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v.2025.04.04

5th meeting of WOAHA regional network of National Contact Points on long-distance transportation in Europe

11-13 March 2025,
Thessaloniki - Greece

Meeting Report

Summary

The 5th meeting of the WOAHA Network of National Contact Points on Long-Distance Transportation (NCPT) in Europe was held from 11th to 13th March 2025 in Thessaloniki, Greece. The meeting brought together 51 participants, including representatives from 41 WOAHA member countries in the European region and relevant stakeholders with additional representatives from Jordan, Thailand, and Uruguay.

The meeting gave the opportunity to reengage NCPT and advance with common efforts to strengthen collaboration and communication between Competent Authorities in ensuring animal welfare during transport in the context of the WOAHA standards. Members' representatives have contributed by sharing their experiences with livestock vessel management during emergencies, procedures on animal welfare during sea transport, and challenges of transport of unweaned animals and under extreme weather. Stakeholders, livestock and meat traders and animal welfare organisations also had the opportunity to share their perspectives on ensuring animal welfare during transportation. In addition, the EU Commission also shared its view on animal transport challenges and presented an update on relevant EU activities.

The first group exercise focused on improving collaborative procedures for routines and emergency communication between Competent Authorities and allowed the revision of proposed template documents. Participants had the opportunity to exchange knowledge and present challenges, providing possible solutions. The feedback gathered during the exercise provides a solid foundation to develop a draft template, which will be shared with the NCPT for a final round of review and comments.

The second working group exercise on the development of a self-assessment tool on implementation standards on animal welfare transport allowed us to consult with the network's needs and feasibility of the tool, as well as to review the proposed data collection questionnaire. Participants recognised the benefits of the tool and the need for its development and implementation.

Participants confirmed the effectiveness of the NCPT network in enhancing communication to address animal welfare issues emerging during long-distance transport. The workshop also emphasised the importance of sharing experiences and knowledge through the network.

The meeting highlighted following key points: (i) a collaborative approach to ensure animal welfare during transport based on WOAHA standards within national and multi-national legal frameworks; (ii) the utility of proposed template to improve communication between Competent Authorities on animal welfare issues; and (iii) the proposed self-assessment tool on implementation of animal transport standards as valuable tool,

The participants also identified key topics for further discussion during the next meetings, covering sea transport procedures (including roll on-roll off transport), legislation and enforcement procedures, fitness for transport, animal-based measures for welfare assessment and further efforts on improving information exchange between Competent Authorities, including transport pre-approvals. Finally, participants provide their feedback regarding the proposed plan for enhancing the network to facilitate the exchange of information and the network's engagement between annual meetings.

The meeting provided an effective platform for strengthening collaboration and advancing best practices in long-distance animal transportation. The outcomes of the meeting reinforce the importance of continued engagement, knowledge and experience exchange, and the development of tools to support the effective implementation of WOAHA standards on animal transport.

1. Introduction

The 5th meeting of the WOAAH network of National Contact Points on long-distance transportation in Europe (NCPT) was held between 11-13 March 2025 in Thessaloniki, Greece. 41 NCPTs, within a total of 51 participants, attended the meeting, including representatives from Jordan, Thailand, Uruguay and partner organisations.

The main objective was to reinforce the involvement of National Contact Points on long-distance transportation in Europe, re-calling their role and responsibilities, strengthening communication, and collaboration between Competent Authorities related to long-distance transportation of animals in Europe and also with other actors. The meeting also provided an opportunity to present to participants an update on WOAAH's activities and other relevant activities on animal transport on a global and regional level, as well as share experiences in addressing welfare issues during transport.

This workshop was funded by the European Union and Ireland and kindly hosted by Greece.

The previous meeting of the network was held on 9th July 2024 as an online event ([meeting report](#)).

2. Session 1: State of play

The meeting was opened by Katerina Marinou, Chief Veterinary Officer of Greece, who emphasised the importance of effective communication among Competent Authorities and involved stakeholders to ensure efficient transport of live animals and highlighted the vital role of this network. Estelle Hamelin, Sub-Regional Representative of WOAAH in Brussels, acknowledged the network's strength and the progress made over the past two years. She outlined the two key working group exercises: working on common routine and emergency information-sharing communication system and collecting feedback on the self-assessment tool for compliance with WOAAH transport standards that is under development. She also acknowledged the valuable contributions of Members who shared their experiences, highlighting their role in the network's success. The strongest testament to this success is the growing interest in replicating this model in other areas.

