

Brussels, 14 July 2017

Minutes

Meeting of the **EU PLATFORM ON ANIMAL WELFARE**¹
6 June 2017, Brussels, Charlemagne Building

1. Inaugural meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare

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

2. List of points discussed

2.1 Opening session

2.1.1 Introduction and welcome to participants

The Chair, Mr Xavier Prats Monné, Director General for Health and Food Safety opened the inaugural meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare and welcomed the Platform members and participants.

2.1.2 Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety - Keeping EU leadership on animal welfare

In his intervention, Commissioner Andriukaitis referred to the EU Platform on Animal Welfare as both an arrival and a starting point. An arrival point in the sense that animal welfare has always been one of his priorities and a starting point since there is so much the Platform can achieve.

He emphasized that the Platform is not a forum for discussing new legislation but it should instead focus on how to better and consistently implement the existing rules, through dissemination of knowledge and experience. He highlighted that non-legislative actions could deliver concrete results by for example promoting the development of animal welfare voluntary commitments by businesses as well as by promoting the added value of EU animal welfare standards globally. Commissioner also stressed that the Platform will be able to deliver only if members are committed to working together in a common effort. The Platform should focus on common areas of interest within the scope of the Union's competences and focus on achievable few objectives consistent with available resources. Furthermore, the Platform should complement the work of other existing fora rather than duplicating them. He drew everyone's attention to the need that the Platform produces tangible results, so the members' objectives should be in line with their resources.

2.1.3 Paula Calamatta, Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union-Member States as key players.

Ms Calamatta presented the Maltese national approach to animal welfare, highlighting its main components: communication, cooperation-collaboration and commitment. By presenting the experience of Malta, she referred to the voluntary actions that Member States could take for example in areas not regulated at EU level (e.g. animal cruelty). She also highlighted the

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role of education in raising public's awareness, through for example education schemes adopted by the country, and the supportive role of animal welfare organizations.

2.2 Morning session

2.2.1 Xavier Prats Monné, Director General for Health and Food Safety - Why an EU Platform on Animal Welfare?

Mr Prats Monné introduced the objectives of the Platform. He explained the rationale and process behind the composition of the Platform and noted that the inaugural meeting would be web-streamed in order to guarantee full transparency. He presented the agenda and rules of procedure, which were both adopted by the members of the Platform. He reminded the independent experts on their obligations to inform the Commission of any relevant change which might rise to conflict of interest, including upcoming activities. The agenda of the meeting was approved as tabled. The rules of procedure of the Platform were adopted.

2.2.2 Session 1: How can the Platform contribute to better application and understanding of EU legislation on animal welfare?

2.2.3 Ana Ramirez Vela, Head of Unit, Unit F2, Animals - Commission priorities in enforcing EU legislation on animal welfare.

Ms Ramirez Vela presented the Commission's approach in ensuring the full enforcement of the EU legislation on animal welfare by Member States and the priority areas identified by the Commission, on the basis of the importance of the animal welfare problem and of the positive impact of possible related solutions. The current Commission's main priorities in this area are on proper enforcement of the EU legislation on the protection of pigs and on animal transport.

2.2.4 How can the Platform contribute to better application and understanding of EU legislation on animal welfare? - Exchange of views (29 interventions)

The members welcomed the establishment of the Platform as a basis for elaborating concrete solutions to address specific challenges linked to animal welfare. They supported the Commission's approach and key objectives of the Platform, as well as the priority areas of work identified by the Commission. They committed to share their existing best practices and pilot projects on the identified challenging areas. Several members explained their activities to support the uniform implementation of the pig directive and of the animal transport regulation. In this context, dissemination and sharing of information, transfer of knowledge and better communication were identified as key elements for better application and understanding of EU legislation. Furthermore, the members also highlighted the need for better implementation of the Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing, in particular of the stunning requirements for poultry. In relation to better enforcement, some Member States presented their common initiatives, such as for example the one on cross-border trade in puppies by The Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Belgium and Sweden. In addition, some members referred to the need to continue working on animal welfare research to facilitate the application of the legislation. Some members also proposed that the Platform could discuss issues not harmonized at EU level such as companion animals, aquaculture, etc.

