



Report of the 280th Session

Tuesday 7th February 2012, 11.45 - 12.45 hrs
Room PHS P7C050 – European Parliament, Brussels

I. Presentation of Commissioner Dalli

Honourable Members,

I am grateful for your kind invitation for me to present the new EU strategy for the protection and welfare of animals.

Let me express my appreciation to the European Parliament for its significant contribution to the drawing up of this strategy.

Indeed, key ideas presented by Parliament in its 2010 Resolution on the 2006 Animal Welfare Action Plan have been taken on board.

In addition, Parliament adopted, in the 2012 budget, a pilot project costing one million euros for a **network of reference centres** for animal welfare. This will be instrumental as regards designing a possible new law for such a network.

I am also very pleased that the Commission will organise – together with the Presidency – a conference dedicated to this strategy, here in Brussels at the end of this month.

Animal welfare is an integral part of the overall concept of **food quality**, and more and more European consumers are calling for welfare-friendly products. Animal welfare therefore represents an important **business opportunity**.

Moreover, the Lisbon Treaty further promotes animal welfare without, however, providing the Commission with additional powers.

Animal welfare has also become an important issue of **commercial competitiveness**. This has become more apparent given that implementation of EU legislation is not always uniform in all Member States.

Indeed, **lack of enforcement** by Member States as regards some specific topics is one of the major issues adversely affecting animal welfare in the EU.

As long as **consumers** are **not sufficiently empowered** to make informed choices on animal welfare when buying food, the market will **not provide sufficient economic incentives** for producers to comply with animal welfare rules.

A **lack of sufficient knowledge** of animal welfare matters amongst many **stakeholders** clouds various related issues. This could partly explain the difficulties in implementing EU animal welfare rules.

The new strategy aims to address these problems through two complementary approaches:

1. it takes a **holistic approach** by considering the possibility of establishing a **new EU legislative framework** to include animal welfare principles for all animals.
2. the strategy proposes to **reinforce existing EU actions**.

Let me take each of these in turn.

- In the context of a **new legal framework**, the Commission will examine the possibility of **using outcome-based indicators** to test compliance with animal welfare rules. For example, to ensure that heat is not causing suffering to animals, instead of determining air temperature in the legislation applicable to all situations, attention would be paid to the behaviour of the animals – such as whether they pant – or look for water or shade. This will help producers focus on concrete results for the welfare of animals, whilst taking into account their specific contexts and by using the most economically suitable means.

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Established in 1983

- A sufficient level of competence of those working with animals is, of course, essential. A new legislative framework could streamline competence requirements applicable to those handling animals – such as farmers, animal keepers, veterinarians and animal transporters. Such requirements already exist in some cases, but there is a need for greater coherence across all animal welfare legislation.
- A new legal framework could also include the establishment of a European network of reference centres for animal welfare. Such a network could contribute to better enforcement, in particular working on the development of outcome-based animal welfare indicators. It could also provide technical and scientific assistance to authorities and stakeholders through dissemination of research, technical innovation and vocational training. Such a network would not, however, duplicate the role of existing EU bodies such as the European Food Safety Authority, nor the national research bodies.
- A new framework could also contain new communication tools, such as information and education campaigns, to increase transparency and quality of information to consumers on animal welfare to help them in making food purchases.

Turning to the other main aspect of the strategy:

- We need to achieve better enforcement of current EU rules. Insufficient enforcement by Member States remains a serious problem. The Commission is determined to make every effort to ensure that current provisions are properly implemented by the Member States. We have to also be very conscious of the fact that our legislation has to be smarter and that during the legislative process on various proposals we do not set a path which makes implementation difficult to achieve and complex to assess.
- This is an internal market problem as it distorts competition between EU producers. It also undermines our credibility in international negotiations on animal welfare.
- We have already seen how challenging it is to implement the ban on un-enriched cages for laying hens. We must avoid this happening again in relation to the ban on sow stalls that will come into force on 1 January 2013. The same applies as regards the new Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter.
- The difficulties of some Member States in enforcing EU legislation show us that stronger co-operation between the Commission and Member States is necessary to face forthcoming challenges.
- We also need to continue our efforts to promote animal welfare internationally and to ensure that our producers are not placed at a competitive disadvantage compared with producers from third countries.

