

Brussels, 11 October 2019

Minutes

Sixth meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare

7 October 2019, Borschette

1. Sixth meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare (the Platform)

The meeting was web streamed. Click [here](#) to access the recording.

2. List of points discussed

2.1. Opening session

2.1.1. Introduction and welcome to participants

The Chair, *Ms Bucher*, Director General for Health and Food Safety, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. She also highlighted that this meeting was the last one for *Commissioner Andriukaitis*.

2.1.2. Anne Bucher, Director General for Health and Food Safety – Presentation and adoption of the agenda

Ms Bucher presented the draft agenda of the meeting which was adopted as tabled.

2.1.3. Susanna Ahlström, Senior Specialist, Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry - Finnish Presidency priorities regarding animal welfare

Ms Ahlström presented the primary results of a questionnaire sent by the Presidency to all Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) with the aim of preparing the conclusions on animal welfare for the December AGRIFISH Council. *Ms Ahlström* highlighted the appropriate timing of the initiative, with the arriving of the new Commission, the ongoing evaluation of the animal welfare strategy and the 10th anniversary of the last EU legislation on welfare of farmed animals¹. She also explained that the total number of respondents varied between questions as some respondents did not answer all the questions. She thanked the Austrian delegate for preparing the questions on transport.

Regarding the results, a majority of respondents agreed that the actual legislation was not comprehensive enough (88%) and acknowledged the need for additional legislation (87%) or a single animal welfare law (63%). The CVOs mainly supported the need to amend the legislation on transport² and on the protection of pigs³. Moreover, they also recognised the need for regulation at EU-level to protect the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial

1 Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009

2 Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005

3 Council Directive 2008/120/EC

practices (79%), either as an independent piece of legislation or as part of a wider framework on health or identification. On implementation, the CVOs identified as the main reasons for non-compliance in their countries: unclear legislation, the attitude and insufficient knowledge of operators and farmers.

Ms Ahlström stressed that most of the respondents (91%) were in favour of a continuation of the Platform. They welcomed the possibility to dialogue with a broad variety of stakeholders and to exchange information on policy development. Regarding trade negotiations with third countries, CVOs believed that animal welfare should have a more central role. They added that the Commission and Member States should focus on the enforcement of OIE recommendations. On transport, the respondents considered the role of the National Contact Points (NCPs) valuable in the exchange of information and in case of emergency. However, they considered that the service hours were not sufficiently broad and that only one meeting per year was not enough. Regarding labelling, most of the CVOs supported the idea (83%), but were divided between supporting a guidance or a regulatory approach. They stressed the need for cooperation between all stakeholders of the food chain, in particular for absorbing the costs linked to higher standards. Regarding the rural development program, animal welfare measures were not considered effective by CVOs. Most of them (88%) agreed that a new strategy was needed and should include a better and uniform legislation as well as training of authorities, operators and farmers. Moreover, the current legislation also needed to be updated, especially on transport, and should focus more on intensive farming production.

2.1.4. Questions and answers (4 interventions)

CIWF asked for a clarification on the position of CVOs regarding intensive production and asked for a follow up on this discussion.

Eurogroup for Animals welcomed the broad support for better regulation and an animal welfare framework law, but stressed that such process would take a long time. **Eurogroup** asked if a tertiary legislation under the Official Control Regulation (OCR) or the Animal Health Law (AHL) was considered as an option for (non-)binding guidelines and if CVOs were considering to address this topic in the Working Parties.

Ms Ahlström replied that she could not give any more details on intensive farming as the CVOs only commented on it briefly. This issue will be discussed in further meetings. Regarding the (non-)binding guidelines based on the OCR/AHL, the CVOs proposed to prepare guidelines to unify enforcement. This would be a faster solution for improving the EU animal welfare situation than the development of legislation which could take several years, especially for a framework law.

HSI asked when the report would be finalised and if it would be available for the Platform members. **Ms Ahlström** explained that the report was in preparation for the Council's conclusions and that it would be public after adoption in December.

OIE wondered what kind of ideas were discussed on the implementation of animal welfare standards globally during the CVOs' meetings or in the survey. **OIE** reminded the members

that the basis texts of the OIE do not allow an intervention directly at national level. **Ms Ahlström** answered that these were the replies given by the CVOs in the survey and not during official discussions and that the general trend was to promote AW informally at global level.

2.1.5. Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety – Speech

Commissioner Andriukaitis quoted Milan Kundera⁴ to stress that no matter our diet we could all be animal welfare advocates as long as we ensured that the animals lived and died without unnecessary suffering. During his mandate, the Commissioner took animal welfare seriously and heard the EU citizens' opinion reflected in both citizens' initiatives and Eurobarometer.

