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65. Suggests issuing a public call for tenders with a view to coordinating the administration of Europeana as effectively as possible, defining clear, realistic objectives and re-evaluating the operation if necessary;

66. Recommends to the Commission that it research the possibility of establishing a European body to coordinate the involvement of national authorities in monitoring the digitisation process, copyright payments to authors and other issues relevant to the Europeana project;

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67. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

Evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010

P7_TA(2010)0130

European Parliament resolution of 5 May 2010 on evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010 (2009/2202(INI))

(2011/C 81 E/05)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 23 January 2006 on a Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010 (COM(2006)0013),
- having regard to its resolution of 12 October 2006 on a Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010 ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 May 2008 on a new animal health strategy for the European Union 2007-2013 ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 May 2009 on the proposal for a Council Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which lays down that, in formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 28 October 2009 on options for animal welfare labelling and the establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals (COM(2009)0584),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 28 October 2009, 'A better functioning food supply chain in Europe' (COM(2009)0591),

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 308 E, 16.12.2006, p. 170.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 279 E, 19.11.2009, p. 89.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 303, 18.11.2009, p. 1.

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- having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A7-0053/2010),
- A. whereas animal health standards are of vital importance for the management of European livestock farming, as they are having an increasing impact on the level of competitiveness of farms,
- B. whereas any harmonisation of the protection of livestock in the Union must be accompanied by rules on imports with the same aim, in order to avoid placing European producers at a disadvantage on the European market,
- C. whereas every activity to protect and ensure the well-being of animals must be based on the principle that animals are sentient beings whose specific needs must be taken into account, and whereas animal welfare in the 21st century is an expression of our humanity and a challenge to European civilisation and culture,
- D. whereas the goal of an animal welfare strategy must be to ensure that proper account is taken of the increased costs which animal welfare generates, and whereas an ambitious animal welfare policy can only be partially successful without European and worldwide dialogue and without an aggressive policy of raising awareness and providing information inside and outside Europe about the advantages of high animal welfare standards, i.e. if it is developed unilaterally by the European Union,
- E. whereas, in order to further develop animal protection in the Community, it is necessary to step up research efforts and to integrate animal protection into all relevant impact assessments, as well as to involve all interest groups in the decision-making process; whereas the transparency, acceptance and uniform application of, and monitoring of compliance with, existing provisions at all levels are a prerequisite for a successful animal protection strategy in Europe,
- F. whereas in recent years Europe has enacted a wide range of animal welfare laws and achieved one of the world's highest levels of animal welfare,
- G. whereas, in its resolution of 2006, Parliament asked the Commission to submit a report on the development of animal welfare policy before it presented the next Action Plan and to include animal welfare in all fields of its international negotiation agenda,
- H. whereas, back in 2006, Parliament highlighted the need to improve information to citizens on animal welfare and on the efforts made by our producers to comply with the rules,
- I. whereas animal welfare must not be neglected, as it may constitute a comparative advantage for the European Union, on condition, however, that the Union ensures, in an open market, that all animals and meat imported from third countries meet the same welfare requirements as apply within the Union,
- J. whereas at the time of the assessment and review of the Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010 the European Union must commit itself to securing recognition of animal welfare standards in the agricultural section of the next WTO Agreement, before the final conclusion of a general agreement,
- K. whereas there is a link between animal welfare, animal health and product safety, and whereas a high level of animal welfare from breeding to slaughter can improve product safety and quality,

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- L. whereas a certain category of consumers accepts higher prices for products meeting higher animal welfare standards, while the vast majority of consumers still choose lower-priced products,
- M. whereas in its above-mentioned resolution of 2006 the European Parliament insisted that the rules, standards and indicators adopted should be based on the latest technology and science and stressed that economic aspects must also be taken into account, since a high standard of animal welfare in particular also entailed operating, financial and administrative costs for the EU's farmers; whereas failure to respect the principle of reciprocity poses a risk to fair competition vis-à-vis non-Community producers,
- N. whereas at the time of this review of the Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010 and on the eve of the first reflections on the CAP for the period after 2013, the European Union must adopt a balanced position on welfare, taking into account the economic consequences in terms of additional costs for livestock producers, linked to adequate income support for them through policy on prices and markets and/or direct aid,
- O. whereas it is essential that European animal protection policy be accompanied by a coherent trade policy, which must be based on the fact that, in spite of the efforts of the EU, animal welfare concerns are not addressed by either the July 2004 Framework Agreement or by any other key documents of the Doha Round; whereas, therefore, until there is a fundamental change in the attitude of the main trading partners in the WTO, it is not viable to introduce further animal welfare standards which have negative effects on the international competitiveness of producers,
- P. whereas animal welfare is commonly understood to mean the result of the application of standards and norms relating to the well-being and health of animals which are designed to meet their inherent species-specific needs and long-term welfare needs; whereas the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) recognises the following as being among the essential requirements for animal welfare: food and water, the opportunity to exhibit natural behaviour, and health care,
- Q. whereas the Commission communication of October 2009 entitled 'A better functioning food supply chain in Europe' indicates that 'significant imbalances in bargaining power between contracting parties are a common occurrence' and that they 'have a negative impact on the competitiveness of the food supply chain as smaller but efficient actors may be obliged to operate under reduced profitability, limiting their ability and incentives to invest in improved product quality and innovation of production processes',
- R. whereas the aforementioned cost increases may lead to production being moved to regions with lower levels of animal protection,

