



**EUROGROUP
FOR ANIMALS**

A group of young piglets are shown in a farm setting. They are standing on a blue plastic mat. The piglets are pink and white, with some having small yellow tags on their ears. The background is slightly blurred, showing a clean, industrial-looking environment with white walls and overhead lights.

**MEETING REPORT OF THE
HIGH LEVEL SEMINAR
'ANIMAL WELFARE 2016-2020'**

"Delivering results"

INTRODUCTION

At the 15th of March 2016 Eurogroup for Animals hosted, jointly with the cross political EP Intergroup for the Welfare and Conservation of Animals, a seminar at the European Parliament. The aim of the seminar was to discuss the future of animal welfare in the European Union by opening a constructive dialogue on the results to be generated from the Joint Declaration on Animal Welfare initiated by the German, Danish and Dutch Agricultural Ministers in December 2014. When signing the Ministerial Declaration on Pig Welfare, launched in April 2015, the Swedish Agricultural Minister joined this animal welfare coalition as well. The perspectives for the EU to deliver in these declarations were reviewed.

The participants of this high level seminar were, amongst others, Minister van Dam (Minister for Agriculture, The Netherlands), Minister Bucht (Minister for Rural Affairs, Sweden) and Minister Weyts (Flemish Minister for Mobility, Public Works, the Vlaamse Rand, Tourism and Animal Welfare, Belgium). Also, two video messages were shown from Minister Schmidt (German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture) and Vytenis Andriukaitis (EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety) respectively.

AGENDA

9.00 - 9.05	Introduction by moderator Ed Bray, journalist at AGRA FACTS, Moderation
9.05 - 9.10	Welcome Janusz Wojciechowski MEP, President of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals
9.10 - 9.25	Fostering animal welfare or failing citizens Reineke Hameleers, Director Eurogroup for Animals
9.25 - 9.35	Perspectives on a new EU Animal Welfare Strategy 2016 - 2020 Martijn van Dam, Minister for Agriculture, The Netherlands
9.35 - 9.45	Taking pig welfare to the next level Sven-Erik Bucht, Minister for Rural Affairs, Sweden
9.45 - 9.55	Pets in need of European action Ben Weyts, Flemish Minister for Mobility, Public Works, the Vlaamse Rand, Tourism and Animal Welfare, Belgium
9.55 - 10.05	Video message by the German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture Christian Schmidt
10.05 - 10.15	Phasing out non - therapeutic mutilations in farming, pre - launch report Dr. ing. Hans Hopster, Wageningen University, The Netherlands
10.15 - 10.25	The way forward Roman Kolar, Board member Eurogroup for Animals and Deputy Director, Akademie für Tierschutz, Deutscher Tierschutzbund, Germany
10.25 - 10.30	Short interview with Hans Huijbers, Board member LTO, Dutch representative Copa Cogeca
10.30 - 10.40	Long - distance livestock transportation Maria Noichl MEP, Chairwoman of the AW - Intergroup's working group on animal transport
10.40 - 10.50	Video message by the EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis The Commission will be represented by Short interview with Michael Scannell, DG SANTE, Director of Directorate D, Food chain: stakeholder and international relations
10.50 - 11.10	Panel debate with speakers and MEPs
11.10 - 11.20	Conclusions & take away messages
11.20 - 11.30	Interviews with media

PRESENTATIONS, SHORT INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSION

Several initiatives have emerged recently, driven by ambitious Ministers from different Member States and setting the blueprint for a possible 2016-2020 Animal Welfare Strategy for the EU. This event was the opportunity sought by many to bring decision-makers together from institutions across the EU and to motivate the European Commission to deliver this long-awaited strategy.

This strong political will to resume a European drive to address major animal welfare challenges was also echoed by MEP's present at the event. **MEP Janusz Wojciechowski** said that he urges the Commission to draw up an ambitious new EU Animal Welfare Strategy for this term. He stated that it would ensure the continuity and clarity of operations that are essential to achieving further positive developments in EU animal welfare policy.