2.1. WOAAH global activities on transport ([Link to view presentation](#))

The WOAAH's Global Animal Welfare Strategy (GAWS) envisions a world where animal welfare is respected, promoted, and advanced alongside animal health, human well-being, socio-economic development, and environmental sustainability. GAWS is built on four key components: developing animal welfare standards, education and capacity building, implementing these standards and policies, and effectively communicating with governments and the public. WOAAH also develops and implements regional animal welfare strategies and platforms to address specific regional needs and priorities. This approach fosters collaboration and enables tailored strategies to improve animal welfare in diverse contexts. Additionally, the WOAAH Observatory was created as a systematic and continuous monitoring system to track the implementation of WOAAH's international standards. The WOAAH Observatory is conducting a thematic study of animal welfare during transport by land and sea: the level of implementation of WOAAH standards by Members' Veterinary Services to evaluate the extent of WOAAH standards implementation by Member Veterinary Services, gathering insights on facilitating factors and barriers to implementation.

2.2. WOAAH ad hoc Group on transport of animals by sea and by land ([Link to view presentation](#))

The presentation provided information about the revision of the WOAAH standard on animal transport by the WOAAH ad hoc group of experts. The introduction highlighted the complexity of live animal transport and its societal concerns, emphasising the need for collaboration among stakeholders, the establishment of welfare measures by the government, and the relevance of WOAAH standards.

The presentation outlined the terms of reference, scope, and objectives for revising the transport codes. It discussed concepts such as animal welfare hazards, animal-based measures, and management-based measures. Key topics covered in the revision work include journey planning, documentation, training and competence of personnel, responsibilities, contingency plans, animal welfare hazards and welfare assessments. Additionally, supporting documents such as the emergency plan, journey plan, and checklist models are considered to be included as references in the revised standards.

Discussion:

The discussion highlighted the various support materials, such as guides and infographics, that have been produced in the EU in collaboration with stakeholders. This collaboration has fostered widespread ownership of these resources. They can serve as a model for developing similar documents that align with WOAHA standards. In addition, participants highlighted the need for regular training to ensure ongoing education and preparedness.

It was emphasised that contingency planning must involve all stakeholders, not just Competent Authorities.

The impact of climate conditions and climate change on animal welfare during transport was also addressed, along with the differing conditions across countries. It's crucial to consider how animals adapt based on their country of origin, as these factors play a significant role.

2.3.WOAH regional activities, including NCPT network state of play and engagement plan ([Link to view presentation](#))

The Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe is a regional mechanism to improve animal welfare in all 53 countries of Europe and to empower Veterinary Services to take action on animal welfare in compliance with WOAHA standards. The 4th Action Plan of the Platform for 2024-2026 builds upon the achievements of the previous plans and focuses on strengthening member involvement and collaboration in its implementation. The Platform's priority topics cover the slaughter of animals, animal transport, dog population management, animal welfare during natural disasters, and the welfare of working equids. Key 2024 achievements include the successful implementation of the action plan activities, improved communication strategy, and ongoing work to refine the monitoring and evaluation system.

The network of National Contact Points on Long-Distance Transportation (NCPT) was established by the Regional Commission for Europe in 2022 ([ToR](#)) with the general objective of building operational communication links within the network to facilitate the exchange of relevant information and addressing issues with long-distance and cross-border transport of animals in the region. Currently, 50 out of 53 WOAHA Europe Members have nominated their NCPT. The last network meeting was held in July 2024 as an online event.

Participants confirmed the relevance and effectiveness of the network. Through the poll, 19% of participants indicated that they contacted another contact point once, 23% two to three times and 19% more than three times over the last 12 months. Participants also acknowledge the exchange of information within CA beyond Europe built through networking during multiregional WJS workshops; 19% of participants indicated that they contacted another contact point once, 10% two to three times and 5% more than three times over the last 12 months.

In addition, 45% of participants indicated that those exchanges were very helpful, and 24% indicated that they were at least somewhat helpful.

