

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

**BRUSSELS
19 NOVEMBER 2018**

SPEECH

Ladies and Gentlemen,



It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the fourth meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare.

I would like to thank our special guest today, Mr Wojciechowski, Member of the European Court of Auditors, who has kindly accepted to present the main conclusions of the Court of Auditors recent report on animal welfare.

Seventeen months have passed since our first meeting in June 2017.

Let me begin by saying how impressed I am by the work and commitment so far. We must keep this momentum going.

Today is an important opportunity to take stock – on the Platform's work to date and the Commission's most recent achievements in animal welfare, and to look at our future agenda.

I want to start with the Platform and its Members' activities.

Two subgroups have been established – one on animal transport and one on pig welfare.



Overview of the Platform and its Members' activities

- Two subgroups have been established.
- Four voluntary initiatives have been created by the Platform's Members.



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The animal transport group has met twice this year. The outcome from these meetings will be presented later today.

It was asked to work on three issues where we know there are difficulties in implementing requirements.

I am happy that work to improve enforcement of animal welfare during export from the EU is making good progress.

I understand that work to improve practices for long distance transport of unweaned animals has a longer deadline, but that difficulties linked to transport in extreme temperatures are being addressed.

The second subgroup on pig welfare was established at the Platform meeting in June and will meet, for the first time, on 26 November.

Preparations for this are underway and we will hear more about the group's tasks later. Members will focus on evaluating farm assessments for tail-biting in pigs, and the usefulness of slaughterhouse data to improve on-farm conditions and avoid tail-docking of pigs.

I know that the members of this group are experts who can assist and advise the Commission on how to make progress to avoid tail-docking in pigs.

Both subgroups have the expertise to provide important advice and assistance to the Commission in these priority areas. With their input and commitment, we will be better placed to propose practical solutions to better enforce EU legislation. A collective effort, involving all stakeholders, is essential to progress.

In addition to the two subgroups established by the Commission, I was pleased to hear that four voluntary animal welfare initiatives have been launched by Platform Members – on horses, pets, farmed fish and "pullets" - young hens before they lay eggs.

This afternoon, the leaders of these voluntary initiatives will present the outcome of their work.

I am very encouraged by the number of voluntary initiatives we have seen so far.

It clearly demonstrates that this Platform is being taken seriously and that its members are fully engaged in making it work.

As I have stressed on previous occasions, the outcomes and success of the Platform depend primarily on your involvement.

Alongside the Platform, the Commission has made important progress on a number of other animal welfare initiatives.



Commission's latest achievements

- The first EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare started to work on 1 October.
- A Recommendation on an EU Coordinated Control Plan for the official controls on online sales of dogs and cats adopted in August.
- The Platform's digital communication tool – fully operational.

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Firstly, I am pleased to announce that the first EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare began its work on 1 October.

This centre was designated in March and will focus its work on pig welfare. Later today, you will hear about the Centre's tasks and its first work programme.

Secondly, in August 2018, the Commission adopted a Recommendation on an EU Coordinated Control Plan for official controls on the online sales of dogs and cats.

The initiative's main principles and approach were presented to you during our last meeting in June. Today I want to thank Member States for their support.

Thirdly, as announced at our last meeting, the Platform's digital communication tool has been launched and is now fully operational.

Several features have been progressively developed and improved. There are now dedicated networks for the subgroups. The same possibility exists for voluntary initiatives if they request it.

On top of this, a weekly newsletter has been set up to cover the most relevant animal welfare news.

Almost 70% of the Platform's Members have signed up to the digital tool. I am pleased that some are already very active.

It is an important tool to keep Platform members in touch between meetings and keep initiatives moving forward. It is crucial, therefore, that all of you participate.

I hope that those who have not yet registered will do so soon.

Finally, a point on our international activities.

We continue to promote the EU's animal welfare standards globally. This part of our work remains one of the three pillars of EU animal welfare policy.

For the first time at a Platform meeting, a third country will share its experience in implementing animal welfare requirements.

New Zealand is well known for its activities on animal welfare. Later today, Mr Nick Dymond will present recent developments in New Zealand's animal welfare regulations.

I want to use this opportunity to say that the work we have done together through the EU-New Zealand Cooperation Forum since 2007 has been very fruitful.

Now, let me turn to the future initiatives.



Commission's future initiatives

- Evaluation of the EU Animal Welfare Strategy 2012-2015
- Establishment of a second EU Reference Centre (mid-2019)

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Next year, the Commission will launch an evaluation of the EU Animal Welfare Strategy 2012-2015.

This was recommended in the European Court of Auditors' in their report that Mr. Wojciechowski will present shortly.

The Commission will also establish a second EU Reference Centre, to focus on the welfare of poultry, rabbits and fur animals. These animals represent a huge number of farmed animals.

It will be designated during the first half of 2019.

I am confident that both EU Reference Centres will provide concrete support to Member States to ensure better enforcement of our animal welfare requirements.

Other key events coming up include the Commission's seminar on 28 November on the online sales of dogs and cats.



Commission's future initiatives

- A seminar on the online sales of dogs and cats to be hosted (28 November)
- Commission's project on Quality Controls and Indicators for Animal Welfare is to be launched (late 2018)

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This initiative was proposed by the EU Dog and Cat Alliance. It recognises the multiple problems linked to online animal trade and its risks for consumer protection across Europe. Stakeholders with first-hand experience will present arguments for self-regulation in the online market.

Finally, by the end of this year, the Commission's project on Quality Controls and Indicators for Animal Welfare will be launched.

Its general objective is to determine whether Member States have a strategic approach to enforcing EU requirements for animal welfare on-farm.

You will hear more about this project later this morning.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, we can be proud of what the Platform has achieved so far.

It could not have been done without your valuable input and your commitment to improving animal welfare conditions.

We all know: everyone is responsible when it comes to animal welfare. Everyone has his part to play.

I look forward to building on the progress we've made so far as we move into new projects and another year of the Platform's activities.

Thank you.