To this end, we will further include animal welfare in bilateral trade agreements and co-operation forums to further engage third countries in applying international animal welfare standards.

- It is also essential that we, the Commission, continue our work on promoting education and information on animal welfare. We have launched training initiatives for officials through the Better Training for Safer Food programme, which needs to be maintained.
- We also need to develop our information activities targeted at consumers through specific campaigns to explain the animal welfare standards already in place for EU products.
- Finally, the strategy seeks to optimise synergies with other EU policies – in particular with the Common Agricultural Policy.

Several mechanisms are already in place – such as animal welfare measures in rural development or cross-compliance – but these resources could be further aligned.

Honourable Members,

Through this strategy, the Commission analyses the past with a view to shaping the future of EU animal welfare policy.

Animal welfare is an issue where Europe truly leads the world. This multi-faceted strategy will strengthen this position by improving welfare standards and compliance thus meeting the wishes and expectations of European citizens.

I am sure I can count on this group to continue to make an active contribution to both the shaping and the delivery of the strategy's aims.

Questions and debate

Marit Paulsen (ALDE, SE) said that the new strategy has an open door. The house behind must be furnished with the content of the related Parliament report of 2010. Several aspects of this EP report have already been included but in an extremely weakened way which makes the Strategy incomplete. She agreed that enforcement by the Member States should be the first priority but also the Commission has to follow the decisions taken by the Council and the European Parliament. Examples for this are pending reports: In 2005 and 2007 the Commission was supposed to publish two reports on different aspects regarding the welfare of pigs which have not been published yet. The same applies to an expected report on broilers which was due to be released on 30th June 2012 but has been rescheduled for 2015. The Parliament will continue to put pressure on the Commission that its commitments are fulfilled in time. Thanks to the Lisbon Treaty the Parliament has the power to make its voice heard.

Commissioner Dalli concurred that enforcement of existing EU animal welfare related legislation is key and stressed that it is very difficult to ensure that the Member States carry out their obligations in this regard. He admitted that some Commission reports are still pending and attributed it to the heavy work load and the lack of resources in the Commission obliging to prioritise work tasks. If certain deadlines for the presentation of reports are not complied with, does not necessarily mean that the issue is of minor importance- he said.

The way the European Union legislates should be much smarter than it has been in the past especially when it comes to legislation that allows long transition periods. He referred in particular to the laying hens Directive and the ban on sow stalls. On the latter issue the Commission has already started to put this in front of the Member States during the first AGRI-Council that was held at the beginning of the year. The Commission has just the power to screen for information and to assess if Member States adhere. At the current point of the enforcement process regarding the mentioned dossiers, non-compliant Member States cannot yet be fined for not having respected the deadlines.

Future legislation which foresees long transition periods should impose the presentation of implementation plans and specific milestones which allow the Commission to step in in time so as to ensure final adherence at the set deadline. Currently, the Commission can only start to take action at the end of a transition period when it has been legally proven that a Member State has not complied. This is unacceptable for anybody and the Commission should do its utmost to ensure its capability to enforce adherence. He said that he was currently still seeking legal advice on how far he can go with publishing information that the Member States provide. The new Animal Welfare Strategy will hopefully contribute to a better enforcement of the related EU legislation.

Dan Jørgensen (S&D, DK) pointed out that the Commission has already prepared a new proposal on animal transport following the commitments by two predecessors of Commissioner Dalli who had promised the European Parliament to work on the revision of the Animal Transport Regulation. He inquired why the proposal had finally never been published. He also reminded the Commissioner that 1 million citizens have put their signature to the [8hours petition](#) demanding shorter transport times for animals. Furthermore, several Animal Welfare Intergroup Members are on the way of getting EP majority support for the [written declaration 49/2011 on the establishment of a maximum 8-hour journey limit for animals transported in the European Union](#). Massive political pressure will be put on the Commission on this issue. He called on the Commissioner to release the proposal on animal transport which has already been drafted. This would make everybody happy.

