

Brussels, 11 December 2017

Minutes

Meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare

10 November 2017, Albert Borschette Building

1. Approval of the agenda

The agenda of the meeting was approved.

2. Second meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare

The meeting was web streamed. A recording of the meeting is available under: <https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/second-meeting-of-the-platform-on-animal-welfare>.

3. List of points discussed

3.1. Opening session

3.1.1. Introduction and welcome to participants

The Chair, Ladislav Miko, Deputy Director General for Food Safety opened the second meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare and welcomed the Platform members and participants.

3.1.2. Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety – Platform up to 2019

In his address to the Platform, Commissioner Andriukaitis started by congratulating the members of the Platform for the success of the first meeting and thanked them for their constructive attitude and commitment. He highlighted that animal welfare is one of his personal priorities.

The Commissioner updated the participants on the developments of the Platform activities. In particular, he announced the establishment of a first sub-group that will focus on animal transport. He stated however, that since changing the legislation is not the task of the Platform, it is advisable to focus on other options to improve the welfare of animals during transport. This sub-group can undertake tasks that will improve the enforcement of EU legislation on animal transport.

The Commissioner also stressed the importance of voluntary initiatives and of sharing them during the meetings of the Platform, where in-depth discussions on a particular topic can be held. The agenda for the second session will focus on unwanted horses, and Commissioner Andriukaitis also acknowledged the interest expressed by Platform members on the welfare of rabbits and farmed fish.

In the second part of his address, the Commissioner announced the designation of the first EU reference centre for animal welfare before the end of April 2018. This centre will be a milestone for animal welfare in the European Union and will be dedicated to the welfare of pigs.

Finally, he drew everyone's attention to the fact that despite limited resources, the Commission is about to complete all twelve of the outstanding actions foreseen by the EU Animal Welfare Strategy at the beginning of his mandate. He concluded by stressing that the Commission will continue to be very active on animal welfare but insisted on the fact that it is the engagement of everyone that is crucial for the Platform's success.

3.1.3. Olev Kalda, Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union – Technology and animal welfare

Mr Kalda presented the Estonian technologic approach to animal welfare. He emphasized the importance of the use of technological tools and the positive impact they can have not only on animal welfare and health but also on farmers. He enlisted some of the most important tools that the country is using for this purpose, such as "Dairy Comp 305" (a herd management software), "X-NIR" (a feed analyser) and "DTM suite" (a feeding management software), as well as "Drug Watch" and "Foot sensors".

3.2. Morning session

3.2.1. Session 1: Enforcement – sub-group on animal transport

3.2.2. Ana Ramirez Vela, Head of Unit F2, Animals – Presentation by the Commission on ongoing activities on animal transport

Ms Ramirez Vela presented the ongoing activities of the Commission in the field of animal transport, which have all the common objective of improving long distance animal transport, in line with the Council Regulation 1/2005.

She introduced the two-year project on the transport for export, which has the aim of reducing animal suffering during long distance transport to non-EU countries. Ms Ramirez focused mainly on the export of cattle to Turkey, since it represents the largest portion of the European export in this field and thus the area where we can have exponential improvements. The Commission is investigating the problems in order to better address them and to give feedback to the Member States. Audits carried out by the Commission are therefore based on those risks so that resources can be better allocated.

In the second part of her presentation she highlighted the good results delivered by the Contact Points Meetings, especially the adoption of network documents such as the ones on the livestock vessels, checks before departure and one on transport of poultry which has been agreed also with the industry.

3.2.3. Presentation of the scope and terms of reference of the sub-group on animal transport

3.2.3.1. Eva Zamora Escribano, Head of Unit G2, Animal Health and Welfare – Establishment of subgroups and the sub-group on animal transport

Ms Zamora Escribano presented the general rules applicable to the establishment of the sub-groups of the Platform, adding also some specific references to the sub-group on animal transport. She started by providing details on the legal base of the sub-groups, referring to article 14 of the Commission Decision of 30 May 2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission Expert Groups (the so-called horizontal rules) and to article 8 of the Commission Decision of 24 January 2017 establishing the Platform.

