



EU Platform on Animal Welfare

14th meeting

WebEx video conference

Thursday, 7 December 2023, 09:15 – 17.55 CET, Brussels time

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

– SUMMARY REPORT –

The 14th meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare provided the opportunity to inform the Platform members about the adoption by the Commission, on the same day, of an animal welfare package, made up of two legislative proposals on animal welfare, on the protection of animals during transport and on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability, and of the formal Commission reply to the European Citizens' Initiative 'Fur Free Europe'. Members had the opportunity to follow the live press conference presenting a major step in the revision of the EU animal welfare legislation since years. It was followed by detailed presentations by the Commission of the adopted package. The agenda of the meeting also included the presentations of EFSA report on "*Scientific and technical assistance on welfare aspects related to housing and health of cats and dogs in commercial breeding establishments*" and update on ongoing mandates. The meeting saw also several presentations, among others on the economic, environmental, and social benefits of transporting meat and carcasses over live animals, on the development of impact indicators to assess the effects of the CAP on animal welfare or on animal welfare indicators at the slaughterhouse. Furthermore, the Commission announced the establishment of the subgroup on animal welfare policy indicators. As always, the meeting allowed live discussion and exchange of views between representatives of Member States, NGOs, professional organisations, and independent experts.

OPENING

CHAIR: Bernard Van Goethem, Director for Crisis preparedness in food, animals and plants, DG SANTE

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The Chair welcomed the participants, in the room and online, and Commissioner Kyriakides. He presented the [agenda](#) which was adopted without comments.

Speech by Commissioner Stella Kyriakides

The Commissioner warmly welcomed the Platform members. She informed about the adoption by the Commission, on the same day, of an animal welfare package, made up of two major legislative proposals on animal welfare and of the formal reply to the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) 'Fur Free Europe'.

The first legislative proposal aims to revise the EU legislation on [the protection of animals during transport](#). The new transport Regulation will bring tangible changes in this area, thanks to new science and experience with the existing requirements. It will improve the welfare of several million live animals yearly transported within and outside the EU for slaughter, fattening or breeding.

The second legislative proposal on [the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability](#), will set, for the first time ever at EU level, minimum welfare requirements to protect dogs and cats in breeding establishments, pet shops and shelters, and requirements to ensure a robust traceability of all dogs and cats placed on the market, including through online marketing. Several contributions have fed into the proposal. A coordinated [EU Enforcement Action on illegal trade of cats and dogs](#) revealed serious problems with illegal trafficking on the EU market, and especially at import. The [EFSA, has issued the first ever scientific and technical assistance report in this area](#). And the members of the Platform have dedicated a lot of hard work to this proposal.

The Commissioner informed that alongside the legislative proposals, the Commission adopted a formal reply setting out the legal and political conclusions and the action intended to be taken in [response to the ECI 'Fur Free Europe'](#). The Commission has asked EFSA for a scientific opinion on the welfare of fur animals (to be provided by March 2025). Based on it, by March 2026, the Commission will evaluate the economic and social consequences of different options, including the bans that the ECI 'Fur Free Europe' requests.

The Commissioner acknowledged that there were more expectations regarding the legislative package, including the proposal on the phasing out of cages. She reassured that this is not the end of the road for those proposals, but preparatory work needs to continue before they are ready to be adopted.

The adopted proposals reflect the commitment of the Platform and of the Commission as well as scientific evidence and societal expectations. The Commissioner underlined the pivotal role of the Platform and warmly thanked the Members for their input provided in the process of the revision of the EU animal welfare legislation. She extended her thanks to the staff of the 'Animal Welfare' unit for their long-standing commitment.

Presentation of EFSA report on “Scientific and technical assistance on welfare aspects related to housing and health of cats and dogs in commercial breeding establishments” and update on ongoing EFSA mandates [PP]

Questions and Answers

Eurogroup asked about the Commission timeline for the adoption of the remaining legislative proposals and regarding the EFSA mandate on fur, whether it would focus on welfare needs of animals and whether it would be possible to include in it all species farmed for fur, not only minks, foxes, raccoon dogs and chinchillas. *HSI* echoed Eurogroup concerns that the fur mandate would only cover four animal species and questioned how the members of the EFSA scientific panel were selected and how the conflict of interest with research carried out by the fur industry would be resolved. *Welfarm* wondered if EFSA will provide information on what a good winter garden for turkeys should be. *FVE* thanked EFSA for the report on welfare aspects related to housing and health of cats and dogs and expressed satisfaction that the recommendations provided by the voluntary initiative on dogs could underpin research on dogs and cats. *FVE* also asked whether the public health and biodiversity aspects of fur farming would be considered as well as the welfare aspects of killing in event of disease outbreaks. *Eva Sossidou* asked whether the outputs of the Welfur project will be taken into account to develop the new scientific opinions. *EFFAB* informed of its meeting with EFSA and commitment to provide data on beef and turkey and highlighted that it takes time to compile field data and assess their relevance for the EFSA mandate.

