

Meeting of the sub-group on Transport

First meeting, 29 March 2022

(Videoconference)

– MINUTES –

Attendance

Independent expert	Michael Marahrens
Civil society organisations	Animal Welfare Foundation Animals' Angels
Business and professional organisations	FESASS UECBV Copa
Member States	Portugal The Netherlands
European Commission	DG SANTE G5 DG SANTE F2
Guest(s)	Millieu/Ecorys Consortium

Discussion

1. Welcome & brief tour de table

The Chairs welcomed participants and invited them to make a 'tour de table'. There were two observers, representing the contractor of the Commission for the Study in support to the impact assessment on animal transport.

2. Presentation on the IT Digital Tool

The Commission gave a brief overview on the use of the IT Digital Tool for members to follow up on meetings and upload their contributions.

3. Context, mandate and timeframe by the Commission

The Commission presented briefly the context of the mandate of the subgroup: under the Farm to Fork Strategy the Commission committed to revise the animal welfare acquis, including Regulation (EC) 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport.

The Commission has started many different initiatives to help in this regard: a fitness check to evaluate the current legislative framework, an ongoing impact assessment supported by an external study, a mandate to EFSA on updating their scientific advice that will translate into 5 different opinions on animal transport covering the main species and several other studies and projects.

Regarding the mandate of the subgroup, it is limited to transport and the group follow Commission rules for expert groups and the EU Platform on Animal Welfare. The subgroup will not be discussing concrete legislative drafts but rather exchanging on the key possible policy options and directions for the revision of the transport legislation. The subgroup will meet once a month for approximately 2 h, with the exception of August 2022, in order to cover 10 different proposed topics.

4. Working method

The Commission presented the working method highlighting the following practices:

- Members participate in their personal capacity and do not represent the views of the organisations they work for;
- The group does not aim to reach a consensus on every subject, but rather to have an open discussion allowing to collect all views and different elements to be taken into account;
- Commission will chair the meetings, which will happen, unless indicated otherwise, by means of teleconference. Members will receive in advance the agenda, minutes of previous meetings and questions aimed at orientate the debate;
- Chatham House rules apply;
- The subgroup will report back to the plenary of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare.

Members were invited to provide the group with papers, studies, reports and other relevant documents in the Digital Tool.

5. Presentation by Commission of the list of topics proposed

The Commission informed that 10 meetings are foreseen covering 10 different issues, representing the main challenges in terms of policy options for the proposal of the new regulation on animal transport:

1. *Export to third countries – general issues – March 1 Meeting*
2. *Export by third countries by livestock vessels – April 2 Meeting*
3. *Export to third countries by road – May 3 Meeting*
4. *Limiting Journey times – June 4 Meeting*
5. *Transport of unweaned and other vulnerable animals – July 5 Meeting*
6. *IT database – September 6 Meeting*
7. *Transport means equipment and monitoring tools – October 7 Meeting*

8. *Reporting of data from MSs – November 8 Meeting*
9. *Policy and/or other indicators on the protection of animals during transport – December 9 Meeting*
10. *Transport of dogs and cats – January 10 Meeting*

Further issues were proposed by members:

- Animals transported in containers with focus on poultry.
- Harmonisation of both certification and sanctioning systems at EU level;
- More specific air transport requirements;
- Under vulnerable animals to include end of career animals, cats and dogs, pets and others.

The Commission stressed that very specific and technical issues will not be covered as the scientific advice from EFSA will cover many of those. The subgroup would rather discuss and explore some of the key policy options foreseen under the inception impact assessment and the possible policy directions and potential solutions to the challenges to implement the current legislation.

Next steps:

The Commission will reflect on how to address the proposed additional topics to the extent possible given the complexity of the subject and the already heavy agenda of this subgroup.

6. Export to third countries

The Commission indicated the discussion would follow the questions sent to members in preparation for the meeting and clarified that the discussion need to focus on the pros and cons of a ban to third countries only small and large ruminants.

1. Do you think a ban on exports of small and large ruminants is possible?

In favour of a ban:

- Difficulties to comply and enforce the current provisions, particularly beyond EU borders. Some provisions are impossible to implement.
- Third countries rarely meet animal welfare standards and do not provide feedback on the welfare of animals.
- The fluctuation of transport is too large for any effort from competent authorities to be sufficient.
- Member States implement differently the current legislation leading to unfair competition.
- Animals are not used to (potential) weather conditions in third countries.
- Difficult to satisfactorily fulfil the minimum husbandry and holding demands in third countries for animals imported from EU.
- Non existing EU standards for export of live animals.

Against a ban:

- Working on better compliance should be the key by implementing already existing recommendations.
- It is in no one interest to transport high valuable animals in poor conditions.
- Import of animals often takes place ad part of building up a new herd, and as part of this process third countries also import housing systems, equipment and advisory and veterinary services from the EU, which proves their interest in keeping animals in good welfare.
- A blanket ban would not take into account the distance to third countries or their standards on welfare (e.g. Norway, Switzerland)
- There are some good experiences from which lessons could be learnt.
- A ban to export EU animals has the potential to shift the trade to other countries making animals travelling even longer distances and lead to an increasing livestock production in third countries based on breeding animals with a lower genetic potential in terms of productivity, animal health, climate and animal welfare.
- A ban to export animals could make some rural area being depopulated.
- Often semen and embryos are mentioned as solutions that can substitute the export of live breeding animals. However, neither the technologies nor the know-how is sufficient developed as well as the farm

structure is not in place to replace the export of live breeding animals, but maybe in the future it could be part of solution for reducing the export of live cattle.

2. How to improve the work ahead on welfare with third countries?

- Agreements with third countries on cooperation on animal welfare.
- Working groups and initiatives at bilateral level with third countries.
- Bilateral agreements between Member States and third countries not only on health certificates but welfare issues.
- Request systematic feedback after arrival.
- Boost and expand the network of the OIE national contact points on animal transport to the other regions.

3. Other considerations

- Education and certifications of competence are fundamental.
- Drivers need to address better the fitness for transport.
- Improve vehicles with new technologies that allow for more transparency.
- Common list of control posts outside the EU.

7. Calendar for the next meetings

The Commission will propose dates for the next meetings up until July.