



Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans  
Commissioner Stella Kyriakides  
Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski  
European Commission, Berlaymont  
Rue de la Loi 200, 1000 Brussels

8 October 2020

### **'End the Cage Age' European Citizens' Initiative**

Dear Executive Vice-President Timmermans,

Dear Commissioners Kyriakides and Wojciechowski,

The European Commission has just received the successful **'End the Cage Age'** European Citizens' Initiative, with **1.4 million verified signatures** collected from all across the EU. The Initiative, supported by over 170 organisations from across the EU, calls on the EU to ban all cages for farmed animals: laying hens, rabbits, sows, calves, quail, ducks, geese, pullets and broiler breeders.

**We, the undersigned cross-party MEPs, urge you to phase out the use of cages for farm animals.**

The EU has pioneered certain bans on cages for farm animals: a partial ban on veal crates in 2007, a ban on the barren battery cages for egg-laying hens in 2012, and a partial ban on the sow stall in 2013. From 2021, cages will be prohibited in all organic farming throughout the EU.

Nonetheless, every year **over 300 million animals** in the EU still spend all, or a significant part, of their lives imprisoned in cages. Egg-laying hens and rabbits raised for meat are kept in space about the area of an A4 sheet of paper, and almost all sows spend half of every year inside cages, in which they cannot even turn around. This causes tremendous suffering, as these sentient beings cannot perform most of their natural behaviours.

The lack of EU leadership on abolishing all cages for farmed animals has resulted in many EU Member States introducing national legislation that goes beyond the minimum EU standards:

- In **Austria**, 'enriched' cages for laying hens and cages for meat rabbits have been banned.

- In **Belgium**, rabbits raised for meat and breeding females will no longer be kept in cages by 2025.
- In **Denmark**, sow stalls may only be used for 3 days after insemination in new pig housing and this will apply to all systems by 2035.
- In **Germany**, enriched cages for laying hens will be illegal from 2025, barren cages for rabbits will be illegal from 2024, sow stalls will be illegal from 2028 and the use of farrowing crates will be limited to 5 days by 2035-2037.
- **Luxembourg** has banned all 'enriched' cages for laying hens.
- The **Netherlands** has banned barren cages for rabbits and only permits sow stalls for the first four days after insemination.
- In **Slovakia**, a memorandum between the agriculture ministry, employers and poultry workers commits to a phase-out of cages for laying hens by 2030.
- **Sweden** has banned all cages for sows – both sow stalls and farrowing crates.

The EU needs to harmonise these different standards in order to ensure a level-playing field for our farmers. We expect the EU Commission to ensure that all products imported into the EU meet these standards. This harmonisation must be done to the highest possible common denominator in order to ensure an effective transition to sustainable food systems.

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted that industrial farming practices and the destruction of natural habitats pose a risk of the emergence of new pandemics. We must thus stop supporting intensive farming practices, like caged farming, and create resilient food systems instead.

Farmers should not be expected to bear the costs of transition alone. The European Commission and Member States must ensure appropriate funding mechanisms, such as the Common Agricultural Policy and revenues from taxation, to assist farmers in the transition.

Consumers have repeatedly shown their willingness to pay a higher price for higher welfare products. A higher price for animal products will also help support the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, who face a fierce competition by factory farms in Europe and beyond.

The current 'Farm to Fork' strategy outlines the plan of the EU Commission to review animal welfare legislation, yet it does not explicitly commit to re-examine the different farming systems animals are raised in, including cages.

These are challenging times. We urge you to act in accordance with Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and introduce legislation to end the inhumane practice of farming animals in cages. This would bring EU agricultural practices more in line with the science of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and closer to the expectations of EU citizens.

We thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

MEP Eleonora Evi  
MEP Anja Hazekamp

MEP Martin Hojsik  
MEP Stelios Kouloglou  
MEP Fabio Massimo Castaldo  
MEP Mario Furore  
MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen  
MEP Maria Noichl  
MEP Marie Toussaint  
MEP Sylwia Spurek  
MEP Francisco Guerreiro  
MEP Tilly Metz  
MEP Manuel Bompard  
MEP Petras Auštrevičius  
MEP Manuela Ripa  
MEP Pär Holmgren  
MEP Alice Kuhnke  
MEP Jakop Dalunde  
MEP David Cormand  
MEP Chrysoula Zacharopoulou  
MEP Malin Björk  
MEP Marisa Matias  
MEP Niels Fuglsang  
MEP Younous Omarjee  
MEP Ville Niinistö  
MEP Piernicola Pedicini  
MEP Martin Buschmann  
MEP Günther Sidl  
MEP Sarah Wiener  
MEP Heidi Hautala  
MEP Annika Bruna  
MEP Ernest Urtasun  
MEP Alexis Georgoulis  
MEP Michal Wiezik  
MEP Francois Alfonsi  
MEP Karima Delli  
MEP Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield  
MEP Claude Gruffat  
MEP Yannick Jadot  
MEP Mounir Satouri  
MEP Caroline Roose  
MEP Salima Yenbou  
MEP Michèle Rivasi  
MEP Benoit Biteau  
MEP Damien Careme  
MEP Veronika Vrecionová  
MEP Mick Wallace  
MEP Manon Aubry  
MEP Pascal Durand  
MEP Saskia Bricmont

MEP Ivan Vilibor Sinčić  
MEP Jutta Paulus  
MEP Petri Sarvamaa  
MEP Alviina Alametsä  
MEP Ismail Ertug  
MEP Katalin Cseh  
MEP Elzbieta Kruk  
MEP Tanja Fajon  
MEP Fredrick Federley  
MEP Ignazio Corrao  
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MEP Margrete Auken  
MEP Kira Marie Peter-Hansen  
MEP Ioannis Lagos  
MEP Mohammed Chahim  
MEP Łukasz Kohut  
MEP Dimitrios Papadimoulis  
MEP Anne-Sophie Pelletier  
MEP Thomas Waitz  
MEP Zdzisław Krasnodębski  
MEP Sven Giegold  
MEP Marina Kaljurand  
MEP Sylvie Brunet  
MEP Silvia Modig  
MEP Daniel Freund  
MEP Giuseppe Ferrandino  
MEP Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg  
MEP Martin Häusling  
MEP Robert Biedroń  
MEP Niklas Nienaß  
MEP Michael Bloss  
MEP Rosa D'Amato  
MEP Helmut Scholz