Commissioner Dalli replied that he would like to keep everybody happy but the question would be which direction the Commission needs to take on this issue. The Commission can come up with new proposals but he doubted whether they would address the complexity of the issues involved. He strongly believed that animal transport policy is not a mere issue of limiting the duration and improving the transport conditions. The solution might be found with the introduction of a clear labelling system on the country of origin. This will demand precise definitions on what is considered the place of origin of an animal. Currently, a very large number of animals are transported over long distances simply to establish "a new origin" at the place of slaughter. The core questions are why it is necessary to transport animals in such large numbers and why they cannot be slaughtered close to the places where they have been reared. Why is it necessary to transport horses from Romania to Italy so that the product can be labelled with "made in Italy"? It is better to approach the issue by finding a long term solution rather than looking for the improvement of certain aspects which will have to be revised again at a later stage.

All efforts have to be made to implement the current regulations. With the technology available it should be easy to monitor transport vehicles throughout their whole journeys. This is where the Commission has to start working with

the Member States to ensure better enforcement.

In the interest of real animal welfare, he suggested approaching the issue in a pragmatic way by looking at the root of the problems and not by trying to calm the conscience and saying - we have legislated and we have shortened the time of live animal transport.

Carl Schlyter (Greens/EFA, SE) started with some positive notes on the new Animal Welfare Strategy. He welcomed the fact that it includes initiatives relating to farmed fish and that the Commission intends to continue implementing animal welfare concerns in trade agreements with third countries. He also appreciated the Strategy's focus on better enforcement and education.

He disagreed with the Mr Dalli's statement that the Commission has little power to ensure enforcement by the Member States as it disposes of sufficient tools to ensure better compliance.

Commissioner Dalli replied that concerning the ban on conventional battery cages for laying hens and the ban on sow stalls in 2013 he would have to acquire the legal basis which could allow the Commission to act already at this stage. The Commission cannot yet amend the legislation on sow stalls because it foresees a year of implementation process.

Carl Schlyter (Greens/EFA, SE) countered that the Commission has the power to limit the market for illegal products. He asked not to waste the Commission's limited resources, energy and time to explore different options for the enforcement of the **final animal testing ban for cosmetics** which should come into force in 2013. He stressed that the EP Environment Committee is totally opposed against any attempts of finding derogations to the animal testing ban for cosmetics. The worst scenario of a complete ban would just be that a few new chemicals would not be used in cosmetics. However, there are already plenty of approved chemicals that the industry can reformulate in billions of ways. With a complete ban the Commission will not stop innovation but will be able to halt unnecessary animal suffering.

He called on the Commission to legislate on **dairy cows** and on **certain loopholes concerning the importation of personal effects relating to wildlife**. It is unacceptable to shoot lions in Africa and to bring them back as personal effects.

On **labelling of the country of origin** he fully agreed with the Commissioner and reminded again on the importance to include as well the labelling of processed meat. He looked forward to future initiatives in this regard.

Concerning the **revision of the public procurement policy** he stated that there is a clear will in the House that the Commission should consider the inclusion of animal welfare concerns. The revised policy should encourage people to procure meat products locally according to the Treaty's health and moral imperatives and without violating the whole logic of the internal market.

He regretted that the Commission would still not agree on the 8 hours transport time limit for animals destined for slaughter. This would facilitate the implementation of the Animal Transport Regulation because many of the violations to the law happen in staging points where the lorries stop during long distance transports.

Commissioner Dalli was convinced that in case of a **revision of the Animal Transport legislation** the Commission would have a supportive partner in the European Parliament but the Council would still have difficulties to accept it, despite several Member States being in favour of a reviewing the Regulation.

