

**To:**  
**Commissioners Kyriakides and Wojciechowski**  
**European Commission**  
**B-1049 Brussels, Belgium**

**Please reply to:**  
**Animal Politics Foundation**  
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**1012RZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

Subject: Live animal transports

15th of April 2021

Dear Commissioners Kyriakides and Wojciechowski,

We, politicians from all over the world, call on the European Commission to take immediate steps to ensure effective protection of animals during long-distance transport. Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU stipulates that, as sentient beings, full regard should be paid to animal welfare requirements. However, time and time again, it has been shown that this fundamental part of the EU treaties is being ignored in the case of long-distance live animal transport. We ask the European Commission to act with the urgency appropriate to such situations involving the life and death of sentient beings.

Millions of animals are transported annually, both within the [European Union](#) and to [third countries](#). Animals are transported in terrible conditions, on journeys that can last several days, weeks or even months. They are [crammed](#) inside often [dirty](#) vehicles (trucks, vessels, and airplanes), suffer from [high temperatures](#), dehydration, a lack of ventilation and stress. Many die during the journey.

The recent tragedies on board the Queen Hind, Karim Allah and Elbeik vessels show it is time to take action. In all these cases, contingency plans were lacking, massive and severe animal suffering and the death of thousands of animals as a result.

COVID-19 has worsened the situation: animals are regularly stuck at borders, sometimes with more than a 12-hour delay. There is a higher probability that ships or trucks will not be allowed to unload due to the closing of borders.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic confirmed what virologists have been [saying for years](#): that the livestock industry (including the mass transport of live animals) makes the EU extra vulnerable to zoonotic diseases and new pandemics. We therefore stress the importance of the European Commission taking measures to decrease that risk and to act quickly on the issue of live animal transport.

The aforementioned recent disasters with animal transports are not isolated cases. Multiple reports, audits and videos show that repeated infringements of EU regulations and the suffering of animals during transport is commonplace and that this is a structural issue.

It is clear that the Council regulation (EC) N°1/2005 is failing to protect animals during transport: journeys are too long, too many exceptions are granted, conditions are not compatible with animal needs, checks are not effective and violations are not sanctioned. This has been going on for years, despite calls from European citizens for this to end.

The European Parliament has [repeatedly](#) made it clear that it wants this situation to end, but the European Commission has been failing to act. This does not only go against EU regulations, but also against European values.

We call on the European Commission to:

- ban live animal exports to non-EU countries ([following the example of New Zealand](#), where the government has just banned live animal exports);
- suspend all transport of live animals on journeys over 8 hours (between place of departure and final destination), as requested by MEPs in 2012 already, after the same call was made by EU citizens;
- ban the transport of unweaned or pregnant animals;
- ask member states not to grant any new EU authorisations to ships that transport animals;
- urgently compile a list of operators who have committed serious and repeated offences and share it with national authorities, as requested by the European Parliament in 2019 already;
- withdraw the certificates of approval of the vessels Elbeik and Karim Allah and notify all member states of this decision;
- conduct an audit to investigate the cases of the Elbeik and Karim Allah, including verification of the compliance of the slaughter process with regulation (EC) No. 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing;
- and hold member states involved accountable for violating animal welfare regulations and Council regulation N°1/2005 by means of infringement procedures.

We respectfully urge you to take the steps set out above. The fate of millions of lives is in your hands.

Yours sincerely,

Le Parti animaliste (France)

Anja Hazekamp, Party for the Animals/Partij voor de Dieren (The Netherlands)

Laura Duarte, PACMA (Spain)

Vanessa Hudson, Animal Welfare Party (United Kingdom)

Kyriacos Kyriacou, Animal Party Cyprus (Cyprus)

Tatu Chanth, Eläinoikeuspuolue (Finland)

Robert Gabel, Partei Mensch Umwelt Tierschutz (Germany)

Lars Corvinus Olesen, Veganerpartiet (Denmark)

André Silva, PAN -Pessoas-Animais-Natureza (Portugal)