“As the directly elected EU institution, representing 508 million people throughout the EU the Parliament has always attached great importance to the promotion of animal welfare policy as this is an issue which is dear to a majority of EU citizens.”

Reineke Hameleers, director Eurogroup for Animals opened her speech by also saying that the meeting is the direct result of the strong commitment by several national governments to take seriously their citizens' desire to respect animal welfare and that she applauds the Ministers for showing such political



and moral leadership. But, she stated three worrying trends related to this issue can be observed. First of all, implementation and enforcement of animal welfare legislation is still inadequate in large parts of the EU. Secondly, existing animal welfare legislation is falling short of its objectives as it is failing to incorporate new scientific findings as well as ethical concerns from citizens and no significant progress has been made in updating it. Finally, in an ever globalising world, the EU is facing increasing pressures to improve competitiveness according to Reineke Hameleers.

Martijn van Dam, Dutch Minister for Agriculture, confirmed this by saying we need to face the fact that the current food system is not future proof. He said to make a real and lasting change in agriculture, we need to shift from a supply-oriented system to a demand-led one. Specifically, the demands of consumers and society as a whole, like more safety, more transparency and better treatment of animals.



Furthermore he stated that we need to have a new animal welfare strategy on an EU-level.

‘We need to create a world in which food is healthy, delicious, safe and honest’

Martijn van Dam, Dutch Minister of Agriculture

To do so, Minister van Dam pointed out we need to create a world in which food is healthy, delicious, safe and honest. He would like us to commit to a food production system that by 2030 at the latest offers animals a substantially better life with more respect for their physical integrity. In his opinion the previous EU strategy has contributed towards this goal and he would like the next strategy to take us further.

Ms. Schreijer-Pierik asked Minister van Dam about farmers' welfare and the products' position in the market following investments in animal welfare. Minister van Dam replied that in today's reality in the Netherlands pig meat farmers' investment in animal welfare has led their products to a "much stronger position in the market during the current market crisis than the ones who didn't do so". Finally Minister van Dam concluded that with regards to trade agreements, we must be careful who we open up our borders to and we must not remove tariff barriers for products produced with lower animal welfare standards than in the EU because it could be false competition for European farmers who invest in animal welfare.

Sven-Erik Bucht, Swedish Minister for Rural Affairs also stressed the importance of high welfare levels for animals, especially pigs. He said the tail of the pigs has become an important symbol for Swedish consumers and animal welfare has been a priority for the Swedish government for a long time, which is apparent in the regulations which are in some cases stricter than in other European countries.



One of the priorities for the Swedish government is the area of antimicrobial resistance. The proposed new regulation by the Commission, regarding veterinary medicine, is a golden opportunity to take action to counteract the development of antimicrobial resistance, Minister Bucht said. He really hopes there will be a ban on routine preventive use of antibiotics. In addition to signing the Declaration on Pig welfare together with his colleagues and submitting a proposal to form a platform on animal welfare in the EU, Minister Bucht also emphasized that he stands firmly behind the call to the Commission from the Dutch Minister to produce an impact assessment regarding a limitation on live animal transport to the abattoir to an 8 hours maximum.

Ben Weyts, Flemish Minister for Animal Welfare picked up by stressing that we need more European cooperation on animal welfare, than has been observed over the past years. According to Minister Weyts, since EU-wide problems need common solutions we have to work towards common standards and unified solutions, while still respecting the Member States' autonomy. An example is animal welfare in European agriculture. In Minister Weyts' opinion animal welfare could be an asset for European agriculture. He said: "Wouldn't it be great if, whenever you see the 'European label', you know it means that the product is made with great attention for animal welfare and with a maximum of guarantees concerning animal welfare?"