On **labelling** he said that it has been quite easy to find a system for eggs as a distinction could be found according to the housing method. For pork this will be much more difficult. A good example for it is Parma ham which will be difficult to market with a label referring to the country of origin of the meat.

The whole concept of labelling consists in putting an emphasis on both protection and empowerment of consumers. The Commission needs the consumer's strength and influence on the market to make a change. For this, the consumer has to be provided with all required information and has to be educated to interpret it for her/his own particular situation. The Commission has to be in a position to collate the information that is needed by the consumers and has to take decisions which will allow policy makers and the industry to find the right methods to change their ways and practices. Animal welfare labelling is key. The Commission will have to see how the label is going to be so that it is informative but yet not overwhelming and how it can be used in the best way.

Concerning the **ban on sow stalls** the Commission has to make all possible efforts in 2012, to get timely compliance in all Member States as it will be much more difficult than it has been with the laying hens issue. This is why he wanted to publish the information about enforcement provided by the Member States so that also the European Parliament can put pressure on Member States to ensure compliance. It is something all EU institutions have to be committed to.

Concerning **dairy cows** he said that Commission is currently just listening to the problems that might justify the drafting of specific legislation.

He agreed with Carl Schlyter that the Commission should be more sensitive regarding **loopholes applying to personal effects**. The definition of personal effects needs to be better fine-tuned.

Commissioner Dalli was convinced that **public procurement** represents a concrete means to foster animal welfare friendly products and he committed to raise the issue with the other Commission DGs.

Coming back to the issue of **animal transport** he stressed that in principle he would not be against a revision of the current legislation but before the Commission has to understand what is doable.

On **cosmetics** the Commission will issue a report on the current situation. The position is not to extend the deadlines as it would be futile especially if no other solutions are in view. Extending a deadline is simply postponing a decision – he said. The Commission will be making suggestions and will be proportionate and objective taking into account the latest scientific knowledge.

Anna Rosbach (ECR, DK) came back to the issue of animal transport and made the link with human health. Animals that have been transported over long distances are full of stress hormones and thus their meat cannot be very healthy for humans. The solution could be to slaughter more and more animals locally, and to use **mobile slaughterhouses** where possible. Referring to Parma ham, she could not understand why it should be a problem to indicate the country of origin of the meat as this would not harm the image of the end product. Concerning the education of consumers she said that the media could play a very positive role in promoting local and animal welfare friendly produce.

Commissioner Dalli agreed that slaughtering at the place of origin is something that has to be promoted in future. Mobile slaughterhouses are however not the solution mainly for hygiene and health reasons. Defining “the country of origin” as the place of rearing rather than of slaughter is the solution. This would have very beneficial effects on the reduction of animal transport. He also agreed that involving the media and broad casting in the education process of consumers would be very helpful and effective to change people’s life style and mind sets.

Marit Paulsen (ALDE, SE) inquired if the Commission services would all more or less agree among each other when it comes to animal welfare concerns. The European Commission has a big problem on how to support farmers to change to more animal welfare friendly housing systems. She was aware that this would fall more under the portfolio of the Commissioner for Agriculture but wanted to know whether Commissioner Dalli and Commissioner Ciolos would be in agreement on animal welfare concerns. She emphasised that a happy animal makes the job for the farmer easier and a healthy animal is always a more profitable animal.

Commissioner Dalli replied that Commissioner Ciolos is on board when it comes to animal welfare concerns and that the Commission services coordinate and cooperate well on this issue. He stressed that in many Member States EU funds are already available for farmers who would like to build more animal welfare friendly housing systems.

Dan Jørgensen (S&D, DK) said that all could agree on the fact that the strategy contains many positive aspects. However, for citizens engaged in animal welfare the strategy lacks concrete and specific action points. He asked which animal species in Europe’s suffers the most today, so that urgent action is needed to change their condition.

