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Vespa velutina: a new colony loss cause in temperate Europe

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Vespa velutina nigrithorax Du Buysson, an invasive alien hornet from South-East China, had been reported in Europe from the Bordeaux area (France) ten years ago for the first time. Till now it has reached most of France, North Spain in 2010, the Northernmost part of Portugal in 2012, North-West Italy in 2012 and South-West Germany in 2014; in Spain, Italy, and Germany, *V. velutina* was firstly observed near the French border. Some specimens were also found in Belgium, but the species is not yet established in the country.
V. velutina prefers warm temperate climates, while cold and arid areas seem not to be suitable for it. In any case, a large part of Southern Europe is exposed to invasion by this hornet species. *V. velutina* eagerly preys on flying insects to get protein food for its larvae, but it shows a special taste for honey bee foragers that it catches in front of the hives. Everywhere it has settled, severe colony losses have been experienced by local beekeepers and both migratory beekeeping and honey production have been impaired. Therefore, *V. velutina* may be considered as a potentially major cause of colony collapse in temperate European areas.
Many efforts have been carried out in the infested areas to control this invasive species both by beekeepers and by research institutions at local, regional, and national levels. The results so far achieved can be considered at best rather partial and therefore a joint European action should be implemented to face this new threat to the European beekeeping. The involvement of the Coloss network in such an action would be highly advisable.