The Commissioner summarised the main achievements of the Commission in the last five years starting with the completion of the previous strategy. The Commission took a series of steps to improve the implementation and enforcement of EU rules for the welfare of pigs, the transport of animals and the protection of animals at the time of killing. Including, the production of educational materials, reports and organisation of workshops. **Commissioner Andriukaitis** highlighted and detailed the improvements made by Member States on animal transport during summer and on ending routine tail docking. He also recalled the importance of the results of the EU coordinated control plan on online sales of dogs and cats to help Member States with the challenges for official controls in that field. Furthermore, the Commissioner announced the designation of a second reference centre dedicated to the welfare of poultry and other small farmed animals. He gave an update on the ongoing evaluation process of the previous animal welfare strategy and stressed the value of members' input to make this evaluation process as comprehensive and forward looking as possible. Regarding the promotion of animal welfare internationally, the Commissioner reminded the members of the Commission's constant collaboration with the OIE and third countries as well as the organisation of capacity building activities with TAIEX and under the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme.

Commissioner Andriukaitis thanked the Platform members for their work and announced that the next Commission would decide on the extension of the Platform mandate. He concluded that animal welfare was an integral part of sustainable food production and cited the Danish project for a climate neutral agriculture by 2050 as a brilliant example to follow. He believed that the next Commission would continue in this direction, in particular using the full potential of the OCR but also as part of the New Green Deal. The Commissioner also thanked DG SANTE's very small team of officials responsible for animal welfare in Brussels and in Grange for their dedication and work.

⁴ "Humanity's true moral test, its fundamental test, consists of its attitude towards those who are at its mercy: animals." - Milan Kundera

2.1.6. Questions and answers (8 interventions)

Several members thanked the Commissioner for his personal commitment during his mandate as well as the opportunities and results brought by the Platform (*CIWF, EUROFAWC, Eurogroup for animals, E. Sossidou, AVEC, Slovakia, COPA*). They also shared their hope for a renewal of the Platform.

CIWF stressed that in the future the Platform should go beyond creating only voluntary guidelines but also recommend legislative measures. *CIWF* also believed that the new college of Commissioners should attribute more staff and resources to the currently very small animal welfare team of DG SANTE given the growing political dimension as well as the constantly growing expectations of EU citizens in relation to this topic.

Eurogroup for Animals highlighted the Commissioner's actions on live animal transport, including his strong speech at the AGRIFISH Council meeting, his call on Member States to suspend long journeys during summer months and for Romania to stop transport of live sheep on vessels to the Gulf countries. *Eurogroup* then asked to what extent the Commission was considering the shift from export of live animals to the transport of meat and carcasses and if infringement procedures would be launched against Romania as Romania did not heed the Commissioner's call to stop such exports.

Commissioner Andriukaitis answered that legislation and guidelines should be discussed in the future and agreed on the success of the Platform. The new Commission's Green Deal must include animal welfare standards as climate change also affects animal health and welfare. Regarding animal transport and the trade of carcasses, the Commissioner explained that the Commission cannot oppose legally signed contracts. He agreed that it would be better to export meat products rather than live animals as this would strengthen local businesses. However, he added that a complete ban on live animal transport was not possible and that transport must be based on standards, technology and requirements. The Commissioner also explained that he had permanent contact with Romania and that the issue would be raised at the next AGRIFISH council. The Commission will analyse the current situation and advise the next Commission on the actions to take, including the possibility of infringement procedures.

AVEC wondered how to control animal welfare along the supply chain when 25% of poultry meat is imported from third countries. *AVEC* also raised the attention of Commissioner Andriukaitis to violence perpetrated against farms by fundamentalists advocating animal welfare. *COPA* raised concerns about the relation between citizens and farm/food chain operators and the difficulties to manage extremist groups targeting farms. The farm to fork initiative should include communication to the consumers and open the farms to citizens. It should also inform them about the origin of products and the difference between EU and imported products.

Commissioner Andriukaitis replied that he was firmly opposed to these violent radical acts which completely disrespect reality, science and basic European values. Regarding imports of meat from third countries, the Commissioner emphasised that trade is a two way system. We

export the same as we import and we cannot refuse imported products which comply with our food safety rules and sanitary standards. The Commissioner also highlighted the need to inform citizens about the complexity of modern agriculture, not a romanticized view of the 19th century's one, by strengthening education and communication. It is crucial to promote the reality of agriculture and animal welfare in the EU, whereas internet gives access to images and cases of animal suffering worldwide, creating strong emotions and fears, also based on misinformation.

Vier Pforten raised questions about the Commissioner's earlier comment on vegan diets and on the transparency of the second Reference Centre which includes fur animals. First, the production of these animals is already banned in a lot of European countries. Second, a conflict of interest may occur with the Aarhus University which is part of the Welfur project, funded by the fur industry. *Vier Pforten* added that EU citizens would like to see a review of the rules on animal transport and asked if the Commissioner would advise his successor in this respect.