The structured discussion session focuses on the engagement plan for the network between the network's meetings. All participants unanimously confirmed the need for regular updates from WOAHA regarding the NCPT network, with the most preferred frequency of updates being every 3 months (44%). The information most desired in these updates includes an updated list of contact points, progress on the revision of WOAHA standards on transport, relevant WOAHA events and activities, and members sharing experiences and new developments. Suggestions to strengthen communication within the NCPT network included using various communication platforms (e.g. WhatsApp, Viber), short online thematic sharing custom schedules, and exploring options for developing a dedicated communication platform.

Discussion:

The discussion emphasised the importance of in-person meetings and discussions to better understand the challenges faced by other colleagues beyond Europe. An example of this was the first Whole Journey Scenario for the Americas, in which WOAHA Members from Europe also participated. A proposal was made to extend the contact network to other WOAHA regions.

The idea of organising online flash thematic meetings dedicated to specific topics was discussed and well received, with Members encouraged to share their needs and suggestions for these sessions.

3. Session 2: Addressing the challenges and sharing experience

3.1. Update on EU activities on transport of animals ([Link to view presentation](#))

The EU Commission provided a short overview of the EU legislation on the protection of animals during transport, including the related official controls and tertiary legislation focused on the transport by livestock vessel. In addition, the Commission presented an update on the latest activities on animal transport (e.g., a study on digitalisation, a plan for audits on transport by sea during 2025 and the progress in the negotiation process of the Commission's proposal for a new Regulation on the protection of animals during transport).

Discussion:

The discussion focused on various aspects of EU regulation, including its impact, limitations, evaluation, and links to international standards.

- Revision of the EU regulation 1/2005: the main objective is to revise the 1/2005 regulation, but it may also involve amendments to the regulation on official controls. Discussions are ongoing, and it is too early to determine the impact that modifying regulation 1/2005 may have on other regulations.
- Limits of the application of the EU regulations: The EU regulations are mandatory for implementation in all EU Members States but do not extend to countries outside the EU. However, a ruling by the European Court of Justice states that animal welfare regulations must be respected until the final destination of the animals, even if outside the EU, leading to challenges that are addressed in a later presentation (4.3).
- Disinfection of the trucks: The recommended measures go beyond animal welfare regulations and are linked to animal health regulations. They cover aspects such as the frequency of disinfection, methods used, and their intended purpose. However, there is no specific list of approved disinfectant products; it is up to the CA to validate a list.
- Animal welfare indicators for compliance in transport: Currently, there is no list of indicators for assessing compliance with transport regulations. The development of animal welfare policy indicators is ongoing, with a dedicated sub-group of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare working on this topic. Furthermore, the EU Commission's proposal for the updated regulation includes further work on defining these indicators.
- Transport by air: Air transport regulations are managed by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). As IATA standards commercial based standards, even access standards documents require a fee, implementation for standard pose a challenge for the Competent Authorities. Work is ongoing to ensure free access to general principles, e.g. in the WOH standards, while still referring to the IATA's standards for more detailed provisions.

3.2. Addressing challenges for transport of unweaned animals ([Link to view presentation](#))

The presentation focused on the welfare and health aspects of transporting unweaned Irish dairy calves to continental Europe, highlighting several critical issues. Regulation 1/2005 specifies requirements for transporting unweaned calves, including standards for space allowance, travel times, and provisions for watering and feeding.

There is growing concern about the welfare of calves during transport, which typically occurs via road and ferry. To address these concerns, a research initiative called the MOOVE Project, led by the Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Teagasc), was launched. This project aims to assess the health and welfare status of the calves and develop strategies to improve their overall welfare during transport.

Additionally, the presentation showcases innovations in automated milk-feeding systems designed for long-distance transport. These on-lorry feeding systems seek to address challenges related to manual feeding and health and safety issues by delivering precise quantities of milk without human intervention.

The presentation emphasized the importance of prioritizing calf welfare during transport and the ongoing research efforts dedicated to enhancing their health and well-being.

Discussion:

The discussion on the challenges for transport of unweaned animals led to a discussion of transport incidents caused by human wrongdoing and corrective actions, enforcement measures, journey planning, driver responsibility and certification.

In the case of transport incidents resulting from non-complying with Irish Law (e.g., lack of Lory's satellite records provided to competent authorities, route deviation, or skipping resting points), the transporter companies are subjected to warnings by letter requesting an explanation of the violation. In repetitive or more severe infringements, the license to operate might be revoked for a specific time.

Prior to starting a transport journey, the transporter company must provide an 'entire journey plan', containing specific driving times, resting periods, unloading of animals, or checkpoints. The journey plan must then be approved by a Veterinary Inspector before the transport can begin.

