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**FINAL VERSION**

**of the**

**MISSION REPORT**

**on a veterinary mission to GREECE, carried out from**

**October 12th to October 16th, 1998**

**in the field of animal welfare during transport (Directive 91/628/EEC),  
also covering some aspects of  
animal protection at the time of killing,  
animal identification and  
slaughter hygiene**

Comments, based on a letter dated 18.1.1999 from the Hellenic Ministry of Agriculture, Athens, have been included into this version of the mission report (see point 5.3.3.2, footnote 1 and point 6.2, footnote 2).



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## **1. Mission details**

- 1.1. The mission took place from October 12<sup>th</sup> to October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1998. A representative of the Greek Ministry of Agriculture, Athens, and two veterinary experts of the European Commission's Food and Veterinary Office, Dublin, were members of the mission team during the visits in Greece.
- 1.2. Four slaughterhouses of different sizes, two ports, one border inspection post and the premises of a sheep dealer were visited during the week.
- 1.3. Livestock was present on only four of the sites visited and livestock vehicles were seen on only three premises. There were no activities in one larger slaughterhouse, although the visit had been announced the day before the visit. An unannounced visit to a small slaughterhouse could not be carried out, as the responsible veterinary officials were unable to arrange for access, the key for the locked building said to be with an absent municipal employee. Compared with the conditions in other Member States, transporting, loading, unloading, lairaging, resting and killing of livestock was observed at a rather limited number of sites – a situation already observed during previous Commission veterinary missions in Greece, in other fields.
- 1.4. A closing meeting was held in Athens in the Greek Ministry of Agriculture to discuss the results of the mission.

## **2. Scope of the mission**

- 2.1. To verify whether the requirements of Council Directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals during transport (as last amended by Council Directive 95/29/EC) had been transposed and were applied in Greece, with particular reference to long-distance transports by road and ferry, including consignments from other Member States.
- 2.2. When visiting slaughterhouses, the conditions under which animals were killed (Council Directive 93/119/EC on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing) and the slaughter hygiene (Council Directive 64/433/EEC on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat) were also checked.
- 2.3. During the visits of relevant sites, it was also checked whether animals had been identified in accordance with Council Directive 92/102/EC on the identification and registration of animals and Council Regulation (EC) No. 820/97 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1. During previous Commission missions to Greece in 1995 and 1996 in the field of animal welfare – and in particular with regard to stunning – it had been found that the means for adequate restraint, effective stunning and rapid killing had often been inadequate in Greek slaughterhouses and that the

checks that should be carried out by the Greek authorities had been insufficient; means of transport had shown deficiencies (Commission Documents VI/1933/95, VI/1934/95, VI/8407/96 and VI/8408/96).

- 3.2. A veterinary mission, carried out by the European Commission in 1994 in the field of meat hygiene had noted poor operational hygiene practises, unhygienic skinning and evisceration and visible contamination of meat in “derogated” fresh-meat establishments (Commission Document VI/5080/94). During visits of EC-approved slaughterhouses in 1996, most slaughterhouses had not been in operation when visited (Commission Document VI/1915/97), so that an evaluation of slaughter hygiene had almost been impossible.
- 3.3. The mission was therefore undertaken by the European Commission to evaluate progress in Greece in the aforementioned areas.

#### **4. Legal basis for the mission**

Commission Decision 98/139/EC in connection with

Article 10 of Council Directive 91/628/EEC,  
Article 14 of Council Directive 93/119/EEC,  
Article 12 of Council Directive 64/433/EEC,  
Article 3 of Council Directive 92/102/EEC.

#### **5. Main findings (information received and facts found)**

- 5.1. Transposition of EC legislation on animal welfare during transport into national legislation

Council Directive 91/628/EEC (as last amended by Council Directive 95/29/EC) has been transposed into Greek legislation by the Presidential Decree 344/1997 of 11.11.1997.

- 5.2. Information received on competent authorities for animal welfare

- 5.2.1. Central competent authority

The Ministry of Agriculture, Athens, is the central competent authority for animal welfare.

- 5.2.2. Other competent authorities

At peripheral level there is basically only one type of competent authority: the *Nomos* (prefecture), of which 54 exist in Greece. The Commission team was informed that regional authorities that group several *Nomi* do not exist any more. Each *Nomos* has a Veterinary Directorate under a Veterinary Director (usually a veterinarian) who is responsible for all veterinary matters, including animal welfare, in his or her *Nomos*. The Veterinary Director is working under the *Nomarchos* (prefect) and receives instructions from the Ministry of Agriculture. In many areas – such as veterinary approvals, suspension of approvals and withdrawal of approvals for establishments – the veterinary

authorities of each *Nomos* act rather independently and play a major role in enforcing legislation.

