

Vice-President Timmermans
Commissioner Wojciechowski
Commissioner Kyriakides
European Commission
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Belgium



Marija Vučković
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Brussels, 20 March 2020

COVID-19: Transport of live animals between Member States and to third countries

Dear President of the Agriculture Council, Commission Vice-President Timmermans, and Commissioners Kyriakides and Wojciechowski,

We hereby turn to you as Members of the European Parliament expressing our concern over the increased animal welfare and public health risks linked to cross-border transport of live animals amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have received news from all over Europe about the increasingly worrisome situation of live animals stuck in long queues at borders between Member States and between the latter and third countries.

We have noted that the Commission's *Guidelines for border management measures* include the recommendation for Member States to set up 'green lanes' to ensure the unobstructed transport of 'priority goods', which may include 'essential goods', such as livestock. Unfortunately, it appears that these non-binding recommendations are at present not able to prevent severe delays in the transport of live animals.

Insisting on continued transport of live animals between Member States and to third countries despite these increased delays is incompatible with Article 13 TFEU, which requires the European institutions to pay "*full regard to the welfare requirements of animals*" when formulating and implementing policies on the internal market, agriculture and transport; it appears to be clear that, given the current circumstances, general compliance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations cannot be guaranteed.

Furthermore, insisting on the continuation of long-distance animal transport despite the above described circumstances holds severe risks for public health. Long border delays result in increased stress and heightened disease risk for the animals, leading to a heightened risk of

zoonoses being spread. In addition, persons involved in the long-distance transport of live animals, namely drivers, vessel crews, animal handlers, officials from the competent authorities and veterinarians, border crossing personnel, and loading/unloading personnel, are all at risk of getting contaminated by and/or spreading Covid-19. In the current context, the European Union should avoid adding any further threats to public health and any additional pressure on already overburdened national health systems.

On Thursday, March 19 you received a letter from 35 European NGOs, which described the worsening congestion at many internal and external borders of the European Union and which asked you to take the appropriate temporary measures to prevent a wave of severe non-compliance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005.

We fully adhere to this letter and urge you to consider urgently adopting the 3 recommended temporary measures, namely:

- **Suspending all exports by land and by sea of live farm animals to non-EU countries.**
- **Suspending all transport of live farm animals on journeys over 8 hours between Member States.**
- **Ensuring rapid communication between Chief Veterinary Officers and National Contact Points to help livestock organisers avoid border crossings with long queues or refusal of entry by certain countries.**

We understand how challenging these times are, however, we call on you to act in accordance with Article 13 and 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and take all necessary measures to avoid mass non-compliance with Regulation 1/2005.

We thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

MEP Tilly Metz
MEP Francisco Guerreiro
MEP Sylwia Spurek
MEP Maria Noichl
MEP Niels Fuglsang
MEP Anja Hazekamp
MEP Eleonora Evi
MEP Pascal Durand
MEP Martin Hojsik
MEP Klaus Buchner
MEP Emil Radev
MEP Petras Auštrevičius
MEP Petra De Sutter
MEP Sarah Wiener
MEP Thomas Waitz
MEP Saskia Bricmont
MEP Anna Deparnay-Gutenberg
MEP Ernest Urtasun

MEP Marc Angel
MEP Jytte Guteland
MEP Günther Sidl
MEP Clare Daly
MEP Urmas Paet
MEP Leszek Miller
MEP Virgine Joron
MEP Nikolaj Villumsen
MEP Martin Buschmann
MEP Michal Wiezik
MEP Manuel Bompard
MEP François Alfonsi
MEP Benoît Biteau
MEP Damien Carême
MEP David Cormand
MEP Karima Delli
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MEP Yannick Jadot
MEP Michèle Rivasi
MEP Caroline Roose
MEP Mounir Satouri
MEP Marie Toussaint
MEP Salima Yenbou
MEP Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield