



Parlamentum Europaeum

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

29 April 2021

'End the Cage Age' European Citizens' Initiative

Dear Executive Vice-President Timmermans,
Dear Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis,
Dear Vice-President Jourová,
Dear Commissioners Kyriakides and Wojciechowski,

Following the successful European Citizens' Initiative **'End the Cage Age'** presented to the European Parliament during a Hearing on 15 April, we, the undersigned MEPs from various political groups, voice our support for the EU citizens' ask to end the use of cages in animal farming. This can be achieved by a revision of Directive 98/58 on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, in line with the ambitions of the Farm to Fork strategy and the European Green Deal.

As only the sixth European Citizens' Initiative in history to pass all thresholds, 'End the Cage Age' received **1.4 million verified signatures** from across the EU, surpassed the minimum thresholds in 18 Member States¹ and was supported by over [170 organisations](#). EU citizens are calling on the EU to ban all cages for farmed animals: laying hens, rabbits, female pigs (sows), calves, quail, ducks, geese, young hens (pullets) and breeders for meat chickens (broilers).

In late February, this European Citizens' Initiative received support from over 140 scientists, including the renowned Dr. Jane Goodall, who underlined the scientific necessity of ending

¹ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

the keeping of farmed animals in cages. The scientists highlighted in a [letter](#) that every year **over 300 million animals** in the EU spend all, or a significant part, of their lives imprisoned in cages. ‘The scientific argument against cages is clear – European farmed animals live miserable lives confined to small spaces. Many are denied important and basic natural behaviours and what makes a life worth living,’ the letter states.

Sows kept in stalls or farrowing crates are so restricted they cannot even turn around. Rabbits are sometimes unable to stretch up or out fully and generally do not have enough space to perform a single hop. Quail have insufficient vertical space to perform their natural escape behaviour, so they hit their heads on the roof. Lack of space restricts play in calves which is important for their social and mental development. Even an “enriched” cage for hens provides insufficient vertical space for wing flapping (a highly- motivated comfort behaviour) or perching high.

While the EU as a whole has been slow to take on its leadership role, EU Member States like Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Sweden have introduced national legislation that goes beyond the minimum EU standards, phasing out the use of cages for certain farmed animals.

A growing number of companies are also moving away from cage systems. Hundreds of the EU’s biggest retailers and brands have committed to using only cage-free eggs. Last month, food majors including Jamie Oliver, Unilever, Nestlé, Barilla, Ferrero and Mondelēz [stated](#) that they ‘commend the aims of the End the Cage Age Initiative’ and called on the EU to phase out the use of cages in farming, starting with hens.

Together with a phase out of the use of cages, the EU should **protect farmers** – the backbone of local economy in many rural communities – by ensuring a level-playing field and shielding them from unfair competition. We call on the European Commission to ensure that all products imported into the EU meet its standards – including upcoming requirements for cage-free farming.

In November last year, the European Parliament’s research department issued a [report](#) on the alternatives to caged housing, confirming that a cage-free future is indeed possible. In another [report](#), the Institute for European Environmental Policy found that a transition to cage-free farming can be a win-win for animals, the environment and small-scale farmers.

To **build resilience** into our food systems, in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy and the European Green Deal, we need bold action. As a first step, we call on you to end the use of all cages in farming. This would also bring EU agricultural practices more in line with the science of the 21st century pointing to the sentience of animals and in accordance with Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, join the voices of EU citizens and call on you to revise Directive 98/58 on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes in order to end the unnecessary cruelty of caged farming, as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Eleonora Evi
Anja Hazekamp
Francisco Guerreiro
Rosa D'Amato
Martin Buschmann
Sarah Wiener
Sirpa Pietikäinen
Ivan Vilibor Sinčić
Clare Daly
Robert Biedron
Manon Aubry
Malin Björk
Marie Toussaint
Helmut Scholz
Günther Sidl
Manuel Bompard
Michaela Šojdrová
Marisa Matias
José Gusmão
Thomas Waitz
Jytte Guteland
Leila Chaibi
Piernicola Pedicini
Maria Noichl
Caroline Roose
Pascal Durand
Łukasz Kohut
Raphaël Glucksmann
Margrete Auken
Kira Peter-Hansen
Ville Niinistö
Pär Holmgren
Alice Kuhnke
Jakop Dalunde
Mario Furore
Tilly Metz
Sylwia Spurek

Manuela Ripa
Michal Wiezik
Martin Häusling
Anna Cavazzini
Sira Rego
Grace O'Sullivan
François Alfonsi
Benoît Biteau
Damien Carême
Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield
Karima Delli
Claude Gruffat
Yannick Jadot
Michèle Rivasi
Monir Satouri
Salima Yenbou
Ignazio Corrao
Ernest Urtasun
Jiří Pospíšil
Andreas Schieder
Nicolaj Villumsen
Cornelia Ernst
Idoia Villanueva Ruiz
Mick Wallace
Miguel Urban Crespo
Isabel Carvalhais
Silvia Modig
Veronika Vrecionová
Patrick Breyer
Róza Maria Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein
Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg
Michael Bloss
Manu Pineda
Michal Šimečka
Jordi Solé
Alviina Alametsä
Tatjana Zdanoka
Diana Riba i Giner
Pernando Barrena
Maria Eugenia Rodriguez Palop
Katalin Cseh
Niels Fuglsang
Dimitrios Papadimoulis

Alexis Georgoulis
Stelios Kouloglou
Tiziana Beghin
Saskia Bricmont
Petros Kokkalis
Petras Austrevicius
Philippe Lamberts
Monika Vana
Marcel Kolaja
David Cormand
Niklas Nienaß
Manolis Kefalogiannis
Claudia Gamon
Timo Woelken
Martin Hojsik
Luke Ming Flanagan
Maria Arena
Sara Matthieu
Frances Fitzgerald
Katrin Langensiepen
Erik Marquardt