#### 5.2.3. Authority profile

The competent authority profile of the Greek veterinary services has been described in Commission Document XXIV/1788/97.

### 5.3. Main field findings

#### 5.3.1. Rules for intra-Community long-distance transports not respected

Route plans for journeys exceeding eight hours, drawn up for Spanish and Dutch sheep, French cattle, all destined for Greece, were missing or not correctly filled in at the places of departure in the Member States of origin: no unloading, watering, feeding and resting for 24 hours foreseen after the first leg of 29 hours; no unloading and resting for 12 hours foreseen after crossing the Adriatic Sea by ferry; and names of ferries (to cross the Adriatic Sea) not mentioned. The competent Greek authorities, for their part, did not take the necessary measures to oblige the transporters to draw up their route plans in compliance with the requirements of the European Union, at the places of departure in other Member States.

#### 5.3.2. Poor means of transport

5.3.2.1. Most of the few livestock road vehicles seen during the visit showed shortcomings such as holes in the floor of the loading surface (in one case as big as a football), damaged tailgate battens, lack of roof, sharp objects (damaged metal sheets, nails) where animals could hurt themselves, gaps where animals' feet may get entangled, excessive step height (in one case 40cm) that animals had to overcome, and damaged partitions.

5.3.2.2. Remark: Compared with other Member States, only a very small number of livestock road vehicles were seen in Greece during the mission, as sites where larger numbers of livestock come together (such as livestock markets, assembly centres, huge slaughterhouses) are rare in Greece, and because there were no activities at several sites visited (see also point 1.3.).

5.3.3. No adequate supervision in the field of animal welfare

5.3.3.1. At most of the sites visited, the representatives of the competent authorities (the veterinary officials of the respective *Nomi*) were not carrying out the necessary checks to assure compliance with animal welfare during transport and at the time of killing. Even very obvious shortcomings were not dealt with – such as significant holes in loading surfaces of road vehicles or wrong positioning of stunning tongs.

5.3.3.2. The intensity and frequency of checks of intra-Community animal transports in the Greek ports visited during the mission were not considered adequate in relation to the importance of these sites, keeping in mind that animals, when arriving by ferries, had often been on very long trips on the first leg of their journey. No effort was made by the competent authorities to unload and rest animals at these ports (or near them) in cases where cattle or sheep had travelled for more than 29 hours, although lairages (built for animals imported from third countries, but never used) were available in one of the ports.<sup>1</sup>

5.3.4. Inadequate stunning

5.3.4.1. At a small slaughterhouse visited, electrical stunning was carried out in such a way that sheep, instead of being stunned, had to suffer from electrical shocks, due to the fact that the animals were not sufficiently restrained and due to the fact that the fork of the partially rusty electrical stunning equipment was applied to the wool-covered neck (*Regiones cervicales laterales*) instead of spanning the brain. Sheep were escaping during “stunning” and were running around in the slaughterhall. They were not unconscious when stuck, several men pinning them down on the floor during bleeding.

5.3.4.2. In an EC-approved slaughterhouse a worker, when shooting bulls with a captive-bolt instrument, repeatedly shot bulls two or three times, often without any justification. It became evident that he did not have the necessary knowledge for correctly judging the results of his activity. The captive-bolt instruments used were not in good working order, due to poor maintenance.

5.3.4.3. Where sheep and pigs were stunned individually, the responsible persons were unable to demonstrate that the electrical apparatus used incorporated a device indicating the end of the minimum necessary

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission’s Food and Veterinary Office agrees with the comment dated 18.1.1999 of the Hellenic Ministry of Agriculture that unloading and resting in Greek ports (or near them) may not be necessary, if animals have been unloaded and rested for 24 hours in another country, before sea transport. In the cases studied during the visit such unloading and resting before sea transport had, however, not been found.

stunning time, nor was it clear whether the equipment incorporated a device which measures the impedance of the load and prevents operation of the apparatus if the minimum required current cannot be passed. In the case of pigs, the amperage was far below recommended levels.

5.3.5. Animals without identification

Several sheep and pigs were seen that had neither ear tags nor tattoos.