Commissioner Andriukaitis replied that he respected all types of philosophies but does not condone violence. Democracy is based on rules and respect. He reminded that ethical standards must be respected for all animals. Concerning fur farming, it is the Member States' responsibility to decide on such activity bearing in mind science and to implement animal welfare standards. The Commission included small-farmed animals in the second reference centre mainly for concerns about welfare of rabbits. *Commissioner Andriukaitis* will check the issue raised on the Danish institute (Aarhus University). The Commissioner would be favourable towards a new framework law on animal welfare as it could cover many more areas. However, it will be up to the new Commission to decide on new legislation, after the evaluation of the animal welfare strategy.

Morning session

The morning session was again chaired by *Ms Bucher*, Director General for Health and Food Safety. She asked the members to agree on the dissemination of the conclusions of the Platform's subgroups and discuss the ones where there were disagreements.

2.1.7. Session 1: Enforcement – subgroups of the Platform

2.1.7.1. Ana Ramirez Vela, Head of Unit 'Animals', Directorate Health and Food Audits and Analysis, DG SANTE - Output of the subgroup on transport

Ms Ramirez Vela briefly recapped the mandate of the subgroup and its division in three working groups: extreme temperatures, cattle for export and the transport of unweaned animals.

Regarding extreme temperatures, the group focused on producing documents which would be part of a possible app for mobile phones. The group also identified a research gap on monitoring thermal stress.

Regarding cattle for export, the group worked on communication between the different competent authorities and on enforcement issues, including the ones raised in the European Court of Auditors' report. Its members produced recommendations on topics such as checks at loading, which are not compulsory, and highlighted the importance of guidelines on good practices for every stakeholder involved in the transport chain.

On unweaned animals, the group identified three areas which can potentially induce unnecessary suffering, namely, prolonged hunger, the lack of thermal comfort and health/fitness for transport. Due to unexpected lengthy discussions, work took place mainly on prolonged hunger without however reaching consensus among the group. The members produced a document recommending minimum feeding and also worked on indicators for thermal stress. However, they did not find proper indicators for prolonged hunger and industry does not agree with the document produced. This reflected the difficulty of this issue already experienced at Member States' level, for which the National Contact Points network could not reach agreement in the past either.

2.1.7.2. Ana Ramirez Vela, Head of Unit 'Animals', Directorate Health and Food Audits and Analysis, DG SANTE - Outputs of the subgroup on the welfare of pigs

Ms Ramirez Vela explained that the subgroup focused on reducing the risk of tail-biting. The subgroup identified two main issues to solve. First, the need for a harmonised scoring system for tail docking and tail injury. Indeed, most Member States do not have firm data to measure them. Second, in order to make progress in the rearing of pigs with entire tails there is a need for a common recommendation indicating a threshold of tail biting damage in docked pigs and another threshold for success of rearing (non-docked) pigs. To address those issues, they suggested several actions such as collecting data at slaughterhouse level, having a harmonised way to score lesions similar to the broiler system or benchmarking the percentage of pigs with intact tails. The first document produced by the members contains definitions and scoring of the tail damages. The second document addresses the compliance criteria to assess legal requirements linked to certain parameters for tail biting risks such as health, diet and competition. The subgroup wanted to identify iceberg indicators for health as well as setting alarm thresholds and guidelines that competent authorities and veterinarians could use to help farmers. Regarding diet, they sought to identify a link between tail biting and gastro-intestinal damages and how to prevent them. On competition for space and resources, they identified the need for guidance and providing optimal strategies for enrichment material. The documents produced by the members of the subgroups will be useful for the EU Reference Centre for pigs.

2.1.7.3. Questions and answers (17 interventions)

Several members congratulated the Commission and the stakeholders involved in the subgroups for their work and asked how the Commission would diffuse, implement and measure the impact of the conclusions proposed by the subgroups, as it would require translation, dissemination and distribution to the sectors concerned (*Eurogroup for animals, FVE*).

Eurogroup for animals wondered what evidence the Commission had used to say that the enforcement of the transport and the welfare of pigs directives has improved. Moreover, ***Eurogroup*** asked for the status of the infringement procedures announced at the 5th Platform meeting for Member States which are non-compliant with the requirements of the pig's directive.

UECBV stressed that they could not support all outcomes of the subgroup on transport. Scientific evidence needed to be better taken into account as well as the actual work of operators. On the conclusions on unweaned animals, ***UECBV*** added that the 12 hours feeding table was not based on clear scientific conclusions and that there were still differences between each operators' practices. Regarding the issue of tail-biting, it is important to continue the work as those damages can also affect the business industry financially.

EMN stated that the documents were really ambitious considering that only two Member States comply currently with EU rules on tail biting. ***EMN*** would have preferred a more cautious approach but they accepted the conclusions as they stand now but ***EMN*** asked then about any further procedure with these documents, like for example future common guidelines. ***EMN*** added that in the future, slaughterhouses and pig producers must be included in the discussions from the beginning.