As foreseen by the Commission Decision establishing the Platform, some members also proposed the creation of subgroups on different topics such as on animal transport, equines and pigs. The Commission stressed that, in order to achieve positive results, and as the starting point, the Platform should focus on few topics within the Union's competences with concrete and measurable outcomes; it also highlighted that the general approach of the

Platform should be holistic, participative, science-based and pragmatic. The members supported Commission's approach to focus on priority topics and achievable results.

2.3 Afternoon session

The afternoon session was chaired by Mr Ladislav Miko, Deputy Director General for Food Safety.

2.3.1 Session 2: How can the Platform contribute to promote EU animal welfare standards globally?

2.3.2 Eva M. Zamora Escribano, Head of Unit Animal Health and Welfare - What is the Commission doing to promote EU animal welfare standards in the world?

Ms Zamora Escribano presented the Commission's international activities, at multilateral and bilateral level, to promote both the EU animal welfare model and principles globally as well as international animal welfare standards. These activities also aim at reaching a level playing field on the international market.

At multilateral level, the Commission works closely with international organisations, in particular with the OIE to promote the development and implementation of animal welfare standards globally, as well as with FAO on capacity building initiatives. At bilateral level, the Commission's main objectives are to ensure that animal welfare considerations and technical cooperation are included and implemented in all bilateral or regional agreements, and arrangements with non-EU trading partners. Platform's members could contribute to Commission's work for example by raising public awareness internationally and by supporting regional initiatives. The EU Platform is therefore an opportunity to reflect and act jointly to complement and strengthen the outcomes and impact of the ongoing respective initiatives.

2.3.3 Nadège Leboucq, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels - What is the World Organisation for Animal Health doing on animal welfare in Europe?

Ms Leboucq presented the OIE Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe and its activities, aimed at supporting the implementation of the OIE animal welfare standards in the Region of Europe.

She presented the achievements reached with the implementation of the 1st Action Plan 2014-2016 of the OIE Platform, launched in 2013 and focused on three priority areas: animal welfare during transport and at slaughter, and stray dog population control. She also introduced the 2nd Action Plan of the OIE Platform that was endorsed by the Regional Commission for Europe during the 85th OIE General Session in May 2017. In addition to the priorities of the 1st Action plan, it will also cover welfare of animals in disaster situations and welfare of working equids. As the OIE Platform addresses also areas which are not included in EU competences, such as stray dogs, she called for continuing working in coordination and in a complementary manner with the EU Platform on Animal Welfare, as to tackle a higher number of animal welfare issues.

2.3.4 How can the Platform contribute to promote EU animal welfare standards globally? - Exchange of views (22 interventions)

The members fully supported the Platform's objective to contribute to the promotion and implementation of EU and OIE animal welfare standards globally. Some organizations presented their projects and partnerships in non-EU countries. Education, targeted training of non-EU countries' competent authorities and operators, and awareness-raising were considered by the members as key tools to promote animal welfare in non-EU countries.

Several members called for the full application of EU animal welfare requirements for imported animals and animal products. Some members highlighted the need for promoting more and more an outcome-based approach to be applied globally. Most of the members were of the view that the EU should at least strive for the minimum implementation of the OIE standards and optimally request the application of EU rules for imported animals and animal products. Some members also called for possible actions to promote good practices and a transparent approach to lending policies by international finance institutions and export credit agencies. One member asked for the creation of a sub-group on trade.

2.4 Session 3: Examples on how the Platform can facilitate the use of voluntary commitments and promote market value of animal welfare friendly products.

2.4.1 Katharina Kluge, Head of Animal Welfare Unit, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Germany - Animal welfare label.

Ms Kluge presented the German experience on the adoption and application of voluntary commitments on animal welfare. The leading principles of this initiative are voluntary agreements of all participants, development of solutions in dialogue with stakeholders and use of instruments such as animal welfare research and a State animal welfare label. Because Germany is an export oriented livestock producer, such approach was considered the most suitable to strengthen the country's competitiveness on the international market. The animal welfare label will start with pigs. Participation is voluntary at all steps of production from farm to retail. It is also open to participation of other interested countries. It aims at strengthening animal welfare, thus offering an alternative to strict legislative measures.

