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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Updating animal welfare legislation in the EU
– *Information from the Danish delegation, on behalf of the Belgian, Danish, German, Netherlands and Swedish delegations*

Delegations will find in Annex an information note submitted by the Danish delegation, on behalf of the Belgian, Danish, German, Netherlands and Swedish delegations on the above mentioned subject to be raised under "Any other business" at the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 11-12 October 2021.

Updating animal welfare legislation in the EU

Information from the Belgian, Danish, German, Dutch and Swedish delegations

Animal welfare is receiving increasing attention from both the European citizens and the political level in the EU. In the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission pledges to revise the European animal welfare legislation "...to align it with the latest scientific evidence, broaden its scope, make it easier to enforce and ultimately ensure a higher level of animal welfare."

The Ministers responsible for animal welfare in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, strongly support revising the animal welfare legislation in the EU, also in relation to the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "End the Cage Age", and find that it is a window of opportunity to rethink the entire framework, which in many ways is outdated.

In order to uphold focus on animal welfare legislation in the EU, as well as to ensure that the coming revision is ambitious, a position paper on a new EU legislative frame for animal welfare focusing on the keeping of animals has been sent to the Commission in September 2021.

The main purpose with the position paper is to emphasize the importance of ensuring that a new legislative frame for animal welfare is ambitious and that it includes:

- 1) An update of current legislation according to new scientific evidence, and also taking into account areas, where practical experience has identified enforcement problems due to too general or imprecise provisions.
- 2) New specific legislation for animals that are kept or traded in the context of economic activity, and where there is currently only very general legislation or no legislation.

The Belgian, Danish, German, Dutch and Swedish delegations are of the firm opinion that the future EU legislation on animal welfare must cover at least the main species kept or traded in the context of economic activity. Thus, not only farm animals but also certain aspects concerning companion animals, such as dogs and cats must be included in the future EU legislation on animal welfare. This opinion is also in line with the Council conclusions on animal welfare from December 2019. However, in the position paper of the signatory Member States priority is given to updated or new species specific legislation on the welfare of pigs, laying hens, including breeders, pullets, broilers, including breeders, calves, dairy cows, rabbits and turkeys.

Furthermore, as the Commission has already stated on previous occasions, priority must be given to properly enforce the existing EU legislation on animal welfare.

Finally, revising the EU legislation on transport and slaughter of animals are equally important topics, which will also be addressed at a later stage.