When the journey starts, the driver has full responsibility for the vehicle and animals transported. He/she should be able to identify issues with the animals or vehicle and act accordingly. In Ireland, drivers receive one day of training from a private company certified by the Irish Government. This certificate of competencies allows cattle and sheep drivers to be licensed for 3 years and poultry drivers for 10 years.

3.3. Addressing livestock vessel emergencies ([Link to view presentation](#))

Greece and the relevant Central Competent Authority (General Directorate of Veterinary Services of the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food) have been involved in three incidents with livestock vessels transporting farm animals and usually ruminants that travel through the Mediterranean Sea due to its geographical position. These livestock vessels depart either from EU Member States or from third countries with destinations to third countries, and their trips are scheduled to last for several days.

During the presentation, an incident was described with a request to accept a livestock vessel that had departed from Spain carrying 1789 cattle, through its shipping agent, to the Ministry of Shipping and Island Policy in order to approach a Greek port. This vessel had been denied access to Libya's port of destination and further reached other ports of third countries in attempts to sell the animals. Greece implemented EU legislation on animal health, which prevented the unloading of animals in an EU Member State other than that of departure but assisted with fuel, feed and medication supplies for the sake of the welfare of the animals on board.

Furthermore, another incident with a livestock vessel that departed from Spain carrying 320 bovines and 10000 sheep to Jordan and broke down outside the Greek territory was presented. In this case, the direct transfer of all animals to a different livestock vessel that was available in the area within less than 48 hours contributed to a successful example of welfare management in case of such an emergency.

It is very important for veterinary competent authorities to be able to find flexible solutions for safeguarding the health and welfare of farm animals that are transported with livestock vessels, even if there are significant restrictions in legislation.

Discussion:

A follow-up discussion highlighted that even without formal authorisation to accept livestock vessels in the country, preventive measures and supporting actions can help minimise the impact of the issue on animal welfare on board.

Participants agreed that both presented examples highlighted the importance of reinforcing communication between all competent authorities involved to solve issues quickly and mitigate unexpected surprises. For instance, establishing a dedicated hotline between the involved authorities could serve as an effective mechanism for fostering rapid collaborative action, and early updates help to intervene at an early stage, reducing the dimensions of the issues.

3.4. Extreme weather conditions ([Link to view presentation](#))

Germany highlighted the legal requirements on temperatures applicable to all long road transports of cattle, sheep, goats, horses and pigs. According to Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005 the temperature for all animals on the vehicle must be in a range of 5 °C and 30 °C throughout the entire journey with a

tolerance of +/- 5 °C. In the case of exports to non-EU countries, this also applies to the leg of the journey outside the EU (according to the Judgment of the European Court of Justice in case C-424/13 of 2015). Retrospective checks of historical temperature data on [World Weather API and Weather Forecast](#) revealed that this had not always been considered sufficiently in the past. The presentation aimed to raise awareness and explore and discuss solutions together and learn from each other to improve the situation.

Discussion:

The discussion highlighted how geographical location and climatic conditions impact the challenges of maintaining appropriate temperatures for animals during transport. This is particularly important for complying with the legal requirements set forth in Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005. As a result, some countries have improved their animal transport vehicles to ensure that temperatures remain within the specified limits. The use of insulated or preheated vehicles has proven to be especially beneficial in countries with very low temperatures. Combined with regular weather forecast check and log, mindful of stock density when loading the vehicle, the discussion shared positive insights on how to mitigate the non-compliance with temperature requirements during long journey transportation.

4. Session 3: Stakeholders' perspective

4.1. European Livestock and Meat Trading Union ([Link to view presentation](#))

The European Livestock and Meat Trades Union (UECBV) is a key organisation that advocates for the livestock industry's needs, addressing the complexities of transport regulations, market demands, and animal health requirements. The presentation highlighted the importance of intra-EU trade of livestock traded ruminants, with significant annual volumes for cattle, sheep, and goats. UECBV's perspective on business operators' challenges related to animal transport, especially in the context of the European Commission's regulation proposal on animal welfare during transport, was presented. This covered issues such as misalignment with other regulations (e.g. drivers' working time), limitations on journey times, temperature requirements, increased space allowances, and the need for veterinarians during loading and unloading. The presentation also discussed the change in the meat industry structure, economic impact and operational challenges due to current animal health situations and restrictions. It highlighted the necessity for further research to redefine transport requirements without jeopardising the internal market.

Discussion:

The discussion touched the topic of training organised in collaboration with business operators regarding transport. At the moment, EUCBV does not organise any specific training and activities are limited to the dissemination of documents and guidelines.

Additionally, a concern on the possible impact of transport regulation proposed by the European Commission, regarding the travel times from farm to slaughterhouses. The pressure of limiting travel time to 9 hours from farm to slaughterhouse may lead to farmers losing specific product markets due to a lack of specialized slaughterhouses within travel time limits. Conversely, the EU representative emphasised that according to the impact assessment, this travel time limitation represents a small fraction of animal consignments, contributing to the EU reasoning for proposing this measure. Nonetheless, the proposed regulation foresees a derogation provision, allowing for some flexibility to address those concerns.

4.2. NGO perspective – Animals' Angels ([Link to view presentation](#))

With more than 25 years of experience on the road, Animals Angels believes transport pushes farmed animals beyond their physiological limits, causing them suffering due to prevailing commercial interests. The risk factors of transport include, among others, duration, available space, food and water supply, weather conditions, and emergencies across borders. The levels of these risks are pushed beyond the limits at the expense of the animals.

In fact, we see transports lasting days or weeks, animals crowded on board till not being able to inspect them all, transports despite weather warnings or blizzards, with rain entering the animal compartments, transports of very young animals or in advanced pregnancy, insufficient food and water supply for a

long time. Farmed animals are victims of serious delays and conflicts between health laws and animal welfare laws (where the seconds succumb to the first), victims of lack of emergency plans and of priority.

The sanctioning procedures are inefficient to dissuade violations, especially when more than one country is involved. Reducing the duration of animal transport would reduce the risks and the suffering caused. It would simplify controls and benefit administrations

Discussion:

The discussion outcome highlights the need for further political and judicial support to effectively hold tradesman and transporters accountable for non-compliance with transport and animal welfare regulations.

4.3. Export of live animals: challenges and perspectives ([Link to view presentation](#))

The European Commission shared data on the main exporting and importing countries of EU live animals. According to the data from the Commission audits, there is an overall satisfactory level of compliance with the EU rules on export. However, sporadic, and unfortunate incidents still appear for plenty of reasons despite the fact that none of them are animal welfare related. There is a wide set of potential solutions which are currently being explored by the Commission, such as electronic certification, various options for pre-approval mechanisms, operational networks for fast and efficient exchange of information and others. The future perspectives include addressing some of these challenges with the revision of the new EU transport legislation, the new WOAHA Chapters on animal transport which are also currently under revision and the work on potential solutions within the new WOAHA Network of National Focal Points on long distance transport.

5. Session 4: Whole Journey Scenario

5.1. Animal welfare through a sea journey ([Link to view presentation](#))

The presentation provided a comprehensive overview of animal welfare during sea transport, outlining key aspects with practical and hands-on experience examples for preparation for livestock export, loading, the sea journey, and unloading at the destination port.

It emphasised the importance of preparations and pre-transport assessments on farms, focusing on body condition, handling practices, nutrition, disease control, quarantine measures, and health checks and daily inspections.

The presentation covered port operations and logistics for loading and unloading, including documentation, inspection, handling facilities, trained handlers, and coordination with port authorities.

The part on the sea journey, the presentation emphasises the importance of daily inspections of livestock pens to ensure proper maintenance and functionality, highlighting routine oversight for animal health and welfare. Key elements addressed also covered feed and water access, ventilation and air quality, manure management, health treatments and hospital pen, and reporting requirements.

The presentation underscored the importance of ensuring animal welfare and regulatory compliance in the context of commercial demands, risk assessments, and the need for communication between authorities and veterinarians.

Discussion:

The discussion focused on various aspects of sea transport, including the conditions in which animals are transported, the risks of injuries and diseases management, the different types and roles of personnel involved in animal transport and the management of multiple failures on board.

Conditions of transport: Various livestock factors influence transport suitability, some of which are breed-related. Placid animals tend to be easier to transport. Animals with greater body condition and older livestock, as well as younger and slimmer animals, generally have a higher risk for animal welfare. Defining an appropriate stocking density is also an important factor of transport's conditions but at sea is particularly complex to define due to differences in vessel types, seasonal conditions, and animal species. Regulation on stocking density varies significantly between land and sea transport.