The Commission informed that the choice of the species covered by the fur mandate was based on the reality of the current EU fur farming. The selected species were considered as a priority, also considering EFSA resources and the time frame constraint.

EFSA confirmed that the topic of the winter garden for turkey will be assessed, and the recommendation will be provided. About the fur mandate, the methodology used will allow to assess the impact of the husbandry system, practices, and specific hazards on animals' welfare. *EFSA* has acknowledged that it is aware of the risk of conflict of interest and is working on the composition of the working group, also with their legal department, to avoid it. Public health and biodiversity are not included in the scope of the mandate. The animal welfare indicators of the Welfur project will be reviewed by the working group to decide which are relevant. The call for submitting evidence for turkey and beef cattle is open.

Live web streaming of the press conference by Commissioner Kyriakides and Executive Vice-President Šefčovič to present the animal welfare package adopted by the Commission on 7 December 2023

Members had the opportunity to follow the press conference presenting the package on animal welfare adopted by the Commission on the same day.

MORNING SESSION

CHAIR: Andrea Gavinelli, Head of Unit 'Animal Welfare', Directorate Crisis preparedness in Food, Animals and Plants, DG SANTE

Presentation of the European Commission's proposal to revise EU rules on the protection of animals during transport, and its accompanying impact assessment [\[PP\]](#)

Discussion

WOAH informed that it has started to revise the transport rules of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code. It also wondered whether the Commission's proposal provides a list of species that cannot be transported at extreme temperatures. *EMN* expressed disappointment that practical suggestions provided by the industry on how transport can be carried out with high welfare standards, even under existing rules, were not considered for the Commission's proposal. Instead, the proposal aims to impose even stricter rules on farmers and companies that already transport animals meeting high animal welfare standards. *EMN* considered that the most urgent challenge is an uneven enforcement of the existing rules. *Denmark* expressed disappointment that the adopted package did not include the proposals on farm animals, slaughter and labelling as an urgent revision of rules is needed, especially for pigs. It asked the Commission to reconsider the possibility of including these proposals in next year's work plan. *FVE* asked if the subgroup on transport will continue to meet and if the proposal on transport include only sea vessels or also RoRo ships (roll-on roll-off ships). *CIWF* asked why there is no definition of transport for slaughter; why temperature limits per species and journey times do not correspond with EFSA recommendations and why time spend on sea does not count as journey time. *FAO*, on transport to and from non-EU countries, wanted to know how the EU would ensure compliance and enforcement of the rules, since it has no jurisdiction in these countries. *Animals Angels* pointed out that some issues are not addressed by the proposal, such as the transport of small animals; temperature checks during the entire journey (not just at departure and arrival); stocking density in relation to temperatures or specific conditions of animals; journeys at low temperatures; feeding time for unweaned animals; transport of injured animals. Furthermore, it wondered if the Commission intends to adopt another legal text defining common sanctions. *Four Paws* asked which certification bodies would carry out checks in third countries and how the quality of their work would be monitored; how compliance with the limitation of transport times would be