Ms Ramirez Vela explained that the Commission had worked on a two year project on the export of live animals by road and sea. In two years, the number of consignments during summer decreased by 72%. Moreover, at least thirteen Member States are taking actions when the weather conditions are unfavourable to export by road. As it concerns mainly exports to Turkey, pressure on and negotiations with the Turkish authorities has led to an agreement to open the border inspection post 24 hours a day during the summer months to avoid waiting and suffering of animals. The Commission also measured the compliance of exports at EU borders and observed compliance rates over 98%. Regarding pigs, the Commission did not have much data, but Member States have to provide action plans to evaluate the level of tail biting and tail docking. Most of them are realistic and Member States have started to implement them. Concerning the dissemination of the documents produced by the subgroups, it is the duty of the different groups to agree on their use and measurement of the impact of these measures. ***Ms Ramirez Vela*** added that the Commission has taken into account the point of view of industry regarding the documents on unweaned animals and on data collection at slaughterhouses.

Ms Zamora Escribano added that, as the documents have been produced by the Platform, all members of the Platform should also work together for their implementation and dissemination. She explained that there was an overall support for the documents on export of cattle. On extreme temperatures, the comment from World Horse Welfare had been taken into account. However, the conclusions on unweaned animals did not reach an agreement. For the documents on pigs, the recommendations on measuring tail damages at the slaughterhouse did not reach consensus either. ***Ms Zamora Escribano*** explained that the dissenting views on the documents without consensus would be reflected in the conclusions.

CIWF wondered if infringement procedures against the 26 Member States which do not comply with legislation would be initiated.

CELCAA explained that they published their comments on the Digital Tool. They shared the needs expressed in the documents *Measuring tail damage at the slaughterhouse [...]* but did not agree on the proposed data collection system as it could cause technical and financial issues. Moreover, the most severe lesions would not be collected as animals with bad health are not authorised to be transported or slaughtered. *CELCAA* therefore recommended to use an existing data collection system in slaughterhouses, the food chain information system. The data collection would be made by the national authorities and completed by information given by the farmers. *CELCAA* also thanked Ms Zamora Escribano for her precisions regarding the conclusions of the subgroups and the possibility to further update them.

FVE highlighted that some documents could be improved, but all subgroups' members agreed to support the papers. *FVE* explained that the idea included in the document *Measuring tail damage at the slaughterhouse [...]* to develop a harmonised system was very well supported as well as the proposal for a pilot study of its feasibility made by the Reference Centre on pigs. *FVE* also asked the Commission about the future of the subgroups because some potentially useful documents were still under preparation.

VierPfoten highlighted the methodology of the subgroups based on discussion and consensus. *VierPfoten* stressed the importance of scientific evidence which should always take precedence over personal opinions. The working groups mainly updated and reworked existing documents trying to find a common ground and compromise. *VierPfoten* advocated that the documents be made available through an app for operators. Electronic accessibility would be more useful than paper documents in case of emergency.

Ms Ramirez Vela confirmed that 26 Member States do not comply with tail docking rules for the moment and that the Commission has informed them. Proposals for infringement procedures have been developed but it will be up to the next Commissioner to decide whether to launch them. Concerning the collection of data in the slaughter line, the Commission did not have enough scientific data to give an opinion. *Ms Ramirez Vela* acknowledged that this system worked for the broiler industry but that other systems may work better for other animals.

Ms Zamora Escribano explained that the subgroups' future depended on the extension of the Platform. The Commission will then also take the decision to continue existing subgroups or create new ones. Regarding the documents, they will be published on the Commission website and she also encouraged all the members to actively disseminate them.

Mr Velarde (Ind. expert), leader of the unweaned calves group, thanked all the members involved. He explained that there was a lack of scientific evidence so the document was more about best practices and asked industry if they would support the document in the future.

COPA had reservations on the document on pigs but agreed on it in the end. **COPA** reminded members of the complex issue of assessing injuries on the carcasses because this leads to financial penalties for farmers and can depend on various factors other than tail docking.

Denmark supported all the documents but added that they wanted to see a more complete document for the transport of unweaned animals. The document could be updated in the future when there will be more data available.

Ms Keeling (Ind. expert), member of the pig subgroup, explained that the missing data on pigs too heavily injured for transport to the slaughterhouse had been part of the discussions but was not included in the final document *Measuring tail damage at the slaughterhouse [...]*. There is a need to monitor this issue in the Member States. Moreover, the use of the food chain system had also been discussed in the group, but the priority was to develop a reliable standardized scoring system. The establishment of the broiler directive showed the importance of such a harmonised system.

Eurogroup for animals encouraged the Commission to propose a dissemination strategy for the documents produced by the subgroups and voluntary initiatives. Furthermore, **Eurogroup** asked if Directorate F would perform new audits to collect evidence on compliance with the pigs directive. Concerning the evaluation of the functioning of the subgroups the Commission should also assess the integrity of the stakeholders participating as in one case the discussion progress was clearly impeded on the basis of commercial interests. **WAP**, member of the pig subgroup, welcomed the recommendations and supported the call of the group for measuring damages at slaughterhouses. **WAP** stressed that it was a worldwide issue and that the conclusions of the group could be useful beyond the EU, for example for the 3T's alliance. 3 Ts stands for teeth, testicles and tails and is a global group established by WAP for the welfare of piglets uniting NGO's, farmers and slaughterhouses, and aiming at ending painful procedures such as tail docking, teeth reduction and surgical (testicular) castration. **WAP** highlighted the importance of continuing this dialogue in Europe and on a worldwide basis as well as cooperating with EU Reference Centres.

