

DOES THE EU RESPECT ANIMAL WELFARE DURING TRANSPORT?

An explainer

"In formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the requirements of animal welfare..."

Article 13 of the Treaty of Lisbon

Background

Every year, around 1.5 billion live animals are transported between EU countries and exported to other countries outside the EU. The majority of these - cows, pigs, sheep, horses and poultry - are for slaughtering.

In 2005, the Commission introduced a new regulation for the protection of animals during transport. These rules aim to avoid injury or undue suffering during transport. It stipulates the general conditions for animal transport, the responsibility of transporters and authorities, and enforcement mechanisms.

However, despite the introduction of these rules 14 years ago, the reality is that animals have continued to suffer during transport in the EU.

The internationally recognised guiding principles for rules and policies relating to animal welfare establish "Five Freedoms" for animals:

- freedom from hunger and thirst;
- freedom from discomfort;
- freedom from pain, injury and disease;
- freedom to express normal behaviour;
- freedom from fear and distress.

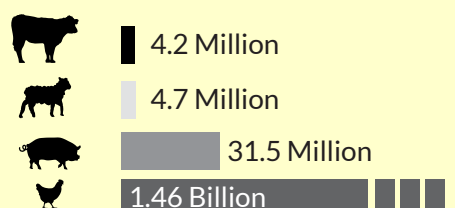
Furthermore, animal needs and feelings must be taken into account.

Animal welfare is enshrined in EU Treaties. The Treaty of Amsterdam officially recognised animals as sentient beings, meaning they are capable of feeling pain and pleasure and cannot be treated as objects or goods.



ANIMALS TRANSPORTED UNDER UNACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS

NUMBER OF ANIMALS TRANSPORTED IN THE EU EVERY YEAR



On average, each journey **TAKES OVER 30 HOURS**
or as much as 70 hours

MORE THAN 3 MILLION
exported to third countries
as far as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

Source: Eurostat, 2014. Icons made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com

What our MEPs say

Anja Hazekamp

(Partij voor de Dieren, Netherlands)

“Every year, millions of animals are transported over extremely long distances in overloaded trucks. Current enforcement of animal welfare rules between many EU countries is inadequate - and even worse to non-EU countries. Last summer I visited exit ports in Slovenia, Croatia and Romania, where I witnessed with my own eyes how animals suffer tremendously due to maltreatment, extreme long waiting times and extreme temperatures with no access to feed and water. There was no enforcement at all. Only the industry was protected and not the animals. Parliament must vote to end the suffering of animals, to shorten the maximum transport time and to end the export of live animals to third countries.”

Stefan Eck

(Independent, Germany)

“It is a shame we still struggle to implement Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of live animals during transport. It has been proved countless times, this regulation is not enforced. Shame on the Commission who does not have the guts to launch infringement procedures against failing governments! It says a lot about the EU's poor values: animals don't count.”

A weak regulation not enforced

[Independent studies and official monitoring](#) have shown that there has been a high level of non-compliance and inconsistencies in enforcing existing rules. Crucially, the 2005 Regulation does not impose a limit on the time animals can be transported. Overall, there has been a steady increase in the hours animals spend in transportation. This translates into appalling suffering for animals.

For example, the Regulation requires watering intervals for animals on long distance journeys. Animals too often do not receive water or are watered insufficiently. There is no verification that this even happens. Water devices on trucks were found to be inadequate, with animals having no space to move to reach the source or devices found to be dirty with manure.

In some cases the Regulation was found to be completely out of touch with reality. For example, unweaned animals (very young animals such as calves) are required to be given adequate fluids in between two transport periods of 9 hours. But it is scientifically proven that it is technically impossible to provide unweaned animals with adequate liquid on board trucks and that they do not know how to use the drinking equipment.

Despite the allowed maximum temperature during transport being 30 degrees, animals are often transported in much higher temperatures and were found under severe stress even within the legal limit. There are several other failings such as inadequate sanctions in place for companies acting above the law for profit, lack of access to vets during transport, or poorly equipped national inspection authorities.

Hypocrisy in implementation

According to a European Court of Justice ruling, the 2005 rules on animal transport apply not only in the EU but on all stages of any journey that starts in the EU and ends outside it.

However, this ruling has been continuously and systematically flouted. [Almost 45% of EU animal exports](#) to third countries go through the Bulgarian border with Turkey. Some of these animals' final destination can be as far as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, where it is impossible to verify compliance.

These countries, including Turkey, do not have the welfare and other standards and rules in line with the EU. Terrible animal transport conditions have been reported including inhumane slaughtering, in breach of international standards. Many animals are transported by ship to the Middle East and North Africa and endure extreme cruelty during loading and the transport at sea.

The view of the Left

Existing laws are inadequate and unenforceable in relation to the realities on the ground. This is why our MEPs are leading efforts to establish an inquiry committee at the European Parliament to investigate these breaches and demand alternatives. This effort gathered the support of 220 MEPs from all political groups, showing a broad consensus on this issue.

A revised Regulation should limit animal transport to no more than 8 hours, as affirmed previously by the European Parliament. The ultimate goal would be to reduce transport times to 2 hours at most. This is the only realistic solution to provide welfare to animals as enshrined in the EU Treaties. We also want a prohibition of long-distance animal transport during extreme weather and for the EU to completely ban the transport of live animals to third countries.



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