Action plan for 2006-2010

1. Welcomes the Commission's decision to focus, in a multiannual action plan for animal welfare, on a few essential fields of action and then take action in these fields;
2. Welcomes the Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010, which has for the first time translated the Protocol on protection and welfare of animals appended to the Amsterdam Treaty into an integrated approach to the development of the protection of animals in Europe;
3. Notes that the vast majority of the measures contained in the current action plan have been implemented satisfactorily;

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4. Notes that there has been a positive development in the welfare of animals as a result of the action plan 2006-2010, but points out that the EU's farmers have not benefited from their efforts on the markets and in international trade and maintains that this should be highlighted in the next action plan;
5. Appreciates the work which has been done to develop alternatives to animal testing, but deplores the fact that not enough has yet been done to ensure that such alternatives are used if they are available, as required by the relevant EU legislation;
6. Acknowledges the efforts of the Commission to include non-trade concerns, including animal welfare, in bilateral trade agreements, but stresses that such non-trade concerns must be promoted efficiently via the WTO;
7. Calls on the Commission to outline what progress has been made in WTO negotiations towards securing acknowledgment of non-trade-related concerns, which include animal welfare, as well as the extent to which animal welfare issues and standards are being taken into account in the Doha round of WTO negotiations;
8. Notes with great satisfaction the progress which has been made in the Animal Welfare Quality Project as regards new science and knowledge relating to animal health and welfare indicators; notes, however, that this project has not fully taken into account the promotion, in practice, of the use of these indicators;
9. Recognises that there is a need to follow up and ensure proper implementation of the existing rules on animal transport in the EU Member States, with particular reference to the issue of developing a satellite system to monitor such transport, and urges the Commission, in the time still remaining before the action plan expires, to discharge its responsibilities in this field and to present the study requested by Parliament and referred to in Article 32 of Regulation (EC) No 1/2005; requests an economic impact analysis on livestock farming to be conducted before any new rules, which should be based on scientifically proven and objective indicators, are implemented;
10. Takes the view that it would make sense to create incentives for the regional breeding, marketing and slaughter of animals in order to obviate the need for breeding and slaughter animals to be transported over long distances;
11. Believes that zoos play an important role in informing the public about the conservation and welfare of wild animals; is concerned that there is a lack of stringent supervision to ensure compliance with Council Directive 1999/22/EC⁽¹⁾ relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos, and urges the Commission to initiate a study of the effectiveness and implementation of the Directive in all European Union Member States;
12. Welcomes the progress made in connection with compliance with the rearing requirements for pigs, even though there are still cases of non-compliance; is concerned, however, that, despite recommendations by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in this regard, workable plans are still lacking as regards the implementation of individual provisions of Directive 2008/120/EC of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs, and calls, therefore, on the Commission, the Member States and the sectors involved to identify cases of non-compliance and the reasons for such behaviour, and make the necessary efforts to ensure greater compliance with this Directive;
13. Urges the Commission likewise to ensure that the ban on systems lacking cages with nests for laying hens, which enters into force in 2012, is fully complied with, and calls on the Commission and Member States to introduce the necessary measures to make sure that the sector is able to comply with this obligation and to monitor the process of implementation in the Member States; maintains that imports of eggs into the EU must likewise comply with the production conditions imposed on European producers;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 94, 9.4.1999, p. 24.