Ms Sossidou (Ind. expert) asked if the Commission planned to categorise, prioritise and disseminate the documents that were almost finalised and to prioritise the research gaps identified.

Ms Bucher, Chair, thanked everyone for the comments. On the issue of dissemination she reminded the members that the Platform was a tool of dissemination at national level. **Ms Bucher** added that the recommendations, knowledge gaps and indicators would be taken into account by the Commission. She presented the drafted conclusions for each Platform's subgroups and asked if all members agreed on them.

Several members asked to vote the conclusions for each working group separately rather than a general conclusion (**Vier Pfoten, Eurogroup for animals**). **Vier Pfoten** further invited the Commission to implement the conclusions on transport through the development of a mobile app and be the owner of it to avoid any bias or allegations.

Mr Vieira, team leader of the export cattle working group, stressed that documents which were not scientifically based could not be voted. He recalled the importance of enforcement tools to improve animal welfare conditions as the regulations are not always followed. He gave the example of the Animal Transport Guides as an efficient tool and supported the project of developing a mobile app.

Ms Bucher reminded the members that the Platform would decide on the dissemination of the documents but not vote or adopt them. Documents for which no consensus is reached will not be disseminated. **Ms Bucher** asked if there were any objections to the dissemination of the conclusions presented and invited the members who disagreed to discuss the issue during lunch time.

Vier Pforten suggested to follow the dissemination strategy established by the working group on extreme temperature.

Afternoon session

The afternoon session was chaired by **Eva Zamora Escribano**, Head of Unit "Animal Health and Welfare", Directorate Crisis Management in Food, Animals and Plants, DG SANTE.

Ms Zamora Escribano came back to the conclusions of the subgroups which were discussed with some members during lunch. The Commission proposed to amend the wording for the conclusions of the subgroup on transport and on pigs. **Ms Zamora Escribano** asked if any members had objections to those amended conclusions.

Proposed conclusion for the subgroup on transport: *The Platform thanks and acknowledges the work of the members of the subgroup. The subgroup has produced a number of relevant documents on “exports of cattle” and on “extreme temperatures” and the Platform invites its members to disseminate the recommendations of the documents and take actions in line with the documents and proposals. These should contribute to improve the welfare of animals and to better enforce the EU legislation on animal transport. In relation to the document on “unweaned animals (calves)” produced by the subgroup, the platform **acknowledges that it contributes substantially to progress on the issue but further dialogue is necessary** ~~prefers to reach consensus~~ before recommending its dissemination and use.*

Proposed conclusion for the subgroup on the welfare of pigs: *The Platform thanks and acknowledges the work of the members of the subgroup. The subgroup has provided targeted proposals for assisting in the development of indicators for tail-biting risks. The Platform invites the EU Reference Centre on animal welfare for pigs to consider the document “Indicators for tail biting risks relating to compliance criteria on health, dietary factors and space and competition” within the framework of its Work Programme for the future. The Platform invites its members to use this proposal, to develop it further in their research frameworks, and in proposals to strengthen official controls using animal welfare indicators. In relation to the document “Measuring tail damage at the slaughterhouse and setting common thresholds” produced by the subgroup, the platform **acknowledges the principle but dialogue on the technical details is necessary** ~~prefers to reach consensus~~ before recommending its dissemination and use. DOC/12476/2019-*

Indicators for tail biting risks relating to compliance criteria on health, dietary factors and space and competition.

Ms Sossidou asked to add to the conclusions the fact that there are cross cutting issues between the groups.

Ms Zamora Escribano answered that considering the short timing it was better to keep the conclusions as they were. On transport, there was no agreement on the document on unweaned animals and further amendments are needed before its dissemination and use. On pigs, **Ms Zamora Escribano** presented the amendments made on the conclusions which include that a dialogue is still necessary for the document on *Measuring tail damage at the slaughterhouse [...]* before recommending its dissemination and use.

Ms Sossidou asked to add to the conclusions that a dialogue between the subgroups is needed to emphasize their collaboration. **Ms Zamora Escribano** preferred to leave the question of dialogue open as the future of the subgroups was unsure.

Mr Vieira pointed out that UECBV acknowledged the principles that tail damages should be measured and that common thresholds should be set.

Ms Zamora Escribano concluded that the documents would be published on DG SANTE's website and on the Digital Tool and asked each member to disseminate the documents produced. She introduced the following session of the Agenda dedicated to the work of the voluntary initiatives.