ensured and would the competent authorities make an in-depth analysis after the journeys. *Eurogroup for Animals* wanted considered that the science on motion stress during sea journeys was inconclusive and therefore the precautionary principle should be applied; it asked what is the difference in rationale on journey times for slaughter and those for other types of journeys; how a fitness for transport was defined; what is the basis for the conviction that enforcement in third countries could be done in the right way; more on ideas on the drinking equipment for unweaned animals. In addition, it asked why the laboratory animals are excluded, and what is the Commission position on shifting to the transport of carcasses and meat. *Greece* asked if geographical peculiarities had been considered for maximum journey times like for Greece time to slaughterhouses outside the country largely exceed the allowed timeline. *Sweden* wanted to know more on the limitations of journeys during cold temperatures. *Animal Welfare Foundation* asked what enforcement control tools the competent authorities have at their disposal to prove the actual length of stay of animals at the place of destination; for export to third countries, why a certificate of acceptance of a consignment is only required for sea transport and why a possibility of reimporting animals is not foreseen. *Antonio Velarde* wondered if there is a limitation of duration of sea transport and if the temperature inside the vehicle would also be monitored. *ELPHA* wanted to know why, when transporting chicks, the fact that the birds have a yolk sac which lasts much more than 24 hours was considered. *COGECA* highlighted the importance of the safety service for the road and sea transport to cover accidents and asked which weather forecast would be considered when preparing the journey, as forecasts may differ. *Welfarm* asked if the journey could still be approved by the competent authority if the journey log was registered and a document was missing or something else had gone wrong. *EFFAB* criticised the fact that the proposal considers that animals cannot be protected at -5°C and hot temperatures while the sector, thanks to the improvements implemented, can control inside temperatures. *EFFAB* also asked to consider adapting the species' specific needs for resting. *COPA* asked how to avoid fragmentation of the single market, given that the regulation will affect peripheral and hot countries; requested more information on the cost implications of the requirement to keep unweaned calves for five weeks on farms and why the animals can be kept outdoors at high temperatures, but not transported. *Norway* considered that some provisions on fish are not suitable for these animals and asked for more information on the scientific background behind them. *AVEC* questioned how it would be possible to have enough veterinarians to be present at all animal loadings and suggested allowing farmers to care for their animals during loading. *Spain* reminded that the proposal will be presented at the Council Working Party meeting on 18 December 2023. *UECBV* wanted to know whether the Commission has considered the situation in which drivers, farmers or personnel of the slaughterhouses try to load animals as quickly as possible due to the limited duration of transport. *CIWF* asked to clarify if a transporter is required to provide a contingency plan for the sea journey (before the start of the journey) if journey times at sea is not counted.

The Commission informed that the proposal contains provisions on sanctions which go beyond the usual provisions of sanctions. It includes a list of certain types of infringements that Member States must consider as serious infringements. On temperatures, the framework is based on scientific opinions. Some ranges can be defined to include commonly transported species, and this has been

done. No rules related to temperature inside the trucks, except for dogs and cats, were included, since it is not really possible to take actions on inside temperatures except if the truck is equipped with heating/air conditioning systems, and there is no intention to require such system for all trucks. Instead, the Commission proposes to approach the issue of temperature at the planning stage, based on the weather forecast. The conditions of high temperatures at farm are not the same as those during transport. Designated bodies in each Member State will be responsible for monitoring the forecasts. On transport at sea, this includes both livestock vessels and RoRo's ships. Time spent at sea is not included in journey time because the motion stress triggers on vessels are very different from those on trains and trucks. Scientific evidence on the motion of stress at sea is inconclusive. This is why, if there is enough space, and the animals are fed and watered at regular intervals, the sea journey does not count for the actual duration of journey as the stress is much lower. Transporters are always required to have contingency plans in place and time obligations for watering, feeding, etc. will still go on. Concerning definition of transport to slaughter, the purpose of the journey was included to make the definition clear. On small animals, the rules on space allowance are based on the allometric equation recommended by EFSA. For animals below 25 kg this equation can be used to calculate the required space allowance. Regarding journey times and resting times, an effort has been made to align animal welfare science with the legislation on social rights of drivers, so that the animals' needs are met but transport also remains practical. On feeding systems, a procedure is foreseen in which the Commission will examine the technical specificities of the system. On the enforcement, thanks to digitalization we will have a good overview of where the consignments are. There are many examples of how this will improve the current situation. The re-import of consignments goes beyond the scope of the current revision. The system of pre-approval could only be introduced for sea vessels as these include thousands of animals, the impact on truck consignments is much lower. On journey times, the reason behind the difference between journey times for slaughter and other types of journeys is the idea of keeping slaughter local and shifting to transport of carcasses and meat. If a slaughterhouse cannot be reached within 9 hours, there is a possible exception to the rule. Regarding laboratory animals, only those transported in bio secure vehicles/containers are excluded as it is not possible to open such vehicles to control the animals. On aquatic animals, the new annex on aquatic animals contains basic requirements but the Commission plans to send mandates to EFSA so the provisions could be changes accordingly in the future. On fragmentation of the market, geographical distributional impacts are in the impact assessment. The subgroup on transport will no longer meet as its purpose was to inform the Commission proposal, which is not on the table of the European Parliament and the Council.

The economic, environmental, and social benefits of transporting meat and carcasses over live animals [PP]

Questions and Answers

EMN asked whether the study considered the cultural and religious aspects of the carcass trade as well as the logistical challenge of cooling chains in the countries concerned. *Copa* said that third countries do not accept European meat, that is why we transport live animals. There is a need to

strengthen the promotion of EU meat products in third countries. *WOAH* asked if the project identified social costs. *Portugal* informed having a visit of a delegation from Israel aimed to approve the first slaughterhouse that will allow the exportation of meat from Portugal to Israel.