The purpose of the sub-groups is to examine specific questions, to assist the Commission on issues related to EU animal welfare legislation, to encourage dialogue and to achieve concrete results. As for the composition, sub-groups can be composed by Platform members and/or non-Platform members provided that the latter are selected via a public call. However, for the first sub-group, only Platform members will be selected.

Ms Zamora Escribano introduced the first sub-group of the Platform dedicated to animal transport, whose topic has been chosen because of its horizontal nature (it concerns all sectors, all farm animals and all members) and for being one of the Commission's priorities.

She stressed that a sub-group would be the most pragmatic way to achieve concrete results if all the members are committed to actively work towards this.

3.2.3.2. Ana Ramirez Vela, Head of Unit F2, Animals – Objectives of the sub-group 'Animal Transport'

Ms Ramirez Vela introduced the objectives of the sub-group 'Animal Transport' by explaining that the main objective will be to assist the Platform in areas related to the protection of animals during transport. It will be up to the members to decide on what to focus specifically. Of course the sub-group will not overlap with other Commission activities such as the National Contact Points and the Project on Animal Transport Guides, but will rather complement them.

She also presented the main priorities of the sub-group, among which were technical innovations, the finding of policy indicators and knowledge transfer. These priorities are broad enough to allow members to choose what they wish to concentrate on, always bearing in mind that the main focus has to be delivering concrete results.

3.2.3.3. Eva Zamora Escribano, Head of Unit G2, Animal Health and Welfare – Composition of the sub-group 'Animal Transport'

Ms Zamora Escribano briefed the participants on the structure and membership of the first-subgroup. The sub-group will be composed of a maximum number of 20 members. A balanced representation will be respected, in order to represent various interests groups. Members should have the relevant expertise and experience of the objectives of the sub-group, but most importantly, should be ready to be active and committed to provide concrete contributions.

Finally, Ms Zamora Escribano explained that the work of the sub-group will start in 2018 and will likely end in 2019. There will be two meetings per year in Grange (Ireland) but the members will also have the opportunity to communicate via electronic means (videoconference, audioconference, file sharing etc.). The sub-group will report to the Platform on its actions.

Applications to become members of the sub-group are to be submitted to the SANTE ANIMAL WELFARE PLATFORM MAILBOX by the 22nd of November.

3.2.4. Enforcement – sub-group on animal transport – Exchange of views (23 interventions)

The members welcomed the establishment of the sub-group on animal transport. They supported the Commission approach of the Platform as a forum of dialogue to address specific issues and achieve concrete deliverables in the field of animal welfare.

Several members asked for the establishment of further sub-groups, such as welfare of fish, welfare of rabbits and illegal trade in dogs and cats. Commissioner Andriukaitis announced his intention to establish in the future a second sub-group on the welfare of pigs. Some members also asked for the submission of the mandate of the sub-group on the welfare of pigs prior to the next meeting of the Platform in order to come better prepared. They acknowledged the fact that the resources for official subgroups are limited and thus proposed the creation of informal subgroups.

The Commission stressed that it is important to start with one or two sub-groups as pilots to assure consistency. Meanwhile, the Commission has no objection if Platform members wish to create parallel networks or groups on other topics. The results of such informal networks or groups, as long as they work within the mandate of the Platform, could be reported to the

Platform. In addition, some members expressed the concern that only members of the Platform could be part of the first sub-group. They fear that the competence required to take part in the works are too specific and therefore suggested the replacement by some experts. Specifically, some members referred to the need to invite the associations of transporters as members of the sub-group. The Commission referred to the rules of procedure. The sub-group is operating under the horizontal rules, and this allows the Commission to invite independent external experts on an ad hoc basis.

Finally, a number of members (like a.v.e.c., FESASS and EFFAB) raised the matter of some contradictions in the legislation – especially between the one on animal welfare and the one on animal health - and of a lack of competitiveness in the European meat industry with regard to non-EU countries. The Commission replied that a study on welfare and competitiveness is about to be finalised, and that the promotion of animal welfare standards internationally is one of its priorities.

