

Factual summary report of the online public consultation in support to the fitness check and revision of the EU animal welfare legislation

This document should be regarded solely as a summary of the contributions made by stakeholders in the context of the public consultation on the fitness check and revision of the EU animal welfare legislation. It cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission or its services. Responses to the consultation activities cannot be considered as a representative sample of the views of the EU population.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATION

The public consultation (PC) aimed to collect views from stakeholders and citizens in support of the fitness check and revision of the EU animal welfare legislation. The consultation ran from 15 October 2021 until 21 January 2022 (14 weeks) on the Commission's "Have your say" portal.

Animal welfare is a cornerstone of sustainable food production. Therefore, under the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission committed to revise the current EU animal welfare legislation by 2023, and to consider options for animal welfare labelling. The objective is to improve animal welfare and broaden the scope of the legislation, by aligning it with the latest scientific evidence, current political priorities and public expectations – all while making the legislation easier to enforce.

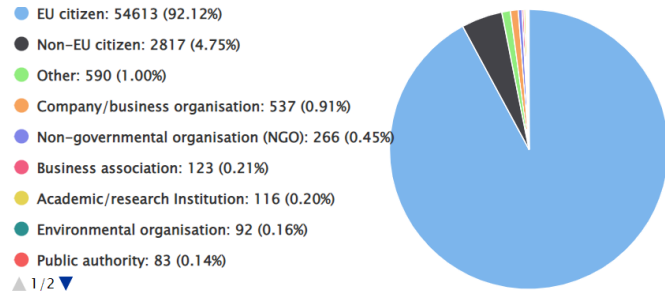
The PC provided an important opportunity to collect views and experiences both on the fitness of the current EU animal welfare legislation, as well as on possible options on how to improve and complement the existing provisions.

2. INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

A total of 59 281 respondents have contributed to the public consultation. While a handful of identical written replies have been submitted, there is currently no evidence of a campaign or coordinated responses of scale. However, the process of moderating the replies received is still ongoing due to the very high number of contributions.

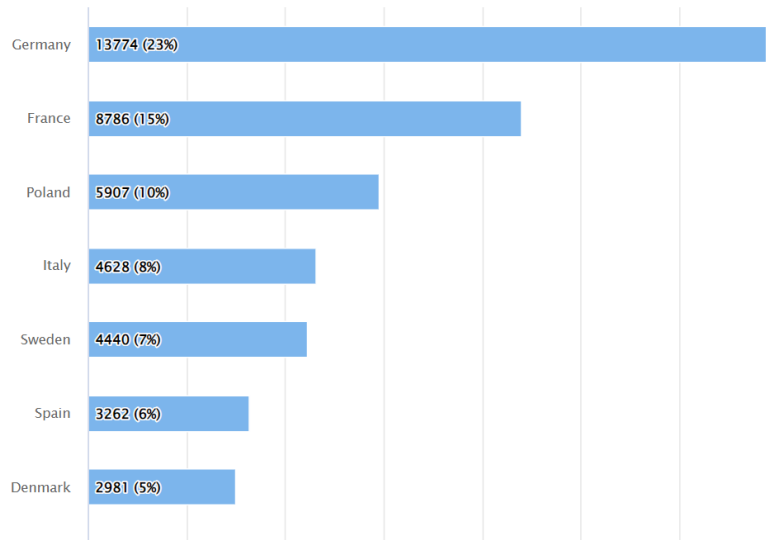
Of these responses, 54 611 came from EU citizens (92%), and 2 817 from non-EU citizens (5%). The other 1 856 respondents can be broken down as follows: 116 academics/researchers; 123 business associations; 537 companies/business organisations; 266 NGOs, 103 organisations (11 consumer organisations and 92 environmental organisations); 83 public authorities; 38 trade unions and 590 other (i.e. respondents who identified themselves under this group).

By category of respondent



All EU Member States are represented among the contributions with the majority of respondents from Germany (23%), France (15%), Poland (10%), Italy (8%) Sweden (7%), Spain (6%) and Denmark (5%).

By country



The non-EU countries most represented among the contributions are United Kingdom (2%) and Norway (2%), but contributions also came from e.g. Switzerland, United States, Ukraine, Canada, Australia, Russia, Argentina, Colombia, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Belarus, New Zealand, China, South Korea, Israel, Gambia, Kazakhstan, Japan, Iran, Gabon, Cuba, Fiji, Afghanistan, Vatican City.

The PC questionnaire was available in 23 official languages. While 25% (14 917 out of 59 281) of the replies were provided in German, contributions were also provided in other languages, in

particular French (16% - 9 269 out of 59 281), Polish (10% - 5 681 out of 59 281) and English (9% - 5 256 out of 59 281).

3. PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF THE REPLIES

The public consultation questionnaire contained 13 questions (and numerous sub-questions), of which 4 concerned the functioning of the current EU animal welfare rules, and 9 the possible options to revise the current legislation.

Fitness Check

Approximately half of the respondents (49% - 28 875 out of 59 281) perceived or strongly perceived that compared to 25 years ago, there is **more uniform protection of farmed animals** across EU countries. A vast majority (80% - 526 out of 660) of business associations and companies agreed or strongly agreed with such claim, while this was the case for 48% (26 077 out of 54 611) of EU citizens. Academic/research institutions largely agreed with this statement (60% - 70 out of 116) and so did non-EU citizens (59% - 1 661 out of 2 817) and public authorities (57% - 47 out of 83).

An overwhelming majority (92% - 54 504 of 59 281) of the respondents thought that the current EU animal welfare legislation does **not ensure adequate and uniform protection of all animal species in need**. This view was strongly expressed also by non-EU citizens (95% - 2 665 out of 2 817) and NGO's (93% - 248 out of 266), and largely shared by consumer and environmental organisations (84% - 87 out of 103) and with a lesser extent academic/research institutions (77% - 89 out of 116).