The presenters answered that cultural and religious factors were at the heart of the project. It is possible for Member States to have kosher slaughterhouses. In terms of environmental costs, the question is whether we can afford to not make these changes from a societal point of view. For employment there is the opportunity to transfer it across the chain. Due to the logistical challenges, there should be a transition period, but from a cost perspective, cold chains should be feasible. Spain and Portugal already have kosher slaughterhouses.

Regarding the promotion of meat products, *the Commission* said that this would be one of the issues addressed in the Strategic Dialogue on Agriculture.

Presentation of the Communication of the European Commission on the European Citizens' Initiative "Fur Free Europe" [PP]

Discussion

HSI expressed disappointment that the Commission had not announced the ban on fur farming. *Eurogroup* asked why the Commission postponed the decision on fur farming, whether it was possible to act more quickly on ending cage farming; why is the Commission considering other measures to improve animal welfare on fur farms, although this was not the request of the ECI and why EFSA will assess welfare under current fur farming conditions rather than absolute welfare. *EMN* inquired whether the EU Reference Centre will be involved in EFSA's work on this mandate. *World Animal Protection* observed that a potential ban should not be undermined by the import of cheap bad products and wondered how this would be considered in the decision to be taken in the future. *Four Paws* expressed hope that EFSA will recommend a ban given that it has already recognized that cage farming is inconsistent with animal welfare and voiced his disapproval of the inclusion on the agenda the point on 'Welfur'. *The Netherlands* expressed hope that EFSA and the Commission will also consider the ethical aspect of fur farming and informed that Dutch citizens do not accept keeping and killing of animals to obtain fur. *AVEC* wondered if the Eurobarometer survey is really a good source of information given that only 6% of people are in contact with farm animals. In addition, aired its concern that the representative of 'Welfur' would not be allowed to ask questions which not democratic. *Cogeca* wanted to know if there is scientific evidence of the environmental impact, what the level of biosecurity is on fur farms and what is the actual reduction of biodiversification. *EURCAW for small-farmed animals* asked if fur animals bred for experimental purposes are in the scope of the EFSA mandate and possible new legislation. *HSI* wondered whether visits to fur farms would be announced or unannounced.

In its response, *the Commission* indicated that EFSA would not request inputs from the EU Reference Centre on the fur mandate, as they are two separate institutions, with different mandates. For the ECI "End the Cage Age", the Commission did not request a scientific opinion from EFSA because this ECI

aimed to change farming practices while the ECI on fur animals aims to stop the activity of a whole entire sector. The Commission cannot take such a decision without the recommendations of EFSA. It is necessary to know whether certain standards can work in practice and their welfare consequences. The EFSA fur mandate includes several elements. On import, it has been fully considered and will be considered further. Visits to fur farms will be announced as they are carried out on a voluntary basis by Member States. On the fur animals bred for scientific purposes, the Commission will provide an answer in writing. Regarding 'Welfur', the Commission responded that according to the procedures, questions can only be asked by members of the Platform.

Animal Welfare: Welfur Certification and Assessment [PP]

The 'Welfur' item was included on the agenda following a request from a member of the Platform, representative of Cogeca, expressed at the previous meeting.

AFTERNOON SESSION (part 1)

CHAIR: Claire Bury, Deputy Director General for Food sustainability, DG SANTE

Presentation of the European Commission's proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats their traceability [PP]

Discussion

EuroFAWC asked whether the health problems of brachycephalic cats and dogs were addressed in a Regulation. *Eurogroup for Animals* wanted to know the meaning of non-detrimental breeding strategies; how legislation will tackle extreme breeding and how legislation on online sales of dogs and cats could be further developed considering that the Digital Services Act (DSA) is not comprehensive. *FVE* wondered whether, in the context of interoperability, Europetnet will be a valid system for the future. *Animal Health Europe* asked whether there would be links with the register in the Regulation and register of establishments under the Animal Health Law and whether there are plans to merge the two legislations as well as how this will work with the requirements of the DSA. *Four Paws* warmly congratulated the Commission for this long-awaited legislative proposal. *EURCAW for small-farmed animals* asked if the new rules for shelters also apply to animals kept in households.

In its response, *the Commission* acknowledged that there is a problem with extreme breeding. For this reason, a general obligation that breeding strategies should not result in genotypes that have detrimental effects on the health or welfare of the dogs and cats has been included. There is a possibility to adopt more legislation via the delegated acts. The households are excluded from shelter definition. The obligations of DSA apply for the sales of dogs and cats. The Commission's proposal adds to it the compulsory warning on responsible ownership, the requirement for the seller to include information on the identification and registration of the animal, as well as information for the buyer

that he can verify the authenticity of the information provided by a seller through a website that will be set up by the Commission. Regarding the register, there are already obligations in the Animal Health Law on registration and approval of establishments, which facilitate the work of Member States in the field of animal welfare. In terms of interoperability, the Commission is also planning implementing acts, and the the idea is to build on what exists already.

AFTERNOON SESSION (part 2)

CHAIR: Andrea Gavinelli, Head of Unit 'Animal Welfare', Directorate Crisis preparedness in Food, Animals and Plants, DG SANTE

Setting the basis for the development of impact indicators to assess the effects of the CAP on animal welfare [PP]

Questions and Answers

Welfarm asked whether the animal welfare indicators developed by the Commission will be mandatory for Member States' national strategic plans. *Bas Rodenburg* observed that some Member States already have cooperation schemes on animal welfare (e.g., BE or NL) which, according to the presentation, have little impact. *Animal Health Europe* informed that according to the European Medicines Agency, in 2022 there has been a 53% reduction in antimicrobial sales across Europe. *Four Paws* asked whether, through the indicators, the Commission aimed to ensure that the efforts of different Member States were better comparable or whether the objective was to obtain a numerical output. *EMN* observed that there are a lot of measures applied under the CAP, in addition to animal welfare, which need to be considered to get the whole picture. *FVE* pointed out that the Joint Research Centre is also developing indicators for the sustainability framework that include animal welfare elements, and that perhaps they could be used for this framework. *COPA* asked how budgetary data and results could be combined and then, based on the outcomes, recommendations to Member States will be made.

In its response, *the Commission* informed that the specific indicators are needed, notably to know what is the impact of what is spent as animal welfare measures under the CAP. The level and stage of development of such measures are very different between Member States, and we do not currently have hard data on where we are. On 6 December 2024, the Commission adopted a report based on the CAP strategic plans with a detailed Annex on the strategic plans of Member States, including measures on animal welfare. The indicators presented are also publicly available on the EU AGRI data portal.

The importance of animal welfare indicators in relation to different policy instruments (e.g., CAP): discussion on the establishment of a subgroup [PP]

Questions and Answers

FAO asked whether the indicators would relate to EU animal welfare policy or also other relevant policies. *Eurogroup for Animals* suggested to collect information on indicators already identify through other projects and scientific work before the subgroup starts to work.

The Commission informed that the subgroup would be focused on animal welfare indicators which would assess the impact of EU animal welfare policies and regulations. The Platform members were invited to send relevant information on the indicators to the EU platform mailbox. The terms of reference of the subgroup on indicators will be published on the Platform's digital tool with a deadline for submitting applications set for 15 March.

Presentation of the report “Extreme breeding: mapping legislation in Europe” [\[PP\]](#)

Questions and Answers

The Netherlands and *FVE* expressed full support for the proposed recommendations on extreme breeding.

Animal Welfare Indicators at the Slaughterhouse: the “aWISH” project [\[PP\]](#)

Questions and Answers

AVEC asked if the project coordinator is in contact with the leaders of other projects under Horizon 2020 on sustainability and animal welfare and suggested establishing a list of all ongoing projects in this area. *FVE* supported the proposal for a list of projects and informed of the existence of the [ArMoR](#) group gathering projects fighting Antimicrobial Resistance in livestock farming. Having a similar group for projects in the animal welfare field would be very useful.

The presenter informed that he is in contact with the coordinators of other projects such as Clear Farm, the Biosecurity project, or the PPILOW project, as well as being part of a consortium in charge of dissemination events.

Update from the voluntary initiative on the international dimensions of animal welfare [\[PP\]](#)

Questions and Answers

World Animal Protection expressed hope that the Commission will support and host a conference on international aspects of animal welfare. Such an event would be an opportunity to bring together the views of different Directorates-General (DGs) of the Commission on how they engage on animal welfare in an international context.

The Commission highlighted the importance of voluntary initiatives as well as the contribution of the Platform members and agreed on the importance of establishing links with the different DGs involved in international cooperation on animal welfare. It would be interesting to see over the next year how such a partnership could work and develop objectives to be then share with other important partners in the field such as DG NEAR, AGRI or TRADE. The Platform on animal welfare is a forum of the Commission not of DG SANTE. Therefore, it could be a joint operation of the Commission, NGOs, Member States, and other international organizations. Certainly, it is worth to reflect more on this.

Closing of the meeting

The Chair thanked all Members for their participation.

Annex: List of participants