

The EU Platform on Animal Welfare and its subgroups – strengthening ISAE's voice in Europe

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The EU Platform on Animal Welfare is an interactive network, established by the European Commission in 2017, aimed at promoting dialogue among competent authorities, businesses, civil society organisations and scientists on animal welfare issues of relevance for the European Union. ISAE became involved by responding to a general call for representation from professional organisations with expertise in animal welfare. ISAE's appointed representative (the ISAE President) attends regular meetings of the EU Platform alongside representatives from other stakeholder groups and independent experts (many of whom are also ISAE members). At the central level, we try to further ISAE's agenda on global development of applied animal behaviour and welfare science, together with partners such as OIE. There are two official Platform subgroups supported by the EC, on Animal Transport and Welfare of Pigs, as well as four voluntary initiatives. Thanks to the diversity of expertise among our members, the ISAE has representatives on both official subgroups and three of the voluntary ones – Responsible Ownership and Care of Equidae, Welfare of Fish and Welfare of Pullets. On each, ISAE's experts provide objective, science-based expertise. Each of the subgroups met initially to establish their priorities and determine the types of output they would produce followed by subsequent meetings and out-of-meeting activity to refine priorities and develop outputs. The Animal Transport subgroup focuses on extreme temperatures, cattle exports outside the EU and unweaned animals, aiming to improve knowledge transfer for those working with animals in transport, develop tools to improve implementation and enforcement of rules, complete a knowledge/technical gap analysis and investigate technical innovations. The focus of the Welfare of Pigs subgroup is tail docking and the assessment of risk factors associated with tail biting, aiming to produce a document on how authorities can instruct official vets to assess risk parameters. The Equine subgroup aims to develop a guide to good animal welfare practice for the keeping, care, training and use of horses as well as a similar guide for donkeys, asses and mules. The Welfare of Fish subgroup is focusing on water quality and handling (factors of importance across all production stages, transport and slaughter), and is developing general and species-specific guidelines on these. The Welfare of Pullets subgroup aims to provide guidelines on the welfare of pullets (young pre-laying hens) as no specific EU legislation currently exists. The ISAE's presence on the EU Platform and its subgroups strengthens the Society's voice in the European Union, continuing to ensure that it fulfils its aim to make expertise in applied animal behaviour and welfare available to policymakers and other stakeholders.