2.1.8. Session 2: Voluntary initiatives – Outcome of the Platform Members' own initiatives

2.1.8.1. Birte Broberg, Senior Veterinary Officer, Danish Veterinary and Food Administration – Responsible ownership and care of equidae

Ms Broberg presented the status of the guide on horses produced by the voluntary initiative group and hoped that it would be endorsed or approved by Platform members in line with the documents produced by the Commission subgroups. She reminded the members that another guide on donkeys was under preparation as well as factsheets based on the horse guide. She also highlighted the broad composition of the group which contributed to the creation of this guide. The members based their work on reports about the EU equine sector, particularly the one entitled "*Removing the Blinkers*" as well as the Resolution of the European Parliament of 2017 on responsible ownership and care of equidae. **Ms Broberg** outlined that both guides contain recommendations on good practices and are not addressing issues already covered by legislation (e.g. transport, slaughter, identification or zootechnics) or by the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. The guides are designed to cover all the contexts of using or keeping those animals and are not meant to replace, contradict or put into question any existing guide, guideline, charter or legislation. **Ms Broberg** detailed their structure and content, including amongst others an introduction of the scope, biological needs, and recommendations. She explained that the *Guide to good animal welfare practice for the keeping, care, training and use of horses* had been published for comments on the Digital Tool. The group took into account the suggestions made by Platform members, except those which had already been

discussed inside the group and had reached a compromise or rejection. Some Platform members had also requested to add figures in the guide but this proposal was rejected given the complexity for adding them. *Ms Broberg* specified that the document is a living one which can be adapted with new scientific evidences. She presented some areas where the text already represented a compromise such as the definition of a proper indoor housing and terminology. Another discussion area was the access to paddock or pasture as the risk of injuries is sometimes higher for certain horses like racehorses. In the chapter on end of life consideration, the group decided to use the term killing instead of euthanize as its meaning can be different depending on the countries.

Ms Broberg asked that the guide be accepted by the Platform members and hoped that all members would support this document. She added that the group would also appreciate the Commission's support for the translation and dissemination of the guides.

2.1.8.2. Léon Arnts, Senior Policy Officer Animal Welfare, Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality; Animal Supply Chain and Animal Welfare Department – Health and welfare of pets (dogs) in trade

Mr Arnts detailed the broad composition of the members involved in the voluntary initiative group. He summarised their objectives, namely the exchange of good practices on enforcement and on systems of identification & registration of dogs (I&R), improving communication and cooperation between Member States as well as the use of the TRACES system and the development of guidelines. The group developed a mapping survey project of I&R in Member States. It includes standardised documents for each Member State summarising the latest results on legislation regarding the identification of pets, online sales of dogs and requirements for breeders as well as updated visual mapping for mandatory I&R of dogs in the EU. The members also worked in smaller working groups on a recommendation based on the outcome of the mapping on I&R and on guides on online dog sales, transport and breeders. *Mr Arnts* presented a draft checklist and a leaflet produced by one of the groups which both focus on online advertisement of dogs. The buyer's checklist includes a number of important elements to check before buying a dog as well as indicators for fraudulent or unserious sellers. The group also developed guidelines with recommendations for online platforms and requirements for advertisements such as information on microchip numbers, anti-parasitic treatment or contact details of the breeder/seller. *Mr Arnts* explained the agenda of the group and announced that the members hoped to start the consultation soon by posting the documents in the Digital Tool. They would then finalise the documents inside the group by December for their distribution and promotion next year. On behalf of all the members of the group, *Mr Arnts* expressed their wish for the Platform to be extended.

2.1.8.3. Katerina Marinou, Head of the Animal Welfare for Farm and Laboratory Animals' Division, Directorate General of Veterinary Services, Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food – Welfare of Fish

Ms Marinou thanked the Commission for giving the group the opportunity to present the progress and work of the voluntary initiative on farmed fish. She recalled the importance of

this sector for Greece and the strategy developed by the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food. She also thanked all the members of the group for their active input and Eurogroup for providing a secretariat and venues for the meetings. *Ms Marinou* outlined that fish were sentient beings and emphasized the need to pay full attention to their welfare as even small changes in their environment can have significant consequences and only few medicines and vaccines are available to fish farmers. The group focused their work on handling of fish and water quality, two important issues for all fish species and across all production stages. The general guidelines produced are based on the Council of Europe Recommendation concerning farmed fish, the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code and knowledge from members of the initiative. In more detail, the guide on fish handling covers general principles, guidelines for operators and specific practices such as crowding or pumping methods. The one on water quality includes guidelines for farmers regarding farm design or contingency plans as well as parameters and operation procedures. The species specific chapters contain biological and behaviour characteristics, welfare indicators for each species or handling recommendations not included in the general chapter. The final chapter will highlight the priorities for future work and outline the remaining knowledge gaps. The group hopes to present the guidelines to the Platform early 2020. The group also wished the Platform to continue to be able to address more topics such as housing and killing.

