

Investigation of alleged contraventions and maladministration in the application of Union law in relation to the protection of animals during transport within and outside the Union

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The temporary Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport adopted the own-initiative report by Daniel BUDA (EPP, RO) and Isabel CARVALHAIS (S&D, PT) on the investigation of alleged contraventions and maladministration in the application of Union law in relation to the protection of animals during transport within and outside the Union.

Every year, millions of animals are transported over both short and long distances within and between Member States and to third countries. A number of countries or regions in the EU and globally have banned the transport of live animals over long distances to third countries and overseas, and others are considering the measure as it is impossible for the transport to be carried out in line with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, as well as being impossible to assess the real conditions during long-distance journeys to third countries.

Based on the conclusions of the report by the temporary Committee of Inquiry set up to investigate alleged contraventions or maladministration in the implementation of Union law on the protection of animals during transport within and outside the Union, Members called on the Commission and the EU countries to step up their efforts to respect animal welfare during transport and update EU rules.

In addition, Members adopted the following conclusions:

The report emphasised that transport is stressful for animals, regardless of the means of transport, and often has a negative impact on their health and welfare and on consumer health, especially when transport is poorly planned or reliant on outdated technology and equipment, or otherwise not properly conducted. It noted that it is particularly difficult to enforce Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 where a transport passes through a number of Member States and where various Member States have approved the journey log and have issued the transporter with the authorisation and the registration certificate for the vehicle, and the certificate of competence for the driver.

Enforcement of Regulation (EC) No 1/2005

The Commission identified the enforcement of the regulation as a major challenge, partly because of differences in the interpretation of the requirements and partly because of the lack of controls by the Member States.

Members welcomed the provisions of the new common agricultural policy, which contribute significantly to farm animal welfare through the cross-compliance mechanism and by encouraging livestock farmers to apply higher standards through the financial support granted under rural development policy. The report noted that the most frequently documented violations during transports are linked to the lack of headroom, animals being unfit for transport, overcrowding, inappropriate watering devices or the lack of water supply and food causing animals to dehydrate, transport during extreme temperatures and inadequate ventilation inside the means of transport, considerably prolonged journey duration and the failure to observe resting times.

There is also a need to improve the checking of journey logs; the application and proportionality of sanctions; the training of drivers and companies; and the certification process for means of transport by road and livestock vessels, so that means of transport that cannot offer good transport conditions are refused certification. The report also highlighted that animal welfare during transport could be better ensured by recording and checking data in real time via GPS, video surveillance and other technologies.

Regretting the significant economic challenges faced by small local slaughterhouses and their reduced numbers, the report called for support of the development of on-farm slaughter, using mobile slaughterhouses, in order to remove the need to transport live animals wherever possible.

Authorisation procedures and approval of means of transport

Members are very concerned about the number of reports of inappropriate vehicles being used to transport live animals, whether by land or by sea, and recognises the major differences between the Member States in interpreting and enforcing the regulation, as far as the approval of the means of transport is concerned, especially with reference to the legislative requirements for road vehicles regarding the watering system, with particular attention to the needs of unweaned animals.

The report called for the adoption of harmonised and binding standards for the authorisation of vehicles and vessels transporting live animals, including for the condition and satellite navigation system of the vehicles. It also pointed out that the inspection and certification procedures for livestock vessels are not harmonised and lack mandatory inspection criteria in some Member States. Members are deeply concerned that in some cases there is evidence that the authorities in some Member States have approved and/or permitted the use of vessels which do not comply with the EU rules on animal welfare, noting that a vessel may operate from every Member State once approved by a single Member State.

In addition, the report noted that in a high number of vehicles, drinking facilities are not adapted to the specific drinking behaviour or size of the transported animals: are out of reach for the animals or are not available in sufficient number or with adequate distribution.

Journey times and resting periods

The report pointed out that the welfare of live animals during transport must be assured at all times, from loading to destination, regardless of the length of the journey and recalled that all necessary arrangements must be made in advance to minimise the duration of the journey and to meet the needs of the animals during the journey. According to Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, journey times should not exceed eight hours, but may be extended if certain additional requirements are met. However, there have been recurrent violations of the Regulation in this respect.

Members regretted the fact that control post facilities for unloading, watering, feeding and resting of animals during long journeys are not always identified on journey logs, as required, or do not comply with EU standards.

Loading and unloading

The report stressed that loading and unloading operations are particularly problematic in terms of animal welfare. Member States are called on to carry out systematic and effective inspections before animals are loaded, particularly when loading onto ships.

Transport conditions

Members pointed out that exposure to temperatures outside the legal range allowed by Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, of between +5 °C and +30 °C degrees, occurs often and is one of the main causes of animal welfare problems. Member States are called on to require the use of new temperature technology inside vehicles to ensure optimal temperature during transport.