

THE WELFARE OF LIVE ANIMALS DURING TRANSPORT

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“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” Mahatma Gandhi

Our political Group responds to the legitimate concerns of European society about environmental and animal welfare issues. Millions of live animals are transported every year for consumption, breeding and fattening, both within the European Union and for export to third countries. The live transport of animals over long distances is a major animal welfare concern given the stress the animals are exposed to. The EPP Group recognises that any journey, regardless of length, can be stressful for animals if the appropriate risk management steps are not taken. Therefore, in order to ensure the welfare of animals during transport, priority should be given to the use of technologies to monitor and track animal welfare indicators during transport instead of an arbitrary reduction in journey times.

Ships, trucks, trains and airplanes can be properly adapted to ensure that animals are transported in good conditions without being subjected to physical suffering. The EPP Group stresses the importance of regional livestock farming structures so they are preserved and supported, as well as mobile and regional slaughterhouses, in particular with a focus on slaughtering at the holding of provenance. The EU has the highest animal welfare standards during transport; however, there are still many irregularities that need to be corrected.

Commitment

Member States shall commit to use all financial resources and control mechanisms to ensure that farmers and operators comply with the welfare requirements of

live animals during transport. The EPP Group calls for the harmonisation and enforcement of national legislation on the welfare of live animals during transport. The animals have to be transported safely and treated fairly; avoiding injury and suffering to animals is important. Therefore, the general conditions according to Article 3 of the Regulation 1/2005 must fully comply: These include water supply, ventilation and temperature monitoring, appropriate space, resting periods and the special requirements for unweaned animals. The EPP Group considers that professional training is the basic requirement for those handling animals during transport. Furthermore, periodical vehicles and equipment inspections shall be carried out. Our political Group supports the installation and use of video surveillance systems on long haul journeys to ensure effective compliance. The strict application of the Regulation 1/2005 on live animal transport shall ensure that repeated infringements lead to legal proceedings against all responsible operators for non-compliance with animal welfare during transport. The EPP Group supports that Member States shall have increased enforcement powers, including measures to prevent the recurrence of infringements and to suspend or withdraw the carrier's authorisation.

The EPP Group encourages harmonised rules across the EU aimed at improving animal welfare during live animal transport. Regular checks shall be ensured at every stage of transport: Mutual assistance and the accelerated exchange of information between the competent authorities of all Member States and third countries shall be improved.

The EPP Group supports compliance with the European Convention for the Protection

of Animals kept for Farming and commits to finding solutions to the current problems in order to ensure high standards of animal welfare and to improve the transport of live animals.

Legislative framework

According to Article 13 TFEU, the European Union and the Member States must ensure that animals are kept and transported in good conditions and they are not subject to mistreatment, abuse, pain or suffering.

The EPP Group recalls the revision and improvements needed to the existing regulation as suggested by European Parliament resolution of 14 February 2019 on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport.

The EU Council Conclusions on animal welfare of December 2019 called on the Commission to revise animal welfare regulations, including the transport of live animals. The EPP Group believes that any changes to Regulation 1/2005 must be science-based and draw on data from existing and ongoing studies and expertise, using the measurable animal-based welfare indicators such as physiological and behavioural indexes, wearable monitors, biochemical markers of wellbeing and simulated truck and airplane journeys. It also supports the Farm to Fork Strategy aimed at more sustainable agriculture, respect for the welfare of live animals and the roadmap to refit the concerned regulations.

Transport of live animals within the EU

The EPP Group proposes concrete solutions to improve the transport of animals within the EU. It insists on the use of digital technologies to obtain information on animal welfare during transport. The EPP Group calls on the Commission and Member States to assure financial support for GPS equipped vehicles and digital monitoring. Interior temperature sensors and ventilation fans shall be mandatory during the long haul transport of live animals, and GPS recordings shall be accessible to Member State Competent Authorities.