Commissioner Dalli replied that he would not have a listing of animals that suffer the most. There are many animal species for which the conditions could be improved. An example for it is pet animals. In this area the Commission should be starting to get a better understanding of what the problems are that have to be addressed. He stressed not to be too pessimistic about animal welfare in the European Union as a lot has been already achieved. There has been enormous progress in the way people are looking at the issue. The reality is that any improvement calls for further improvements which have to be encouraged. The European Union can step by step push the boundaries on animal welfare further. The Commission is there to foster this process with the assistance and advice of the European Parliament.

Carl Schlyter (Greens/EFA, SE) said that some years ago the Eurobarometer carried out a survey which highlighted that for European citizens the biggest animal welfare concern was the intensive rearing of broilers. The European Parliament wanted better housing standards for these birds but unfortunately the Council ignored this call and agreed on lower standards. He inquired what the Commission can do to make sure that the weakened broiler legislation is properly enforced.

Commissioner Dalli ensured that the Commission will push for the implementation of the broiler legislation. He promised to have a closer look at the issue and to possibly meet again in a month time to discuss it.

Closing remarks

No Intergroup meeting will be held during the February Plenary session in Strasbourg but on Wednesday 29 February the Intergroup will hold an early morning session with Matte Gjerskov, the Danish Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries which will give the opportunity to discuss the animal welfare related programme of the Danish Presidency.

Members of the European Parliament (14)

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Jørgensen, Dan (President)	S&D	DK
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Liotard Kartika Tamara (Vice-President)	GUE/NGL	NL
Paulsen, Marit (Honorary Secretary)	ALDE	SE
Reimers, Britta	ALDE	DE
Rosbach, Anna	ECR	DK
Schlyter, Carl (Honorary President)	Greens/EFA	SE
Wojciechowski, Janusz (Vice-President)	ECR	PL
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Guest Speaker and Observers (67)

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Schons, Hans-Peter	ADT e.V. –Arbeitsverband deutscher Tierzüchter
Fernández Augustín, Laura	ASAJA, EU Officer
Strupp-Hundenborn, Kristin	BMELV –German Ministry, food, Agriculture, Consumers
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Saint Leger, F.	Breiz Europe Policy Officer
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Busquet, François	CAAT - EU Policy Coordinator
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Ferrara, Maria	European Commission, DG SANCO G3
Gavinelli, Andrea	European Commission, DG SANCO G3
Simonin, Denis	European Commission, DG SANCO G3
Vassallo, Harry	European Commission Cabinet Commissioner Dalli,
Soto, Emma	European Parliament, AGRI Secretariat
Miczki, Tamara	European Parliament, Official,
Cuvellier, Sarah	EUROPTIMUM CONSEIL, Consultant
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Semaille, Marie-Laurence	Fédération wallonne Agriculture, Consultant
Granados Chapatte, Ana	FWA, Consultant
Floren, Karolina	General Veterinary Inspectorate, Poland
Swabe, Joanna	Humane Society International, EU Director
Jones, Mark	Humane Society International, UK Director
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Slee, Barbara	IFAW Political officer
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Van de Velde, Benny	IFOAM, EU Group
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Porkola, Vilho	Maaseudun Tulevaisuus, Journalist
Manninen, Marjukka	MTK -Rural Professionals
Fischinger, Gertraud	Permanent Representation of Austria
Malena, Milan	Permanent Representation of Czech Republic
Jansson, Kerstin	Permanent Representation of Finland
Korpilo, Berit	Permanent Representation of Finland
Kilgallen, Brian	Permanent Representation of Ireland to the E.U.,
Zilvinas Ilevicius	Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU

Prandota, Jan	Permanent Representation of Poland
Kain, Iain	Permanent Representation of Slovenia
Sanchez, Ruben	Permanent Representation of Spain
Van der Sande, Wim	Permanent Representation of the Netherlands
Quinteros, Katherine	Permanent Representation of the United Kingdom
Moser, Eleonora	Pet behaviourist
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Dalton, Dan	Political Advisor ECR Group AGRI
Wylie, Daniel	Political Advisor Greens/EFA
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