3.3. Afternoon session

3.3.1. Session 2: Voluntary initiatives - unwanted horses

3.3.2. Roly Owers, Chief Executive, World Horse Welfare, United Kingdom - Animal welfare organisation's perspective: World Horse Welfare

Mr Owers presented the thematic of unwanted horses from the perspective of an NGO. Unwanted horses are horses that have been abandoned by their owners because they could not or did not want to take care of them. He explained that the equine sector is of huge relevance in the EU since it counts for over 100€ billion per annum to the economy and it is the second largest rural employer in most Member States. Moreover, it plays an important role in the key priorities of the EU: jobs, growth and investment. In fact, horses have three different types of use and value: economic, emotional and utility. This is why the problem of unwanted horses is quite sensitive.

According to Mr. Owers, the causes are found in excessive supply over demand, in the financial crisis, in irresponsible breeding and legislative limitations such as the exclusion of some horses from the food chain. They have identified three main solutions: a better enforcement of the Equine ID Regulation (EC) No 2015/262, the need to have affordable end of life and a better education for equine owners.

3.3.3. Brid Farrell, Assistant Principal Officer, Animal Health and Welfare Division, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Ireland - Member's State's perspective: Ireland

Ms Farrell introduced the Irish approach to the issue of unwanted horses. She explained that in Ireland the horses' sector has always been of great importance. After the economic crisis in 2008, an oversupply of these animals began to emerge. In order to improve the horse situation, Ireland has taken a number of measures, either legislative or non-statutory. The Control of Horses Act of 1996 (introduced to address problems caused by stray horses), new revised Regulations on Equine ID in 2016, the obligation to register all equine premises and the Animal Health and Welfare Act of 2013 were among the legislative measures taken while the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council, the funding to animal welfare organisations, the Stallion Castration Initiative and other projects aimed at youth training and education were among the non-statutory measures taken.

The result of all these measures is that the supply of horses is coming more into line with the demand and the numbers of unwanted horses has reduced considerably.

3.3.4. Claire Cordilhac, European Project Manager, Department of International Relations, Institut Français du Cheval et de l'Équitation (IFCE), France - Industry's perspective: IFCE

Ms Cordilhac presented the problem of unwanted horses in Europe from the point of view of IFCE. She explained that in France there is an average increase of 20% of old horses, which causes an increase in retirement costs and welfare problems, as well as a stronger pressure on agricultural land, since an enormous amount of land is needed to keep horses. She also pointed out that although precise statistics at EU level are not available experts estimated that 1/3 of the population of horses is of no use and therefore is at risk of being abandoned.

IFCE has identified three main areas to focus on, in order to address the issue. First of all, it is necessary to evaluate the possibility to returning horses to the food chain. Secondly, given that an old horse can cost an average of 1500€ per year, more awareness should be created among horse owners as to when they should exclude them from the food chain. If they decide so, they should subscribe to an insurance policy. Finally, reconversion of horses at the end of their life or of an illness should be considered.

3.3.5. Voluntary initiatives - Unwanted horses - Exchange of views (7 interventions)

Some members asked for a sub-group on the welfare of horses. In particular, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden underlined the need for such a sub-group (or as an alternative, an informal one). A letter has already been addressed to the chairman of the Platform and included a discussion paper on guidelines for good practices. Denmark declared that it will initiate the creation of a parallel sub-group on horses (outside the Platform activities). The Commission agreed to share this paper and stressed once again that it will be possible for the members to establish informal groups of work on topics which they are interested in. Those results could be reported to the Platform provided that they remain within the mandate of the Platform. The sharing of good practices and tools to be used is indeed one of the priorities of this Platform.

Some members also raised the matter of some essential molecules that could exclude the horses from the food chain and asked for a revision of the list of substances essential for the treatment of equidae¹, removing the ones which are not a threat to the safety of the meat.

3.4. Session 3: Information and knowledge sharing

3.4.1. Chiara Fabris, Scientific Officer, Animal and Plant Health Unit, Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance Department, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Italy – The EFSA Animal Health and Welfare Network

EFSA is an EU Agency contributing to the implementation of EU policies in food and feed safety. It promotes scientific cooperation and scientific advice to the EU risk managers and policy makers, including in animal health and welfare.