Therese Ericsson, Djurens parti (Sweden)  
Constance Adonis Villalon, DierAnimal (Belgium)  
Cristiano Ceriello, Partito Animalista Italiano (Italy)  
Bruce Poon, Animal Justice Party (Australia)  
Liz White, Animal Protection Party of Canada (Canada)  
Carol V Johnson, Party for Animal Welfare (Ireland)  
Dimitris Petrou, Cristina Pappi, Κόμμα για τα Ζώα (Greece)  
Pini Ziser, Tsedek La Kol, Justice for all (Israel)  
Frank Alarcón, ANIMAIS (Brazil)

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## **RECENT CASES**

### ***The Al Shuwaikh***

In 2019, the Dutch Party for the Animals opposed the transport of sheep from Romania by the controversial transporter KLTT. Before the Al Shuwaikh vessel's departure, the party warned that in the previous year, KLTT had been responsible for the death of 2,400 sheep during a journey to Australia. Despite this resistance and various warnings, including warnings from the European Commission, Romania let the ship sail. Thousands of sheep died on the journey due to heat and dehydration.

### ***The Queen Hind***

Last November, the Queen Hind vessel, carrying 14.600 sheep from Romania to Saudi Arabia, sank off the Romanian port of Midia. Only 180 sheep were rescued. Further numbers died from exhaustion and injuries after being rescued. Hidden decks were found inside the vessel with hundreds of extra animals loaded on, resulting in severe overcrowding. Reports suspect that the vessel capsized due to overloading. Romanian authorities allowed the vessel to sail and approved the journey log. In accordance with Council regulation N°1/2005, a transport like this should never have been authorised by a member state.

### ***The Karim Allah and Elbeik***

Last December, vessels Karim Allah and Elbeik left from Spain to Turkey with 895 and 1776 bovines, ovines and caprines on board respectively. The vessels wandered at sea for over 2 months, with some member states refusing them entry to their ports because of a mere suspicion of bluetongue outbreak in the zone of departure. The animals lacked food, water, ventilation and even straw. Many died on board during the journey. When Spanish authorities finally allowed the vessels to return to Spain, the animals on board were found in such a terrible condition that they were considered unfit for any further transport and a decision was quickly made to slaughter them. No veterinarians were allowed on board to check the animals' condition and confirm whether they suffered from bluetongue disease or not. Something that remains unclear to this day, as the port authority has so far withheld any test results.

In their inspection report, Spanish veterinary authorities confirmed the poor general state of the animals : « it is possible to observe a considerable loss of weight, [...] ribs and vertebrae are visible to the naked eye, and dehydration was evident as well [...] some of these cachectic animals have been found in a stuporous state, being unable to open their eyes and react to stimulus". Veterinarians also reported that the vessel was overloaded, and that animals had their hooves covered by faeces and urine and had no dry and clean areas to lay down in. They showed signs of prolonged suffering, cachexia, and of dermatological, ophthalmological

and mobility problems.

A report by [Spanish government veterinarians](#), published on the website of the animal welfare organisation [Igualdad Animal](#) described the suffering the young cows endured.

On Thursday, March 25, Spanish authorities began to kill the remaining 1600 animals that had suffered for months on the Elbeik. The slaughter took place in the port of Cartagena, where improvised slaughter areas had been set up. It is not known how the Spanish authorities treated the animals whilst still onboard, awaiting their death. It is also unknown how the animals were killed. Their slaughter was carried out with such speed that it is difficult to imagine that the animal welfare guidelines were followed, as set out in the Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

### ***Blockage in the Suez Canal***

At the end of March, around 20 vessels carrying live animals, which had departed from Romania and Spain, were caught up in the Suez canal blockage that occurred after the container ship Ever Given became stuck and blocked the canal for several days. Some of these livestock vessels left their port of departure even after it was known that the Suez Canal was blocked. Although the canal was eventually cleared of the original blockage, it took many additional days before the other ships that had been caught up in the blockage reached their destination. According to animal welfare organisations, the blockage likely resulted in food shortages for the animals on board, which could lead to yet another tragedy affecting around 130.000 animals.