2.4.2 Gé Backus, Director, Agri and Food, Netherlands - European Declaration on pig castration.

Mr Backus presented another successful example of voluntary commitment and partnership, focusing on the gradual effort to ban pig castration in Europe through the European Declaration on pig castration signed in 2010. Its aim is double: to use analgesia and/or anesthesia during castration and to end castration by 2018. An expert group on ending the surgical castration of pigs was established to overlook the implementation of the Declaration and its results so far have been very promising. Even though pig castration will not be abandoned by 2018, communication and coordination between various actors has been considerably increasing and progress has been made on the use of analgesia/anesthesia. Further progress is needed on how to meet consumers' requirements for meat without boar taint and on how the market can integrate further such animal welfare considerations.

2.4.3 Examples on how the Platform can facilitate the use of voluntary commitments and promote market value of animal welfare friendly products. – Exchange of views (27 interventions)

Most of the members expressed their views on voluntary initiatives such as labelling. Various Member States presented their own labelling schemes. The main challenges identified by the members were the market acceptance of labelled products, the volatility of consumers and the extra costs for producers. However, several members also provided possible solutions to overcome these issues, such as the identification of concrete criteria on which animal welfare schemes should be developed and the dissemination of information on the benefits of animal welfare friendly products. Widespread support was also expressed on moving forward with the European Declaration on Pig Castration. Some members asked for the creation of sub-groups on labelling and pig castration.

Various members outlined their specific animal welfare projects and quality schemes. Many members highlighted the need to develop animal welfare specific guidelines for species not

currently covered by the EU legislation. To this end, research would be crucial to identify the different needs of each country. The Platform's attention was also drawn to the need to further finance animal welfare projects. The role of education was stressed one more time, so that countries can exchange information on the existing animal welfare schemes. Lastly, some members expressed the wish that non-EU trade partners be also included in animal welfare schemes.

3. Conclusions

The contributions of members during the meeting were very constructive and the debates fruitful. The Commission recalled that one of the main tasks of the Platform is to promote the exchange of experiences and best practices, and to develop and exchange coordinated actions with the aim of contributing to the implementation of the EU animal welfare legislation. Furthermore, with the members' support the Platform could contribute to the promotion of Union standards on animal welfare and to the market value of Union products at global level.

It was concluded that the Commission will now reflect on the views and commitments expressed during the day, and will map out the topics that gathered the most interest among the members and that correspond to EU priorities, as to propose appropriate initiatives. These may include the creation of a limited number of sub-groups to be focused on concrete and achievable objectives.

4. Next steps

In preparation of the second Platform's meeting, the Commission will reflect on the outcome of the first meeting and propose the possible topics to be addressed at the next meetings of the Platform.

5. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 10 November in Brussels.

6. List of participants

European Commission: Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis, Marco Valetta, Vilija Sysaitė;
DG SANTE: Xavier Prats Monné, Ladislav Miko, Eva Zamora Escribano, Ana Ramirez Vela, Denis Simonin, Maria Ferrara, Alexandra Kostorz, Stanislav Ralchev, Alexandra Alexandridou, Anastasija Popova; **DG ENV:** Ute Goerres, **DG AGRI:** Judith Kromer, Taru Haapaniemi.

Invited Speakers: Gé Backus, Director, Agri and Food, Netherlands; Paula Calamatta, Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Head of Unit for Agriculture and Fisheries, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Attaché; Nadège Leboucq, Sub-Regional Representative of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in Brussels.

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, The Netherlands, United Kingdom.

EEA members: Iceland, Norway

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

International Organisations: FAO, World Bank 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 Farmers (COPA), Retail, Wholesale and International Trade Representation to the EU

(EuroCommerce), 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), International Federation for Animal Health-Europe AISBL (IFAH-Europe), International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE), Liaison Centre for the Meat Processing Industry in the European Union (CLITRAVI).

Civil Society Organisations: Animals' Angels e.V., 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: Alain Boissy, Elisabetta Canali, Cathy Dwyer, Luc Mirabito, Niamh O'Connell, Vytautas Ribikauskas, Lars Schrader, Evangelia Sossidou, Anna Elisabet Valros, Antonio Velarde Calvo.

Observer: Switzerland