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14. Calls for an EU-wide trade ban on eggs that do not comply with the law;
15. Concludes that the implementation of the current action plan is inadequate in a number of respects and stresses the need to enforce existing rules before drawing up new ones; draws attention in that connection to the importance of effective penalties for non-compliance in all Member States;
16. Stresses the need for the Commission's own evaluation exercise, to be undertaken in 2010, to include a thorough analysis of achievements and of the lessons to be learned from potential flaws;
17. Regrets that the Commission has not, during this period, developed a clear communication strategy on the value of products that comply with animal welfare standards, contenting itself with the report presented in October 2009;
18. Acknowledges that the Community regards all animals as sentient beings (Article 13 of the Treaty); recognises that action has thus far predominantly focused on food-producing animals and that there is a need to bring other categories of animals into the Action Plan 2011 – 2015;

Action plan for 2011-2015

19. Recalls that its above-mentioned resolution of 2006 already called for the existing action plan to be followed by a new one, and urges the Commission therefore to submit – based on new scientific evidence and experience – a report assessing the implementation of the current plan and the situation concerning animal welfare policy in the EU, on the basis of which it should compile the action plan for animal welfare 2011-2015 backed by the required funding;
20. Calls for measures to be taken to ensure that existing legislation is enforced without delay and to secure the harmonisation of standards and a level playing-field within the internal market; recommends that any proposals for new legislation be assessed against the alternative course of fully implementing existing legislation, to avoid unnecessary duplication;
21. Suggests to the Commission that, in its assessment report, it analyse inter alia the extent to which the current action plan has met the demands of European society in the area of animal welfare, the sustainability of the system for European producers, and how the functioning of the internal market has been affected since the implementation of this plan;
22. Calls on the Commission to demonstrate the impact of animal welfare standards and to take full account of the way different factors, such as animal welfare, sustainability, animal health, the environment, product quality and economic viability, interrelate;

A general European animal welfare law

23. Observes that Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union has created a new legal situation under which, when formulating and implementing Union policy in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, transport, the internal market, research and technological development and space, the Union and Member States must, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage; considers that this article applies to all livestock and animals in captivity, such as food-producing animals, pets, circus animals and animals in zoos or stray animals, whilst bearing in mind that differing characteristics and living conditions require differentiated treatment;

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24. Calls on the Commission, in the light of Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, to submit, no later than 2014 and on the basis of an impact study and after consulting stakeholders, a reasoned proposal for general animal welfare legislation for the EU, which, on the basis of the available science and proven experience, should contribute to a common understanding of the concept of animal welfare, the associated costs and the fundamental conditions applicable;
25. Considers that this general animal welfare legislation must include, in accordance with animal health law, suitable guidelines on responsible keeping of animals, a uniform system for monitoring and for gathering comparable data, as well as requirements relating to the training of animal handlers and provisions establishing the particular responsibilities of animal owners, farmers and keepers; considers that all these requirements should go hand in hand with the provision of resources to producers in order to ensure that they are properly implemented;
26. Considers that European animal welfare legislation should establish a common basic level of animal welfare in the European Union, which is the precondition for free and equitable competition within the internal market for both domestic products and third-country imports; considers, however, that Member States and regions should have the possibility to allow individual producers or groups of producers to introduce voluntary systems which are more far-reaching while avoiding distortion of competition and safeguarding the EU's competitiveness on international markets;
27. Considers that imported products must comply with the same animal welfare requirements as those imposed on European operators;
28. Calls for European farmers to be compensated for the higher production costs associated with higher animal welfare standards; suggests that financing for animal welfare measures be incorporated into the new common agricultural policy support schemes from 2013;
29. Considers also that information to citizens on the high level of animal welfare in the EU and on the efforts made by the various sectors involved should be a key element in this policy;
30. Considers that the inclusion of animal welfare requirements in international agreements is essential in order to allow our producers to compete in a globalised market and prevent the relocation of production to regions which have much lower levels of animal welfare and thus compete unfairly with our model;
31. Welcomes the debate concerning various possible animal welfare labelling schemes in the aforementioned Commission communication of 28 October 2009; recalls, however, the need to consider them in a wider context, taking account, in particular, of the various existing environmental, nutritional and climate labelling schemes; stresses that information on the subject for European consumers absolutely must have a sound and consensual scientific basis and be clear to consumers;
32. Recommends that the information given on the label should be precise and direct and should make reference to compliance with the high animal welfare standards demanded by the EU; maintains that it should be the task of the Commission to provide citizens with the necessary information on the European animal welfare system, so as to ensure that they receive objective information;
33. Recommends that a review be conducted of the consistency of animal welfare policy with the Union's other policies;
34. Calls on the Commission to carry out a thorough assessment of the possible problems that European animal welfare standards cause for the competitiveness of our producers and to review the support systems for producers relating to the implementation of these standards;