2.1.8.4. Birte Broberg – Welfare of pullets

Ms Broberg summarised the context of the initiative. The group aims to improve the welfare and life of pullets which will later become laying hens. These animals are covered by Council Directive 98/58/EC, but it is too general to cover the complex welfare challenges of their rearing period and their future lives as laying hens. The initiative is led by Denmark and has a broad composition. The group drafted a guide on best management practices for the keeping of pullets which includes an introductory part on the applicable legislation and its purpose including guidance on rearing laying hens with intact beaks. It also contains recommendations in nine areas such as the training of staff for proper care of pullets or the choice of a rearing system similar to their future living conditions. Environment and stocking density are also areas covered by the guide. *Ms Broberg* explained that figures were difficult to integrate in the guide and that a compromise should be reached on this issue. The group had four meetings so far and continues their discussion by email with the hope to finalise the guide soon and to present it to all Platform members.

2.1.8.5. Questions and answers (3 interventions)

Several members welcomed and congratulated the work of Denmark and experts working on the initiative on horses. They asked the Commission to support the translation and dissemination of the document (*Word Horse Welfare*) and to dedicate a space on DG SANTE's website for the voluntary initiatives (*Eurogroup, FVE*).

Word Horse Welfare reminded the members of the importance of the equine sector in the EU and that education was key for better living conditions of these animals.

Ms Zamora Escribano took note of the requests on translation but stressed that the translation services were busy with new tertiary legislation on plant health, animal health and official controls regulation (OCR). *Ms Zamora Escribano* will investigate translation possibilities to see how many languages could be addressed and reminded members of the possibility to cooperate with Member States.

Eurogroup also asked the Commission for the possibility to add a logo of the Platform on the documents produced. *Ms Zamora Escribano* informed the members that the documents would be uploaded on the website after the meeting and that the Commission would check the possibility to include a visual identity. She highlighted the promotion of the work of the Platform by the Commission in several meetings. *Ms Zamora Escribano* then presented the conclusions of the Platform on the guide produced by the voluntary initiative on equines. She added that the documents produced by the Platform were living documents and asked the members if they agreed on the conclusions presented. No objections were formulated.

Proposed conclusion for the voluntary initiative on Responsible ownership and care of equidae: *The Platform thanks and acknowledges the work of the members of the voluntary initiative. The working group concludes that the following document should be promoted in order to improve the welfare of equidae in the EU.*

2.1.9. Session 3: Information and knowledge sharing

2.1.9.1. Hans Spoolder, Director and coordinator of the EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare (EURCAW)– Pigs

Mr Spoolder presented an update on the activity of the first Reference Centre and reminded the members of its legal base (the Official Controls Regulation - OCR). He presented the main staff of the centre and explained that they would work closely with the second reference centre on poultry to help competent authorities. The centres will provide them with technical information as well as to policy workers and their support bodies. The five areas of activities of the centres are defined by article 96 of the OCR. *Mr Spoolder* detailed each of them according to the work done by the EURCAW-pigs. On coordinated assistance, the centre aims to be a central contact point for technical information requested by competent authorities as well as a networking source by organising meetings across Europe and keeping contact with national reference centres. Regarding indicators, the centre compiled a list to verify compliance with legislation in eight key areas suggested by competent authorities such as stunning effectiveness or tail biting. The centre also addresses the issue of iceberg indicators starting with the six areas of the Member States Action Plan. On scientific and technical studies, the centre produced review papers and factsheets on specific topics available on the website and worked with farmers, transport and slaughter operators to gather best practices. Regarding training and education, the centre evaluated the existing material and used the knowledge of the Better Training for Safer Food programme for setting standard training activities in the EU. They will also produce guidelines on how to change perceptions and attitudes. The EURCAW-pigs is using their website as the main tool of dissemination of results. *Mr Spoolder* presented its content in a live demonstration.

2.1.9.2. Questions and answers (2 interventions)

Eurogroup for animals asked three questions to Mr Spoolder. First, to what extent the deliverables of the subgroups on pig welfare will be taken into account and to which extent the centre is working with the group. Second, if the centre is considering alternative stunning methods as the use of CO₂ is problematic. Third, if there is a strategy to measure the impact of the centre's work on better compliance. *Mr Spoolder* explained that his team would work together with SANTE's Unit F2 on iceberg indicators. Regarding CO₂ stunning, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is currently developing indicators for good assessment in slaughterhouses and EURCAW will use them in its work. The discussion on assessing the different methods of stunning and killing will be done on a scientific basis highlighting the concerns and risks to be taken into account for each method. *Mr Spoolder* added that they would measure their impact with the number of visits on the website, meetings organised and questions received.

Mr Simonin (see next presentation) clarified the role of EFSA compared to the one of the centre. EFSA is in charge of risk assessment and provides scientific opinion on how rules can be possibly amended. Reference centres are in charge of providing technical and scientific support for the implementation of the rules.

HSI asked for the possibility to share the documents used for training in the EU to promote our standards in third countries. *Mr Spoolder* answered that everything that can be useful can be published.