The EPP Group recognises the difference between road and sea transport of animals and supports further research in the area to understand the impact of each mode of transport on animal welfare.

The EPP Group supports carrying out further research into how animal welfare can be improved during transit, such as the feeding of animals during their journey, and research into animal-based indicators of stress and wellbeing. The EPP Group also supports the creation of corridors dedicated to the transport of live animals, including rest and feeding facilities, traceability and the scheduling of journeys to avoid waiting times and loading delays.

Long distance transport of animals

Long distance animal transport occurs when there are limited options for slaughtering or fattening centres at regional level and because of the overproduction supported by financial tools, such as the CAP.

Long distance transport of unweaned and other vulnerable animals, such as gestation and end-of-career animals, should take into account the particular susceptibility to frailty and illnesses and comply with strict rules such as regular stops and unloading for proper feeding.

A transparent EU monitoring and reporting system is needed to both make Member States and the EU Commission fully accountable for the implementation and enforcement of the Regulation, and ensure that violations will be effectively tackle and mitigated.

Particular attention should be given to specific aspects of live animals transport to and from the EU's outermost regions.

However, priority should be given to slaughtering as close as possible to the point of production.

The slaughtering facilities, including mobile ones, in the areas with high animal concentration with a focus on slaughtering at the holding of provenance, contribute to reducing the suffering of animals, improving economic value and introducing the animal welfare label in all stages of the local food supply chain.

Export of live animals to third countries

The EU's live animals export is mainly focused on the Middle East and North Africa. Given the preference of consumers in these regions for slaughtering animals as part of religious rituals, the export of live animals is an important economic activity and source of income for European farmers. Our priority

is to support job creation and the protection of the existing ones. We recall that trade relations are influenced by supply and demand; thus, it is of the utmost importance that the demand for live animals, in particular from the aforementioned regions, can be met by the EU's livestock farmers. The EPP Group insists on ensuring the enforcement of checks and controls from point of departure to destination. Providing documents in electronic format would help the sanitary and border authorities, as well as creating fast lanes at borders, which would reduce waiting times and have a positive effect on animal welfare. Our political Group supports the permanent inspections and supervision of ships and lorries leaving the EU. The importing countries should provide feedback on the condition of the animals at the time of arrival of the shipment. This feedback should be based on checks, which have been performed by certified companies, in order to ensure that the EU-standards are fulfilled.

with responsibilities in the field of veterinary and animal protection shall maintain dialogue to improve the legislation on live animal transport.

- > *Professionally operating transport companies should be strengthened and best-practice measures should be exchanged.*

Conclusions

- > *It is in the interest of both operators and exporters that the animals arrive at their destination in the best possible condition.*
- > *Efficient and concrete solutions are necessary for the better management of live animal transport, without creating additional burdens and high costs, which will eventually be covered by consumers.*
- > *Regulation no. 1/2005 has had a positive impact on animal welfare during transport, when implemented judiciously by each Member State. The EPP Group supports efforts to achieve uniform animal welfare standards in the European Union, as well as a sanctioning regime, in case of non-compliance. The objective should be to reduce, refine and replace transport of live animals with meat/carcasses and genetic material trade where appropriate.*
- > *The European Union shall remain an important leader in the export of live animals. Several national authorities do not make use of the information available in TRACES to conduct the inspections and audits, in part because of existing user access restrictions. Inadequate compliance with animal welfare requirements eventually results in infringements.*
- > *NGOs, governments, responsible authorities, researchers and all structures*

Background: The economic value of intra-EU trade in live animals was EUR 8.6 billion in 2018 and exports of live animals from the EU exceed EUR 3 billion. Transport of live animals to third countries has increased in recent years. Animal transport is an economic activity and a part of the animal production cycle and can be substituted, to an extent, by the transport of animal products and genetic material. The EPP Group welcomes the Commission's efforts to strengthen regional supply chains and to extend the possibility of farm slaughtering.