Injuries and diseases management: The most common injuries occur due to livestock handling. However, there is little data available on injury rates. In case of a sickness outbreak, if neither the exporting nor the importing country is willing to accept the shipment, a bilateral agreement comes into

effect. These agreements are designed to prevent such issues, ensuring that responsibilities are met. However, if this happens, the animals need to be provided with care until the exporter and CA find a solution. On board, an indicator used is the mortality rate; if it is 1% or above, it needs to be reported, triggering an inspection. The usual mortality rate ranges between 0,02% and 0,2%. However, incentivising low mortality is not necessarily in line with animal welfare, as animals requiring euthanasia should be euthanised rather than treated to maintain an appropriate mortality rate.

Types and roles of personnel involved in animal transport (within Australian standards)

- Veterinarians: all journeys require at least one veterinarian on board, mostly an accredited vet and possibly an official vet.
- Accredited stockperson: all journeys require the presence of an accredited stockperson. The crew, which doesn't need specific training on livestock, will always work under the supervision of the stockperson. However, fostering a strong welfare culture on board is essential. A main difference with land transport is that there is a lack of certification for handlers; the only requirement that exists is for the truck drivers that are required to be registered, but no prior experience in animal management is necessary.
- Independent Observers: Have the ability to report to all authorities, not only the agriculture ministry, allowing them to have further reach and increase accountability. They are paid by the exporter, so it creates an incentive. They can be vet, but it is not mandatory. A major challenge is the lack of a unified reporting format, making follow-up difficult.

Handling multiple failures: In the event of multiple failures, an evaluation should be conducted involving all relevant parties, including the exporter and the CA. Actions should be taken based on the contingency plan in consultation with all responsible parties, but foremost with the security of the personnel on board as the first priority.

5.2. Working group exercise: discussion on procedures for routine and emergency communication between countries' Competent Authorities [\(Link to view presentation\)](#)

The objective of the exercise was to work on creating a common document to facilitate communication, both routine and emergency, between Competent Authorities (CAs) of different countries. The conclusion of the exercise identified five situations that require specific communication between CAs:

- Information on infringements and measures taken (e.g., *refusal to allow the completion of a journey*)
- Feedback on the results of checks with no or few infringements
- Pre-approval announcements for high-risk transports
- Requests for / updates on general information
- Alerts about potential issues in a country

Participants agreed that swift communication is essential in the event of serious infringements or emergencies. Consequently, priority will be given to developing a template for the item "Information on infringements and measures taken" to streamline communication between CAs:

The discussion also focused on the content of the document, and several key points were agreed. The document should be short/concise and should contain:

- General information (origin, destination, type of animals, means of transport, etc.).
- Contact details for responsible person(s)
- A brief description of the problem with details of the actions taken and actions required (who, what, when, why, and where)
- Specified deadline for responses or required action (proposal with 48 hours for reply).
- If necessary, additional supporting documents (such as videos, photos, certificates, journey logs, etc.) should be attached.

The template will be developed by the Platform Secretariat with support from a volunteer group of NCPTs and will then be shared with all NCPTs for feedback and validation.

3. Session 5: On-field activities

Participants visited Koutsiofti Farm (ΦΑΡΜΑ ΚΟΥΤΣΙΩΦΤΗ), a fattening cattle farm in Makrochori, Veria, housing over 1,200 heads of cattle. The owner provided an overview of the farm's history, facilities, management, and operational practices, including biosecurity measures. It was highlighted that the innovative feeding practices, developed in collaboration with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, incorporate a unique blend of plant-based ingredients and aromatic herbs to enhance the nutritional quality of the produced meat.

In addition, the field trip allowed a cultural visit to the Museum of the Royal Tombs of Aiga.

4. Session 6: Implementation of WOA standards - development of the Self-Assessment tool on transport

This session was dedicated to consulting with the NCPT network on the development of self-assessment and monitoring tools for the implementation of WOA standards related to transport. The introductory presentation provided an overview of the proposed tool and its development process. The subsequent working group exercise was designed to gather NCPT's feedback on the tool's utility, feasibility, data availability and questionnaire to shape the tool and data collection to address WOA members' needs.