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35. Considers that, before any new legislation is drafted, existing rules – whether general or specific – should be enforced properly; points, by way of examples, to the ban on battery cages for hens, the rules on pigs and the rules on animal transport and the rearing of geese and ducks; stresses that further animal welfare measures should be brought into line with other Community objectives such as sustainable development, in particular sustainable livestock production and consumption, protection of the environment and biodiversity, a strategy to improve the enforcement of existing legislation, and a coherent strategy to speed up progress towards non-animal research;

A European network of reference centres for animal welfare

36. Considers that a European coordinated network for animal welfare should be set up under the existing Community or Member State institutions, and that its work should be based on the general animal welfare legislation proposed above; considers that such a network should designate one institution as the coordinating body, which should perform the tasks assigned to the 'central coordination institute' referred to in the aforementioned Commission communication of 28 October 2009; considers, furthermore, that such a coordinating body should in no way duplicate tasks of the Commission or other agencies, but should become a support tool providing assistance to the Commission, Member States, food chain actors and citizens regarding training and education, best practices, information and consumer communication and assessing and stating its views on future legislative and policy proposals and their impact on animal welfare, assessing animal welfare standards on the basis of the latest available knowledge and coordinating an EU system for testing new techniques;

37. Takes the view that, on the basis of scientific findings, the public should be provided with information about animals' needs and the correct ways of dealing with animals and that this should be done in an appropriate, serious-minded manner; considers that a European network of centres of reference should be responsible for implementing education and information measures, since imparting knowledge on the basis of standardised quality criteria is fundamental if people are to be prevented from developing extreme views;

Better enforcement of existing legislation

38. Calls on the Commission as soon as possible to assess the cost to European producers of animal welfare measures, and to propose in 2012 at the latest recommendations, guidelines and other necessary measures to tackle the loss of competitiveness of European livestock farmers;

39. Calls on the Member States to take appropriate steps to ensure that the notion of animal protection and welfare is promoted via education;

40. Considers that the aim must be a purposeful monitoring system based on a risk analysis in which objective factors are central and in which Member States whose infringement rates are above average must expect to face more stringent checks;

41. Stresses that the imbalances in the food chain, as described in the Commission communication entitled 'A better functioning food supply chain in Europe', often place primary producers at a disadvantage; recalls that primary producers have limited scope for investment on account of the extra costs which this situation entails;

42. Stresses that the European Union budget must include sufficient appropriations to enable the Commission to perform its monitoring tasks, to support producers where necessary and to counter the loss of competitiveness faced by producers as a result of the adoption of new and changing animal welfare standards, bearing in mind that the cost of these standards is not passed on in the price received by farmers when they sell their products;

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43. Stresses that the competitiveness of the farming sector should continue to be improved and strengthened through the promotion of and compliance with the animal welfare rules in force, and also in accordance with environmental protection requirements;

44. Calls on the Member States to ensure that any violations of EU animal welfare rules result in effective and proportionate penalties, and that in each individual case these penalties are accompanied by comprehensive guidance and advice from the competent authorities and appropriate corrective actions;

45. Calls on the Member States to take appropriate steps to prevent breaches of animal welfare regulations in the future;

46. Welcomes the considerable reduction in the use of antibiotics for animals in the Member States since their use as a growth promoter was banned in the EU, while still being allowed in the US and some other countries; expects, however, the Commission and the Member States to address the growing problem of antibiotic resistance in animals in a responsible way; calls on the Commission to collect and analyse data on the use of animal health products, including antibiotics, with a view to ensuring the effective use of such products;

Indicators and new techniques

47. Calls for an assessment and further development of the Animal Welfare Quality Project, particularly as regards the instrument's simplification and practical application;

48. Considers that it will prove complex to measure these animal welfare indicators in the case of imported products; stresses that, without calling into question their utility or validity, these tools should not distort competition to the detriment of European producers;

49. Calls on the Commission, on the basis of the final report of the Animal Welfare Quality Project, to propose a trial period for the assessment of animal welfare within the European Union using the methods developed in the Animal Welfare Quality Project;

50. Calls on the Member States in this context to make better use of the opportunities for support for applied research and investment in innovation and modernisation beneficial to animal welfare which is available from EU rural development funds and DG Research's 7th Framework Programme (2007-2013); calls also on the Member States and the Commission to step up financial investment in research and the development of new technologies and techniques in the field of animal welfare;

51. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to use their best efforts to ensure that the OIE guidelines on animal welfare encourage good standards of welfare that properly reflect the scientific evidence in this field;

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52. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