Ms Fabris explained that the authority operates under mandates sent by the European Commission or Member States. She also gave an overview on the trend for scientific questions on animal welfare. She then presented the EFSA Animal Health and Welfare Network, chaired by the AHAW Team and composed by 30 members and 10 observers, which provided scientific expertise in the field of Animal Health and Welfare. Its main tasks are to: build a mutual understanding of risk assessment principles in Animal Health and Animal Welfare; promote and facilitate harmonisation of Animal Health and Animal Welfare risk assessment practices and enhance the exchange of information.

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:042:0001:0017:EN:PDF>

Finally, Ms Fabris recognised the important role that the EU Animal Welfare Platform can play in this field and reiterated EFSA's support to it.

3.4.1.1. Questions and answers (5 questions)

Some members expressed their interest in the work of EFSA and asked for a major involvement of it in the work of the Platform. Members of the Platform were informed that contact with EFSA may be made via the Member States.

3.4.2. Hans Spooler, Project Leader, Wageningen Livestock Research, Netherlands – Animal transport guides pilot project

Mr Spooler presented the Animal Transport Guides² that a consortium has created in order to develop good practices on transport upon request by DG SANTE. They are intended to serve as a toolbox for better implementation of Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005.

The aim of the project is to develop Guides to Good and Better Practice on the transportation of the five main livestock species in the EU and to reach a large number of stakeholders. The main deliverables of the project includes: five detailed Guides, seventeen factsheets and five short videos. He also presented the time schedule of events (roadshows) dedicated to dissemination of developed materials.

3.4.2.1. Questions and answers (10 interventions)

Encouraging information on the dissemination of these materials was shared by members and they asked for feedback on their application. The consortium has been in touch with four associations of transporters and there have already been some positive outcomes.

4. Conclusions

During this second meeting the very valuable contributions from the Platform members and the fruitful debates were very encouraging for the further development of the work of the Platform. The Commission recalled that the sub-group on animal transport will start its work in the first semester of 2018 and it will report back during the third Platform meeting. The Commission also took note of the many other suggestions such as the creation of various sub-groups which can start to develop directly as voluntary panels (e.g. the welfare of horses and the illegal trade of pets).

5. Next steps

In preparation for the third meeting of the Platform, the Commission will reflect on the outcome of this meeting. The Commission will also propose possible topics to be addressed at the next meeting.

6. Next meetings

The next meeting of the Platform is scheduled for 21 June 2018 in Brussels.

7. List of Participants

European Commission: Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis, Marco Valletta; **DG SANTE:** Ladislav Miko, Eva Zamora Escribano, Ana Ramirez Vela, Denis Simonin, Maria Ferrara, Marguerite Kuzma, Stanislav Ralchev, Alexandra Kostorz, Elena Faga; **DG AGRI:** Judith Kromer, Antonia Luetteken; **DG GROW:** Lowri Evans, Renate Weissenhorn, **SG:** Francesco Carlucci; **RTD:** Razvan Anistoroaei

European Court of Auditors: Xavier Demarch

² <http://animaltransportguides.eu/>

Invited Speakers: Claire Cordilhac, European Project Manager, Department of International Relations, Institut Français du Cheval et de l'Équitation (IFCE), France; Olev Kalda, Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union; Hans Spoolder, Project Leader, Wageningen Livestock Research, Netherlands.

Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and The Netherlands.

EEA members: Iceland and Norway

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

International Organisations: FAO and OIE.

Business and Professional Organisations: Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU (a.v.e.c.), European Agri-Cooperatives (COCEGA), European Association of Livestock Markets (AEMB), European Community of Consumer Co-operatives (Euro Coop), European Dairy Association (EDA), 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 Trading Union (U.E.C.B.V.), European Meat Network (EMN), European Rural Poultry Association (ERPA), Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP), Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), AnimalhealthEurope, 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, Eurogroup for Animals, Humane Society International/Europe (HSI/Europe), Organisation for Respect and Care of Animals (ORCA), Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Slow Food, VIER PFOTEN International (VIER PFOTEN), World Animal Protection, World Horse Welfare

Independent Experts: Elisabetta Canali, Cathy Dwyer, Linda Keeling, Luc Mirabito, Niamh O'Connell, Lars Schrader, Evangelia Sossidou, Anna Elisabet Valros, Antonio Velarde Calvo.

Observer: Switzerland