majority of halal food in the UK is obtained from animals that have been stunned before slaughter.

As part of the Dialrel project, we have conducted spot visits in slaughterhouses in several countries in the European Union and we have discovered that there are more animals slaughtered according to the religious rules than are necessary to meet the demands of the halal and kosher markets. Moreover, both conventional and religious practices of slaughter could be improved. If stunning is not performed according to the suggested rules or the equipment is not in optimal condition, it can be ineffective. Animals can experience high levels of stress before stunning and slaughtering if they are not handled properly.

We are planning a scientific workshop for early next year, with veterinarians and animal scientists from the Dialrel project and experts from both the halal and shechita certifying bodies, to discuss possible strategies for improving all the practices of slaughter. We hope that new practices, such as post-cut stunning, which is already implemented in Australia, will be adopted. We believe that this intervention would help to improve the welfare of animals in the case of religious slaughter.

Source : <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20427330.200-meat-for-a-ritual.html>

PRESS RELEASE 01- 7 February 2007

DIALREL Religious slaughter: improving knowledge and expertise through dialogue and debate on issues of welfare, legislation and socio-economic aspects – FP6 Specific Support Action.

Website Information

Construction and development of a Website, specifically dedicated to the EC funded DIALREL project, is in progress. Regularly updated information will be available at <http://www.dialrel.eu> that will contain information relating to the project on religious slaughter. The objectives of the public website will be:

- To provide an information resource with related links for interested parties and the public about the project and its activities
- To enable individuals and organisations to subscribe to a newsletter and allow them to forward information and communication to the site for dissemination
- To encourage exchange of information and provide a platform for debate
- Project information will be provided under the following headings: religious issues, animal welfare, current practices, legislation, supply and market, consumers, meetings.
- Project partners will be able maintain contact, work on documents posted and hold internal discussions using an intranet system

Project tasks will be carried out under 5 work packages:

WP1. Religion, Legislation and Animal Welfare: Conflicting Standards Information will be collected through consultations and reviews

WP2. Religious slaughter: Evaluation of current practices Available data will be collected and reviewed

WP3. Consumer and consumption issues. Relevant current issues will be identified, examined and evaluated

WP4. Socio-economic issues related to religious slaughtering practices. Impact of current practices and consumer attitudes will be evaluated

WP5. Promotion of the debate and dissemination activities. Organised national and international meetings will be held and information generated disseminated.

I hope this website will prove to be a useful and productive information source and platform.

Dr Haluk Anil

Project Coordinator