

29 September 2023

Informal Council of the European Union on October 6: Revision of European Legislation on Animal Welfare

Dear Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson,

We, Djurens Rätt, World Animal Protection Sverige, Svenska Djurskyddsföreningen and Djurskyddet Sverige, along with Eurogroup for Animals - the pan-European animal advocacy organisation of which we are members - are writing to request your support in ensuring that the commitments made by the European Union in the field of animal welfare are upheld.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the Commission is currently working on four proposals aimed at revising the legislation on animal welfare. The need for such an overhaul is indisputable, with even the Commission stating in its "Fitness Check" that the existing legislation is no longer aligned with the objectives pursued. Dating back several decades, it no longer reflects the current state of scientific knowledge.

You will be participating in the Informal Council of Heads of State and Government on October 6 in Grenada. We understand that the agenda for this meeting will be extensive, covering numerous issues of great importance to the European Union. Nevertheless, we hope that you can find a moment to informally address the matter of revising animal welfare legislation with the President of the European Commission.

The Commission's publication of legislative proposals is still pending. This revision represents a dual opportunity for the EU and its Member States. In many respects, Sweden has gone further than other Member States in terms of animal welfare. Representatives from the Swedish government have on several occasions referred to this fact and expressed that the new animal welfare legislation at EU level is long awaited. At the last AGRIFISH meeting on September 18, a number of countries raised concerns over the delay in publishing the animal welfare proposals. It is now of utmost importance for Sweden to join the group of countries advocating for an animal welfare legislation that is fit for purpose.

This revision is eagerly awaited by the citizens of the Union. The [Eurobarometer](#) survey published on the subject in 2016 shows that 94% of Europeans consider animal protection important, 89% would like legislation to compel individuals using animals for commercial purposes to care for them, and 93% would like imported products to meet the same animal welfare standards as those applied within the Union. In the Future of Europe consultation, one in seven citizens placed animal welfare among the priorities for the Union, and out of the ten European Citizens' Initiatives (ECIs) that succeeded, six are related to animal welfare.

Particularly noteworthy are the ECIs calling on Europe to ban cages and fur farming and farmed fur trade, which garnered over 1.4 and 1.5 million signatures, respectively. For both of these initiatives, the Swedish public provided far more signatures than required by the procedure (five times more for the cage-related initiative and almost seven times more for the fur-related one).

Proposing ambitious new legislation on animal welfare without further delay is, therefore, a matter of democracy for the Union and its Member States just a few months before the elections.

Furthermore, this revision presents an opportunity to ensure sustainable growth in the European agricultural sector. First and foremost, this is a matter of competitiveness. On the global market, the European Union cannot compete by "lowering the bar." Strong ethical standards, particularly regarding animal welfare, contribute to the success of our businesses and exports.

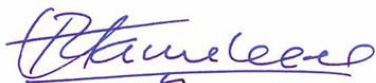
Ensuring such standards comes with a cost, but this cost is far outweighed by the costs of inaction. A recent study by the Impact Institute demonstrates that the external costs of European animal-based production and consumption are approximately 7.7 times higher than their economic values. These external costs are related to diet-related diseases, air pollution, and land use, among other factors.

Delaying this revision would economically affect citizens and small businesses alike.

On behalf of our movement and millions of citizens, we kindly request that you take advantage of the informal meeting of Heads of State and Government on October 6 to remind the European Commission of the importance of moving forward promptly on this matter.

Sincerely,


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