5.3.6. Poor slaughter hygiene

5.3.6.1. In a small slaughterhouse sheep, after being killed, were left on the floor for 90 minutes or more, before being pelted and eviscerated. Among other things, the floor of the slaughterhall was covered with gastro-intestinal contents, intestines being emptied while still attached to the abdominal cavity. Sheep carcasses were all contaminated. Workers wore very dirty clothes.

5.3.6.2. In a larger slaughterhouse bovine animals had wet hides (difficult to dehide hygienically). Sterilizers were out of function. Dirty instruments were used for dressing carcasses. Toilets had hand wash basins without water.

5.3.6.3. For two small slaughterhouses used for slaughter no evidence of their approval could be produced.

**6. List of non-compliances/deficiencies**

- 6.1. The requirements of Article 3 of Directive 91/628/EEC with regard to intra-Community long-distance transports of animals were often not met in the Member States from where animals, destined for Greece, departed (see point 5.3.1.)
- 6.2. The efforts made by the Greek authorities for enforcing legislation in the fields of intra-Community and national animal transports were not in line with the country's obligations<sup>2</sup> under Article 8 of Directive 91/628/EEC (see points 5.3.1. and 5.3.3.).
- 6.3. The requirements of Article 3 of Directive 91/628/EEC with regard to the standards of road vehicles used for journeys not exceeding 8 hours (see point 5.3.2.) were frequently not respected.
- 6.4. Contrary to the requirements of Article 3 of Directive 93/119/EC, animals in one of the slaughterhouses visited had to suffer seriously at the time of killing

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<sup>2</sup> In its comments dated 18.1.1999, the Hellenic Ministry of Agriculture, Athens, has pointed out that the responsibility for the deficiencies described in point 5.3.1. lies with the competent authorities of the Member States of the places of departure.

(see point 5.3.4.1.). Articles 5 and 6 of Directive 93/119 were not respected (see points 5.3.4.2. and 5.3.4.3.).

6.5. The requirements of Article 5 of Directive 92/102/EEC that identification marks have to be applied to animals before they leave their holding, were not met in several cases (see point 5.3.5.).

6.6. The most basic rules for slaughter hygiene, as laid down in Articles 3 and 4 of Directive 64/433/EEC and elsewhere in Community legislation, were completely ignored in one of the slaughterhouses visited (see point 5.3.6.1.). Two slaughterhouses where fresh meat was obtained for human consumption were not approved under Articles 4, 4a or 10 of Directive 91/628/EEC and were thus working illegally (see point 5.3.6.3.).

## **7. Main conclusions**

7.1. Major deficiencies in the field of animal welfare were observed during the mission, in particular in the fields of stunning and long-distance transports. In several areas animals were without the protection that the EU legislation foresees for them, and in one particular establishment animals suffered seriously during killing.

7.2. The veterinary supervision of animal welfare conditions in Greece was not of the standard necessary to enforce compliance with the legislation.

7.3. When comparing the results of the 1998 Commission mission with the results of the animal welfare Commission missions carried out in Greece in 1995 and 1996, no progress could be noted. It is of particular concern that animals were bled to death after “stunning” that was so inefficient that the animals were not rendered unconscious and therefore suffered totally unnecessary pain; the conditions were thus similar to those that had led to the Commission mission in 1995, after an animal welfare association had filed an official complaint with the Commission based on investigations that had revealed “barbaric and illegal practices in Greek abattoirs”.

7.4. Serious deficiencies were also noted in the fields of animal identification and slaughter hygiene.

## **8. Recommendations**

8.1. Recommendations for measures to be taken by the Commission services

8.1.1. The Commission services should examine the situation with a view to opening legal proceedings against Greece for non-enforcement of the rules laid down by Directive 91/628/EEC and Directive 93/119/EEC.

8.2. Recommendations for measures to be taken by the Greek competent authorities

8.2.1. Greece should undertake the necessary measures to ensure compliance with Directive 91/628/EEC, Directive 93/119/EEC,

Directive 92/102/EC and Directive 64/433/EEC and present a report to the Commission by 30.6.1999 on the matter.

- 8.2.2. In particular, after having suspended the activities of the slaughterhouse mentioned in points 5.3.4.1. and 5.3.6.1. (according to a letter from the Greek Ministry of Agriculture dated 22.10.1998, addressed to the European Commission), the Greek central competent authority should carefully monitor the situation in this plant. Other abattoirs of the same type should be checked as well to prevent circumstances and incidents as those described in points 5.3.4.1. and 5.3.6.1.
- 8.2.3. Another Commission mission to Greece should be carried out after 30.6.1999 to verify progress in the various veterinary fields described in this mission report.