Minister Weyts also said it is clear that an international approach is needed in the case of the pet trade as well. Not so long ago the European Parliament passed a very interesting resolution and called on the Commission to compel the Member

'A European label, that means that the product is made with a maximum of guarantees concerning animal welfare, wouldn't it be great?' Flemish Minister Weyts

States to introduce national databases for the registration of all pet animals. Competent authorities and veterinaries would have access to all databases via a special European Platform. Minister Weyts believes the Dutch Presidency of the European Council can play a pivotal role.



The German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Christian Schmidt, addressed via a video message, the importance of improving animal welfare and his gratitude towards those seeking to adopt a united approach at the EU level. He enhanced the cooperation in Germany with the sector and the development of “voluntary commitment”, with the aim of improving animal welfare conditions through statutory regulations across the entire sector.

The Minister conclusively stressed the importance of having and developing an understanding between the policy makers, associations and animal keepers to be able to reach these goals effectively.



Next, **Dr. ing. Hans Hopster from Wageningen University** in the Netherlands, gave an overview of the most important findings

of a study that was carried out by him and his colleagues of Wageningen UR Livestock Research. The aim of the study was to analyse legislative and non-legislative initiatives in the EU Member States that stimulate phasing out mutilations. As a result, successful and less successful examples have been identified and led to six general recommendations.

According to **Roman Kolar**, when we look at concrete ways on how to improve the lives of millions of animals there are various options. However, Roman Kolar said there should be a focus on labels that offer transparent and reliable information to consumers. Such information can be provided through animal welfare labelling that makes production under a higher animal welfare standard transparent.



Mr. Kolar also explained that at the EU level we already have an example for this, namely the labelling of eggs by method of production, which proves in the EU to be a true success story. And that is why Eurogroup for Animals calls for mandatory methods of production labelling, following this example for all meat and dairy products sold in the EU.

Moreover, **Hans Huijbers, the Dutch representative of COPA COGECA (European Farmers and European Agri-Cooperatives)**, explained that one of the biggest issues today regarding farms and animal welfare is the import of products and animals coming from countries with lower animal welfare standards than in the EU. “We don’t demand the same from international farmers which is very strange”, Hans Huijbers claims.

‘There is a strong public support for limiting the transportation of live animals. The “8-hours campaign” managed to collect more than 1.1 million signatures’ *MEP Maria Noichl*

Furthermore, he expressed another of his main concerns regarding the effectiveness of the EU, namely: “We try to be one organization, but from the outside we are just many countries”.



The next speaker was **MEP Maria Noichl** and she specifically addressed the issue of long distance transport of live animals. There is strong public support for limiting the transportation of live animals. The “8-hours campaign” managed to collect more than 1.1 million signatures Europe wide but, so far, these voices have not been heard and there is still no legal maximum limit to journey times and animals continue to suffer due to the poor conditions of their transportation.



In addition, she said serious breaches of the EC Regulation No. 1/2005 occur routinely during these journeys which has a negative impact on the welfare of animals. Moreover, as shown by the Reports submitted to the EC under the Art 27 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, animals “unfit for transport” are transported (Annex 1, Chapter 1). MEP Maria Noichl therefore concluded a revision of the Regulation itself as well as a socio economic impact assessment of the negative consequences of long distance transport are needed.

Following MEP Maria Noichl’s speech, the **EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis**, appeared in a video message in which he stated that many initiatives are being taken by stakeholders and Member States on animal welfare. In his opinion, this demonstrates that the Commission is not solely responsible for animal welfare in the EU.

Everyone is responsible: all food business operators, retailers, transporters, slaughterhouses, Member States authorities, civil society, animal welfare organizations, scientists and veterinarians. And apparently at this stage the Commission is still evaluating which options are the most valuable to address animal welfare issues. Vytenis Andriukaitis finished his speech by saying animal welfare remains a very important issue for the Commission, and for himself personally, and a real impact can only happen with a concrete commitment of all parties involved.

Lastly, **Michael Scannell** recalled in his speech recent successes in relation to animal welfare, which all have provided a good basis for future actions. One example is the impressive progress in the Netherlands, a country with a huge trade in live animals, which showed that full engagement by relevant actors on all levels is needed to reach success. Mr. Scannell has seen improvements in the standards of animal transports too, showing animals can be transported in good conditions for a longer period of time than 8 hours. We should therefore, according to Michael Scannell, not make the mistake to use only one measure for evaluating animal welfare standards.



The Commission is also currently working on a new strategy on antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Yet, in Michael Scannell’s opinion, real action has to be taken, both at EU level and at international level. The key of fighting AMR is basically to raise animal welfare standards. It is also a significant move forward to learn from the Member States that have fully complied with the Animal Welfare Directives and that are already doing the job right to achieve a wider success, Michael Scannell said. He concluded the Q&A session by stating that legislation has a key role to play but it is not the only tool. The Commission has to press all the buttons.

CONCLUSIONS

Closing the seminar, **Ed Bray** concluded that despite recognition of animal sentience within the European Union's founding treaties, the Commission's longstanding commitment to animal welfare has not led to updates of EU animal welfare legislation since 2009. As a result, the regulatory framework is increasingly out of sync with new scientific findings, technical innovations, socio-economic trends and developments in transnational crime. The Ministers spoke of new animal-based welfare indicators for example which should be included in the future.



Recalling the declarations signed by the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Sweden respectively and pursuant to the paper from these same Member States calling for an EU Animal Welfare policy, Ed Bray said that a number of key topics central to these joint declarations were pointed out by the Ministers. These topics included much stricter enforcement of current rules thereby creating a level-playing field, which is only fair for those that have already implemented them properly. The Ministers also stated that it is important the EU does not go backwards but keeps its standards high, something that should give EU products high standing on other markets outside the EU. It was recognized that this is related to the issue of ensuring farmers are on board with the highest standards, which means they should not be undermined by trade deals that undercut the EU's standards. Therefore, imports have to meet EU standards.

But, as Ed Bray also said in his concluding remarks, higher welfare standards should bring added value to farmers too, so there should be a focus on innovation and the EU needs to find ways to reward this either through specific support mechanisms, or awareness programmes or labelling to make sure consumers are informed and aware.

In more detail, speakers asked the Commission to consider undertaking actions on the following before 2020:

- specific legislation for farm species other than those already covered by EU legislation,
- revision of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005,
- develop a strategy for the phasing out of non-therapeutic livestock mutilations,
- use non-legislative powers where possible to effectively control the intra-Union movement of commercially traded animals,
- empower consumers to make informed choices concerning farmed animal welfare standards.
- maintain existing standards in all new trade agreements with respect to the welfare of animals,
- strive for a further reduction in the use of antibiotics and to develop a common strategy to establish a level playing field at EU and international level,
- establish a European Animal Welfare Platform in accordance with the position paper presented by the governments of DE, SE, DK and NL at the AGRI Council of February 15, 2016 and which was already supported by a majority of the Member States and by Ministers at the Agriculture Council in Brussels last month. The speakers especially pointed out that it is important that there is an exchange of best practices on animal welfare between EU Member States,
- proactively enforce the Pigs Directive (2008/120/EC) concerning the provision of environmental enrichment and the ban on routine tail docking of pigs and to launch infringement procedures against non-compliant Member States,
- To consider revising the Pigs Directive in line with the declaration of Vught and according to recent scientific findings.

CALL FOR COMMISSION LEADERSHIP ON ANIMAL WELFARE

Overall, the seminar ‘Animal Welfare 2016–2020 “Delivering results”’ calls on the European Commission and Member States to resume their commitment and cooperation to improve animal welfare in the EU by integrating the content of the above mentioned declarations and the paper on the animal welfare platform in a dedicated EU animal welfare strategy 2016–2020, which the speakers at the seminar mentioned they are looking forward to.



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