4.1. Implementation of the WOA standard on the transport of animals – Member's self-assessment tool ([Link to view presentation](#))

The Platform has conducted a series of activities to assist WOA members in implementing animal transport standards. However, challenges remain in providing evidence of progress toward compliance with these standards. To address this issue, a survey was conducted in 2022 to identify gaps in implementation and the needs of members. In 2023, the WOA Observatory launched a thematic study to assess the implementation of WOA's animal welfare standards during transport through global surveys and focus groups aimed at discussing barriers to adoption. To further support WOA members with a sustainable long-term approach, the Platform initiated the development of a web-based self-assessment and monitoring tool for animal transport. This tool is designed to provide Competent Authorities with clearer insights into their current status regarding the implementation of WOA standards outlined in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code (TAHC), specifically Chapters 7.2 on transport by sea and 7.3 on transport by land. The tool's specific objectives include identifying gaps and areas for improvement in compliance, tracking progress over time, and enhancing the understanding of how WOA standards on animal transport are being implemented by its members.

5.3. Working Group exercise - implementation of the WOA standard on the transport of animals – Member's self-assessment tool ([Link to view presentation](#))

The purpose of the exercise was to gather feedback from NCPT regarding the tool's utility, feasibility, data availability, and questionnaire design. This feedback will contribute to the development of the tool and the data collection process to better meet the needs of WOA members.

Participants engaged in group discussions to reflect on how the tool could assist in assessing their country's implementation of animal welfare standards, identify potential benefits, and suggest enhancements for its effectiveness. The group discussion focused on the following key points:

- The feasibility of the proposed survey, focusing on the time commitment required and its practicality for annual completion.
- The utility of the tool in assessing a country's capacity to implement standards, including the criteria needed for comprehensive implementation such as legal authority, trained personnel, monitoring systems, equipment, reporting capabilities, communication, and budget/resources.
- Various factors that can impact a country's ability to implement animal welfare standards, including capacity-building programs, legislative changes, funding adjustments, biosecurity status, environmental disasters, and trade practices.

The participants confirmed the utility of the tool in assessing a country's capacity to implement standards and feasibility of the proposed questionnaire.

The following main points for improvement of the proposed tool were highlighted during the working group and plenary discussions:

- Clarify terminology and definitions in the survey questions to ensure a common understanding.
- Allow countries to provide comments on significant changes in their data from year to year.
- Include questions about the scale and priority of animal transport in each country.
- Develop a mechanism for sharing results that enables regional-level analysis without identifying individual countries.
- Include the possibility of including highlights of national legislation in the questionnaire.
- Include additional data on the type of enforcement and quantitative data on the number of inspections and number of enforcement actions.
- Consider different survey submission options to address specific countries' IT restrictions.

The comments and suggestions provided by NCPT will be addressed by WOAHA during the development of the self-assessment and monitoring tool for transport.

5. Next steps, meeting outcomes and conclusion

Participants confirmed the operational effectiveness of the NCPT network and its critical role in improving communication among members to address emerging animal welfare issues during the long-distance transport of animals. The workshop also emphasised the importance of sharing experiences and knowledge through the network.

The discussion during the meeting highlighted that the NCPT network provides a platform for the collaborative approach to ensure animal welfare during transport grounded in the common framework of the WOAHA Terrestrial Animal Health Code. Still, it is important to note that the Competent Authorities operate within their respective national legal frameworks, which include EU regulations for member states of the European Union.

The working group exercise aimed at improving procedures for routine and emergency communication between countries confirmed the usefulness of template documents for facilitating communication between Competent Authorities. Additionally, the feedback gathered during the exercise provides a solid foundation to develop a draft template, which will be shared with the NCPT for a final round of review and comments. The participants agreed to prioritise developing a template document for "Information on infringements and measures taken" and agreed on key elements and the main structure of the document. They agreed to continue working on the template being drafted by the Platform Secretariat, with support from a volunteer group of NCPTs. Once finalised, it will be shared with all NCPTs for review and validation. The next template proposed to be developed is a template document for pre-approval and pre-notification of high-risk transports.

The result of the working group exercise on the development of a self-assessment tool on the level of implementation standards on animal welfare transport confirms the tool as a valuable instrument to identify gaps and areas for improvement, support development policy, and measure progress over time in improving long-distance transport in accordance with WOAHA standards.

