

# **Animal Welfare during transport**

**April 2022**

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## Background

In 2019 over 1,600,000,000 farmed animals (ovines, bovines, poultry, and pigs) were transported alive across the European Union (EU) and to non-European countries ([Eurogroup for Animals, 2021](#)). Live transport is a major concern as animals are exposed to stress at loading and unloading, and can suffer hunger, thirst, exhaustion, and lack of space and rest during transit. Transporting live animals also poses serious risks for animals and, potentially, public health due to the possible spread of diseases. Indeed, scientific evidence shows that the stress of transport weakens the immune system, making animals more vulnerable to diseases ([EFSA, 2011](#)).

The EU has had rules governing animal welfare during transport since 1977 (EU Directive 77/489/EEC). Today, Council Regulation 1/2005 (Transport Regulation) applies to all livestock transported within and from the EU, regulating rest periods, the training and authorisation of drivers, some stocking densities, and general transport conditions. Unfortunately, the legal text lacks species- and category specific provisions for all the animals being transported, and allows animals to be transported for days on end throughout and outside the EU. As flagged by the EU Commission during [its audits](#), enforcement of existing rules is very poor and the control by public authorities is scarce, leading to very poor compliance and animal suffering.

The situation gets even worse when animals are exported to third countries: journeys last hundreds of hours - sometimes weeks - and animals face inhumane slaughter practices upon arrival. The rule by the Court of Justice of the EU establishing that provisions of the Transport Regulation also apply to those stages of the journey taking place outside the EU ([CJEU, C-424/13](#)), remains to all effects disregarded, and animals exported via land ([EC, 2019a](#)) and via sea ([EC, 2019b](#)) remain without legal protection once they leave the EU.

## Context

The Transport Regulation did not substantially improve the welfare of the animals transported ([Wageningen, 2011](#)). The legal text is vague and non comprehensive ([Eurogroup for Animals, 2021](#)), and its standards are “not in line with the current scientific knowledge” ([EFSA, 2011](#)). In 2019 the European Commission was urged to revise the

Transport Regulation by both the European Parliament ([2018/2110\(INI\)](#)) and the Council ([14975/19](#)). The European Parliament reiterated such a call in 2022 via its Inquiry Committee on the protection of animals during transport ([\(2021/2736\(RSP\)\)](#)).

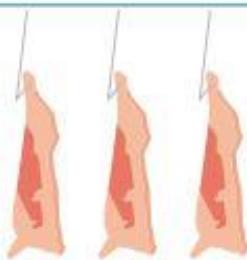
With such Inquiry, the European Parliament also called for a shift to a trade in meat, carcasses, and genetic material. The benefits of moving away from live transport, have already been highlighted by the Scientific Committee on animal health and animal welfare ([SCAHAW, 2002](#)), the European Food Safety Authority ([EFSA, 2011](#)) and the Federation of the Veterinarians of Europe ([FVE, 2008; 2016](#)); and in 2019 Eurogroup for Animals published a report looking into policy measures to reduce the transport of live animals across the EU and beyond ([Eurogroup for Animals, 2019](#)).

Moving away from live transport, would be beneficial from an animal health and welfare, environmental, and public health perspectives, and it would also be coherent with the EU ambition of building up a truly sustainable Europe, where the distance between the farm and the fork is reduced ([EC, 2020](#)).

## Conclusion

Eurogroup for Animals calls for systemic changes to make sure that animals will not be unnecessarily transported within the EU and they will never leave the Union alive. Therefore, it urges:

- the European Commission and co-legislators to revise and enlarge the scope of the Transport Regulation in line with the standards laid down in the White Paper “Time to change the rules” ([Eurogroup for Animals, 2021](#)); and
- the European Commission “to present, no later than 2023, an action plan clearly identifying the driving forces behind animal transport and proposing concrete policy actions, including regulatory actions, and setting a precise timeline and milestones, with the aim of mitigating those forces, and reducing the need to transport live animals enabling the replacement of live transport by a meat, carcasses and genetic material trade as much as possible”, as requested by the European Parliament ([\(2021/2736\(RSP\)\)](#).



The transport of farmed animals shall be reduced, refined and **replaced by meat/carcasses and semen/embryos**, as recommended by the FVE, OIE and EFSA

## 'Journey time'

is defined as the entire time elapsing from the 'Beginning of journey' until the 'End of journey' including loading and unloading of animals. In case of sea transport, the 'Journey time' includes the time animals spend on the road from the farm to the harbour and from the harbour to the 'Final destination', as well as the part of the journey animals spend on the vessels and the roll-on/roll-off time



### Species and category-specific maximum journey times

with a maximum travel time of



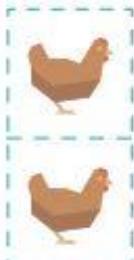
**8 hours**

for adult bovines,  
ovines, swine



**4 hours**  
for poultry and rabbits

Poultry and rabbits shall be transported in species-specific **containers**



### It is forbidden to transport:



Farmed animals outside the **EU borders**

### Pregnant animals

for whom 40% or more of the expected gestation period has already passed

### Unweaned animals



**End-of-career animals**  
cannot be transported  
for more than  
**4 hours**



**Livestock vessels**  
must be approved by  
**a EU Authority** on the  
basis on the fulfillment  
of mandatory and  
strict technical  
requirements and  
conditions

### To preserve animal welfare,

species and category-specific conditions on fitness for transport, minimum and maximum external temperatures, space allowance, watering, and feeding **shall be set by law**



# **EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS**



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Eurogroup for Animals  
Rue Ducale 29 – 1000 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 740 08 20

[info@eurogroupforanimals.org](mailto:info@eurogroupforanimals.org)  
[eurogroupforanimals.org](http://eurogroupforanimals.org)