The picture is clearly mixed when it comes to whether increased animal welfare has **contributed to a more sustainable food system**. A clear majority of public authorities (61% - 51 out of 83) did not consider that the current EU animal welfare legislation meets the future challenges in relation to sustainable food production. A similar view was expressed by 57% (59 out of 103) of the consumer and environmental organisations, and by approximately half of EU citizens (43% - 23 200 out of 54 611). However, a majority of business associations and companies (78% - 348 out of 660), NGOs (58% - 153 out of 266), and academics (60% - 70 out of 116) believed that increased animal welfare has contributed to a more sustainable food system.

Almost half of all respondents (48%) perceived that having common rules on animal welfare has **facilitated trade and improved competition** in Europe. This view was strongly shared among NGO's (67% - 177 out of 266) and academics (53% - 62 out of 116), but only by 51% (337 out of 660) of the business associations and companies and less than half (41% - 42 out of 103) of the consumer and environmental organisations

A majority (66% - 39 024 of 59 281) of the respondents believed that the current EU animal welfare legislation does **not ensure that businesses can compete fairly** across the EU. This view

was expressed by a clear majority of NGO's (77% - 205 out of 266) and academics (55% - 64 out of 116). Yet, responses from companies and business associations/organisations were mixed: while 47% (310 out of 660) believed that it indeed does ensure a fair competition, 46% (306 out of 660) disagreed. Similarly, of the trade unions, 47% (18 out of 38) considered that the current EU animal welfare legislation ensures that businesses can compete fairly across the EU, while 34% (13 out of 38) disagreed.

A majority (65%) of the respondents felt or strongly felt that they are **not sufficiently informed** about the conditions under which animals are farmed in the EU. This view was shared by 84% (46 032 out of 54 611) of the EU citizens. A majority of EU citizens (59% - 31944 out of 54 611) also believed or strongly believed that rules and requirements on animal welfare are (too) complex for consumers to understand.

A clear majority of the public authorities (64% - 53 out of 83) considered that the current EU animal welfare requirements **are not easy to apply** and that it is **not clear** how they should be applied. A vast majority (70% - 58 out of 83) of them considered that **more inspections and controls** by national authorities to be important or very important to help improve animal welfare in the EU.

Policy options for the future

Welfare at farm level

A vast majority (89% - 52 593 out of 59 281) of respondents considered that specific **welfare requirements for extra animal species** should be introduced. Of these species, reference was mostly made to dairy cows (85% - 50 411 out of 59 281) and beef cattle (84% - 49 892 out of 59 281) but several other species received a high response, including cats (79% - 47 064 out of 59 281) and dogs (80% - 47 272 out of 59 281). Fur animals received a lower response rate, e.g. minks (57% - 33 674 out of 59 281) and foxes (56% - 32 941 out of 59 281).

Most respondents were in favour of prohibiting **tail-docking of pigs** (84% - 49 862 out of 59 281). While a vast majority of EU citizens (85% - 46 369 out of 54 611), consumer and environmental organisations (81% - 83 out of 103), non EU-citizens (90% - 2 546 out of 2 817) are in favour of a ban, only 42% (35 out of 83) of public authorities and 18% (118 out of 660) of business organisations support such a measure.

Concerning the **phasing out the use of cages** a vast majority of respondents (93% - 55 001 out of 59 281) expressed that the maximum transitional time allowed should be 5 years for sows, laying hens, calves, rabbits, pullets, broiler breeders, layer breeders, quails, ducks, and geese. Depending on the animal species concerned, between 40% (267 out of 660) and 48% (315 out of 660) of business organisations expressed that the maximum time allowed should be 15 years for all animals mentioned.

Welfare during transport

A vast majority of respondents (95% - 56 547 out of 59 281) were in favour of introducing **maximum journey times** to (better) protect animals. The lowest support was by business organisations and companies but still at 53% (347 out of 660).

A vast majority of respondents (94% - 55 564 out of 59 281) also considered that **the export of live animals** to non-EU countries for slaughter should be prohibited. Such an option was supported by one-third of the business organisations (32% -211 out of 660).

Similarly, a vast majority of respondents (94% - 55 789 out of 59 281) were in favour of a prohibition on **the transport of unweaned calves and other vulnerable animals**, such as pregnant cows. This view was shared by 20% (131 out of 660) of business organisations.

Welfare at slaughter

A vast majority of the respondents (89% - 52 957 out of 59 281) believed that **electrical water bath stunning** for poultry should be prohibited (after a transition period), while approximately half of the business organisations believed it should not (51% - 331 out of 660). Public authorities' views were mixed, with 37% (31 out of 83) claiming the prohibition, 31% (26 out of 83) against it, and 31% (26 out of 83) did not know.

Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of respondents was in favour of the prohibition of **the killing of one-day old male chicks** (94% - 55 434 out of 59 281), including public authorities (72% - 60 out of 83)). Yet, approximately half of the business organisations (48% - 319 out of 660) was against.

Similarly, 93% (55 362 out of 59 281) of respondents were in favour of adopting **specific rules for killing farmed fish**. One-third (35% - 232 out of 660) of business organisations were against.

Consumer information

All categories of respondents believed that an **EU animal welfare label** would be a useful tool for informing consumers on the conditions in which animals are treated (90% of all respondents, i.e. 53 128 out of 59 281).

A vast majority (83% - 49 212 out of 59 281) of all respondents expressed that the label should be based on broader **animal welfare criteria**, including requirements on animal transport and slaughter.