The participants also identified key topics for further discussion during the next meetings covering sea transporter procedures (including roll on-roll off transport), legislation and enforcement procedures, fitness for transport, and animal-based measures for welfare assessment and further efforts on improving information exchange information between competent authorities including transport pre-approvals.

Finally, participants provide their feedback regarding the proposed plan for enhancing the network's dynamics. This plan aims to facilitate the exchange of relevant information and promote engagement within the Network in between meetings.

List of annexes

Annex 1 – Agenda of the meeting

Annex 2 – List of participants

Annex 1

5th meeting of WOA regional network of National Contact Points on long-distance transportation in Europe

Whole Journey Scenario workshop on long-distance transport in Europe

11 – 13 March 2025, Thessaloniki, Greece

This workshop is funded by the European Union and Ireland and is kindly hosted by Greece.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Programme

DAY 1: 11 March 2025		
09:30 – 10:00	Registration and welcoming of participants	
Session 1:	State of play	<i>Chairperson: E. Hamelin</i>
10:00 – 10:15	Opening remarks	<i>Katerina Marinou (Greece) Estelle Hamelin (WOAH)</i>
10:15 – 10:30	WOAH global strategy	<i>Tomasz Grudnik (WOAH)</i>
10:30 – 10:45	WOAH ad hoc Group on transport of animals	<i>Maria Correia (Portugal)</i>
10:45 – 11:15	WOAH Platform on animal welfare for Europe	<i>Tomasz Grudnik (WOAH)</i>
11:15 – 11:30	Q&A / Discussion	
11:30 – 12:00	<i>Coffee break</i>	
Session 2:		
12:00 – 12:30	NCTP Network's state of play and engagement plan	<i>Tomasz Grudnik (WOAH)</i>
12:30 – 13:00	Export of live animals: Challenges and perspectives	<i>Stanislav Ralchev (European Commission)</i>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>	
Session 2:	Addressing the challenges and sharing experience	<i>Chairperson: T. Grudnik</i>
14:00 – 14:30	Addressing challenges for transport of unweaned animals	<i>Aidan Cahill (Ireland)</i>
14:30 – 15:00	Addressing livestock vessel emergencies	<i>Katerina Marinou (Greece)</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Q&A / Discussion	
15:30 – 16:00	<i>Coffee break</i>	
Session 3:	Stakeholders' perspective	<i>Chairperson: T. Grudnik</i>
16:00 – 16:15	European Livestock and Meat Trading Union	<i>Carolina Cucurella</i>
16:30 – 16:30	NGO perspective (Animals' Angels)	<i>Silvia Meriggi</i>
16:30 – 16:45	Update on EU activities on transport of animals	<i>Stanislav Ralchev (European Commission)</i>
16:45 – 17:00	<i>Discussion / Q&A</i>	
19:00 -	<i>Dinner</i>	

DAY 2: 12 March 2025		
Session 4: Whole Journey Scenario		Chairperson: E. Hamelin
09:00 - 09:45	Animal welfare through a sea journey	Renee Willis
10:15 – 10:30	Working Group exercise: Discuss procedures for routine and emergency communication between countries CA/reporting templates: Presentation (15')	
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break	
	Group work (45') Reporting (10') Discussion / Q&A	All
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch	
Session 5: On-field activities		
13:00 – 18:00	field visit	
19:00	Dinner	

DAY 3: 13 March 2025		
Session 6:	Implementation of WOAHA standards – developing self-assessment tool	<i>Chairperson: T. Grudnik</i>
08:30 – 09:00	Extreme weather conditions	<i>Maria Biedermann (Germany)</i>
09:00 – 9:15	Implementation of the WOAHA standard on the transport of animals – Member's self-assessment tool	<i>Tomasz Grudnik (WOAHA)</i>
09:15 – 10:30	Working Group exercise - implementation of the WOAHA standard on the transport of animals – Member's self-assessment tool - Presentation (15 min) - Group work (45 min)	<i>All</i>
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break	
10:45 – 11:30	Working Group exercise - Implementation of the WOAHA standard on the transport of animals – Member's self-assessment tool - Group work - Reporting (10' each)	<i>All</i>
Session 7: Next steps		
11:30 – 12:00	Presentation of the document for communication between countries CA/reporting templates with discussion	<i>T. Grudnik</i>
12:00 – 12:30	Next activities, main conclusions, closing remarks	<i>T. Grudnik</i>
12:30	<i>Lunch and departures</i>	