2.1.9.3. Denis Simonin, Head of Animal Welfare Sector, Unit "Animal Health and Welfare", Directorate Crisis Management in Food, Animals and Plants, DG SANTE – Platform's achievements

Mr Simonin presented the achievements of the Platform since its establishment. He recalled the tasks listed by the Commission recommendation establishing the Platform such as the exchange of information and best practices or the promotion of EU standards globally. *Mr Simonin* presented figures on the Platform, subgroups and voluntary initiatives' activities. He also detailed the subjects shared by the six EU presidencies in the last three years. The Platform offered its members the possibility to discuss topics such as animal welfare labelling, unwanted horses or the welfare of farmed fish in the perspective of NGOs, Member States and industry. Information and knowledge sharing sessions also allowed the members, the Commission and their partners to present current projects aiming at improving the welfare of animals such as the Animal Transport guides or the Spanish governmental campaign "Eres responsable". *Mr Simonin* outlined the success of the Digital Tool developed by the Commission and its wide use by members, especially the ones of the subgroups and voluntary initiatives. He concluded by thanking all the members for their involvement and the opportunities for networking and mutual understanding brought by the Platform. He added that the information sharing and the number of subjects discussed were successful and hoped that the Platform would continue to grow.

2.1.9.4. Questions and answers (2 interventions)

Several members thanked the Commission for the opportunity given by the Platform which accomplished great work (**Sweden, WAP**).

WAP thanked for the possibility to receive feedback from other stakeholders through the Platform and wished the Platform to continue. **WAP** also asked the Commission to give more support to the animal welfare team as well as to give more power to the subgroups such as the possibility to manage pilot projects without always counting on the Commission to act.

Ms Zamora Escribano thanked the members for their eagerness of the Platform to continue.

2.2. Closing

2.2.1. Conclusion and closing of the meeting

Ms Zamora Escribano closed the meeting. She thanked all the members and the Commissioner for his personal commitment during his mandate. She stressed the importance of the new Commissioner for Health and Food Safety to acknowledge the conclusions achieved by the Platforms' subgroups and voluntary initiatives and to continue this concrete work. The agenda was mainly dedicated to the members' initiatives which is a sign of the concrete work of the Platform. She thanked Mr Spoolder for presenting the work of the first reference centre and encouraged the members to share it. She outlined the steps forward accomplished with the establishment of a second reference centre.

She informed the members that all the documents would be available on the Commission website, the register of expert group, and on the Platform Digital Tool. The members will be informed as soon as the decision concerning the prolongation of the Platform is taken by our new Commissioner, Ms Kyriakides.

3. List of Participants

European Commission:

Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis

Members of cabinet: Marco Valletta, Vilija Sysaite

DG SANTE: Anne Bucher, Eva Zamora Escribano, Ana Ramirez Vela, Denis Simonin, Stanislav Ralchev, Aude Luyckx, Irene Seipelt, Isabelle Verbeiren

Speakers:

Susanna Ahlström, Senior Specialist, Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Ana Ramirez Vela, Senior Veterinary Officer, DG SANTE, European Commission
Birte Broberg, Senior Veterinary Officer, Danish Veterinary and Food Administration
Léon Arnts, Senior Policy Officer Animal Welfare, Dutch Ministry of Agriculture
Katerina Marinou, Head of the Animal Welfare Division, Greek Ministry of Rural Development

Denis Simonin, Senior Veterinary Officer, DG SANTE, European Commission
Hans Spoolder, Director and coordinator of the EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare – Pigs

Member States:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands

European Economic Area (EEA) members: Iceland, Norway

International Organisations: EFSA, EURCAW on pigs, OIE

Business and Professional Organisations:

Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU (a.v.e.c.)
COGECA - European Agri-Cooperatives
COPA
European Association of Livestock Market (AEMB)
European Federation of Animal Health Services (FESASS)
European Feed Manufacturers Federation (FEFAC)
European Forum for Animal Welfare Councils (EuroFAWC)
European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders (EFFAB)
European Liaison Committee for the Agricultural and Agri-Food Trade (celcaa)
European Livestock and Meat Trades Union (U.E.C.B.V.)
European Meat Network (EMN)
European Rural Poultry Association (ERPA)
Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)
International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE)
Liaison Centre for the Meat Processing Industry in the European Union (CLITRAVI)

Civil Society Organisations:

Compassion in World Farming (CIWF)
Eurogroup for Animals
Humane Society International/Europe (HSI/Europe)
Organisation for Respect and Care of Animals (ORCA)
Slow Food
VIER PFOTEN International (VIER PFOTEN)
World Animal Protection (WAP)
World Horse Welfare

Independent experts:

Cathy Dwyer, Linda Keeling, Niamh O’Connell, Lars Schrader, Evangelia Sossidou, Anna Elisabet Valros, Antonio Velarde Calvo

Invited experts: Elena Nalon (Eurogroup for Animals), João Vieira (U.E.C.B.V.)

Observer: Switzerland

Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU