

**EU PLATFORM ON ANIMAL WELFARE:
THIRD MEETING**

**BRUSSELS
21 JUNE 2018**

SPEECH

Ladies and Gentlemen,



It is a pleasure to join you for this third meeting - and first anniversary - of the EU animal welfare platform.

Animal welfare, as I have said many times before, is both an important part of my responsibilities, and a personal priority. I am delighted that this platform has already made a valuable and active contribution in its first year.

My comments today will focus on two separate areas.

First, the Platform's recent activities.

Second, I will update you on the Commission's most recent achievements on animal welfare.

Let me begin with the Platform's activities.

You have just seen the presentation on the first meeting of the sub-group on animal transport.

I am pleased that today we will establish a second sub-group on the welfare of pigs.



The slide features a green header with the European Commission logo. Below the header, the title "Sub-group on 'Welfare of pigs'" is displayed in blue. Two bullet points follow: "Focus on providing *manipulable materials* and reducing *routine tail-docking*" and "Part of a comprehensive project to achieve better enforcement". At the bottom, there are three images: a pig in a field, a small green square with the text "Welfare of pigs", and a pig in a pen.

Sub-group on "Welfare of pigs"

- Focus on providing *manipulable materials* and reducing *routine tail-docking*
- Part of a comprehensive project to achieve better enforcement



This sub-group is part of a comprehensive project launched by the Commission to achieve better enforcement of the pig directive.

As I noted in previous meetings, changing the legislation is not the task of the Platform. Better enforcement of existing legislation is and this sub-group will feed into this.

As you know, routine tail docking is still widespread in the EU and many pigs are still kept in barren pens without manipulable materials which allow them to express their natural behaviour.

This is not in compliance with EU legislation and needs to be seriously addressed.

In recent years, the Commission has put in place many measures to improve the implementation of the pig Directive: it has adopted a recommendation, performed audits, study visits, organised workshops and produced educational materials.

Many Member States have proposed improvements, but substantial change requires a collective effort, involving all stakeholders. More needs to be done.

The sub-group on pig welfare aims to assist this process and complement the efforts of everyone involved.

I wish the new group every success and am confident its work will improve the situation.

The second point I would like to address is the welfare of farmed fish.



Welfare of farmed fish



- A **study** on the transport and killing of farmed fish published by the Commission in 2017.
- A **report to the EP and the Council** on the protection of fish at the time of killing adopted by the Commission in 2018.
- Voluntary initiatives from your side are welcome.



Today's meeting will dedicate a session to a detailed discussion on farmed fish, where I would like to encourage voluntary initiatives from your side.

This topic will be presented from different perspectives: industry, civil society, and government.

The Commission published a study on the transport and killing of farmed fish last year.

Based on this, it adopted a report this year on the possibility of introducing certain requirements regarding the protection of fish at the time of killing.

I am interested to hear your views on how to address this specific matter and what concrete measures could be taken to improve the situation.


This debate looks to encourage interested Platform members to work together and complement the Platform's activities.

Let me move now to other recent progress on animal welfare.



**The first EU Reference Centre
for Animal Welfare**

- Established in March 2018
- Provides scientific and technical support for official controls
- First task: mapping out current structures and activities
- Focuses on welfare of *pigs*



Following my announcement last November, I am pleased to inform you today that the first EU reference centre for animal welfare was designated earlier this year, in March. It will begin work in the second half of this year.

Commission services are currently working with the centre to define the work priorities.

Its role, as you will remember, is to provide technical and scientific assistance to the competent authorities in their official controls.

Many Member States have already established similar national structures.

In my view, it is crucial that the EU centre concentrates its resources on providing real added value.

The first role of the centre will be to map out the current structures and activities to avoid duplication of work and allow a streamlined approach.

I also want to update you on progress in the EU Animal Welfare Strategy.



The infographic features a green header with the European Union flag and the text 'EU Animal Welfare Strategy'. Below the header, there is a list of bullet points and a small illustration of farm animals.

- All outstanding actions completed
- 3 reports adopted since November 2017:
 1. killing of farmed fish
 2. application of broilers' directive
 3. impact of EU international activities on animal welfare



When I began my mandate, there were twelve outstanding actions to be completed.

I am happy to announce that all the EU Animal Welfare Strategy's actions have now been delivered.

The most recent include the three reports adopted by the Commission since last November:

- 1) on the killing of farmed fish;
- 2) on the application of the Directive on the welfare of chickens for meat production (broilers);
- 3) on the impact of EU international animal welfare activities.

You will hear more on the impact of our international activities later, but I would like to highlight some of the report's key findings now.

Firstly, it shows the EU remains at the forefront of animal welfare at global level, creating what we can define a 'lighthouse effect' on the definition and improvement of welfare standards at international level and around the globe.

And secondly, it shows animal welfare does not put business operators at a competitive disadvantage.

Rather it is an opportunity to valorise the added market value of products obtained under high animal welfare standards.

As such, international animal welfare activities will remain one of the key areas of focus, together with enforcement and this Platform.

The Commission will continue to promote animal welfare internationally, both at multilateral and bilateral levels.

Other Commission initiatives include the educational material we produced following the study on best practices at the time of killing. This includes 11 fact sheets and a video translated into 22 EU languages.

We are also developing a digital platform that will be presented later today and should become operational later in June.

This could be a powerful instrument for you to share information, in parallel to Platform meetings. I encourage you to use it as soon as it becomes functional.



What can we expect from Animal Welfare Platform?

- Connecting people within a dynamic network
- Sharing experiences and expertise
- Engagement, input and commitment are key to success

Everyone is Responsible



Health and
Welfare

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, we should be proud of what the Platform has achieved in its first year.

Two subgroups have been established; two voluntary initiatives have been created by you.

We have debated different topics, we have shared information and experiences. Above all, we have formed a strong network that will be further reinforced by the new digital platform.

Your engagement, input and commitment play a fundamental part in this Platform's success.

My mantra on animal welfare, as you know, is: "Everyone is responsible".

The Commission will continue to do its part. I count on you to do yours. I look forward to another year of fruitful discussions and continued joint efforts to preserve and improve animal welfare.

Thank you.

