

Revision of the EU animal welfare legislation - poultry



**Kirsten VORNHAGEN, Policy Officer
DG SANTE, Unit G5 Animal Welfare and AMR**



EU animal welfare legislation

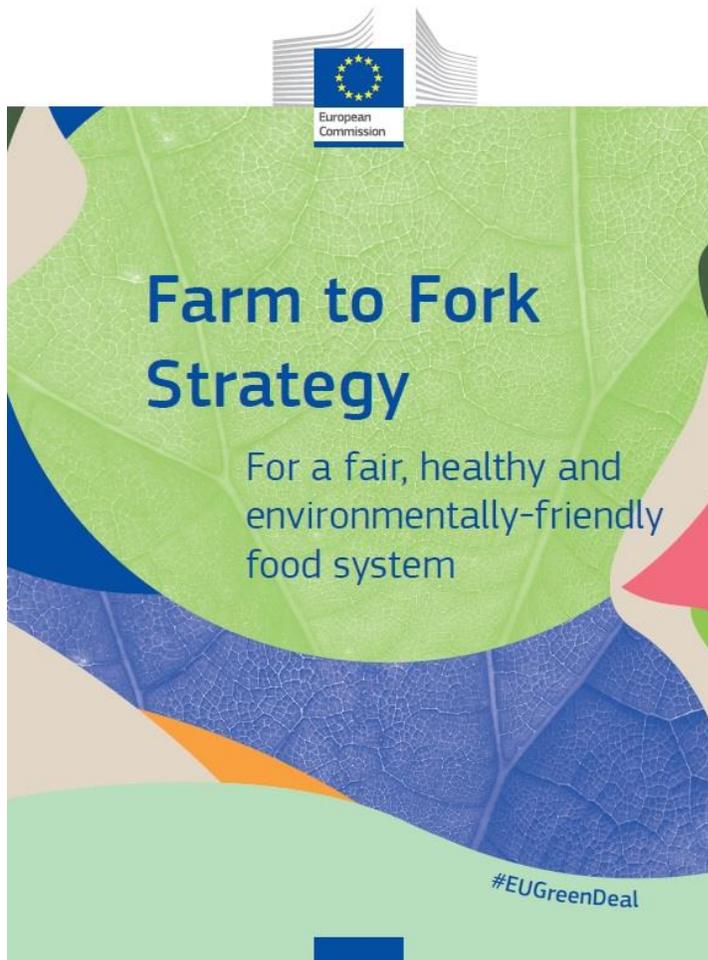
5 Directives on animals kept in farms:

- All farm animals
- Laying hens
- Calves
- Pigs
- Chickens for meat production

2 Regulations:

- Animal transport
- Killing of animals

Farm to Fork Strategy



“Better animal welfare improves animal health and food quality, reduces the need for medication and can help preserve biodiversity.”

*“The Commission will **revise the animal welfare legislation**, including on animal **transport** and the **slaughter** of animals, to align it with the latest scientific evidence, broaden its scope, make it easier to enforce and ultimately **ensure a higher level of animal welfare.**”*

European Citizens Initiative 'End the Cage Age'



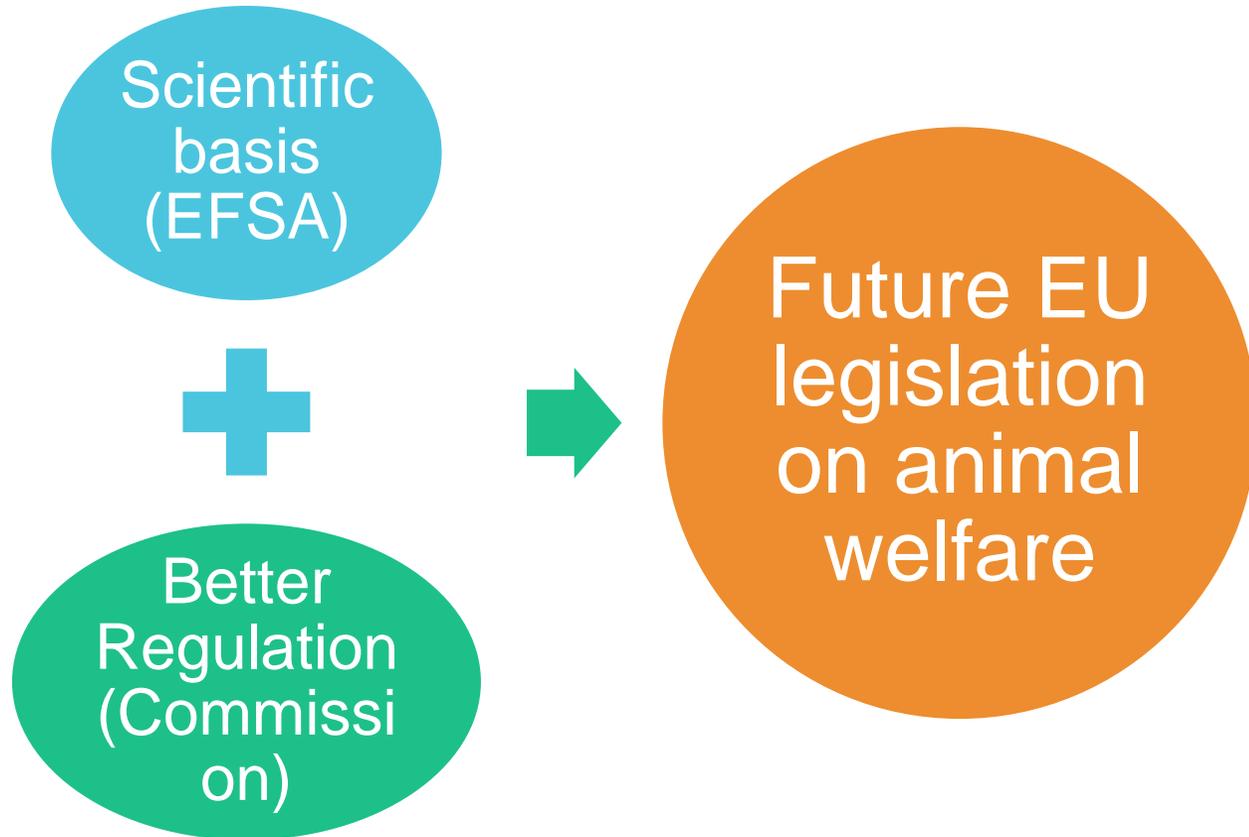
*'The Commission intends to propose to **phase out and finally prohibit** the use of such cage systems, for all the species and categories referred to in the ECI, under conditions (including the length of the transition period) to be determined based on **EFSA** opinions, an **impact assessment** and a **public consultation**.'*

1,4 million signatures in all EU Member States

Legislation to prohibit the use of cages for :

- laying hens, rabbits, pullets, broiler breeders, layer breeders, quail, ducks, geese, sows and calves

Revision of EU animal welfare legislation



- Proposals 2023 on updated current EU law + new rules e.g. on pullets + empowerments for future rules on other species + possibly animal welfare labelling (?)
- Potential future proposals based on Roadmap agreed with EFSA [aw_eval_revision_roadmap_efsa.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/efsa/aw_eval_revision_roadmap_efsa.pdf) (europa.eu)

Scientific basis for the proposals

Ongoing main EFSA mandates on animal welfare

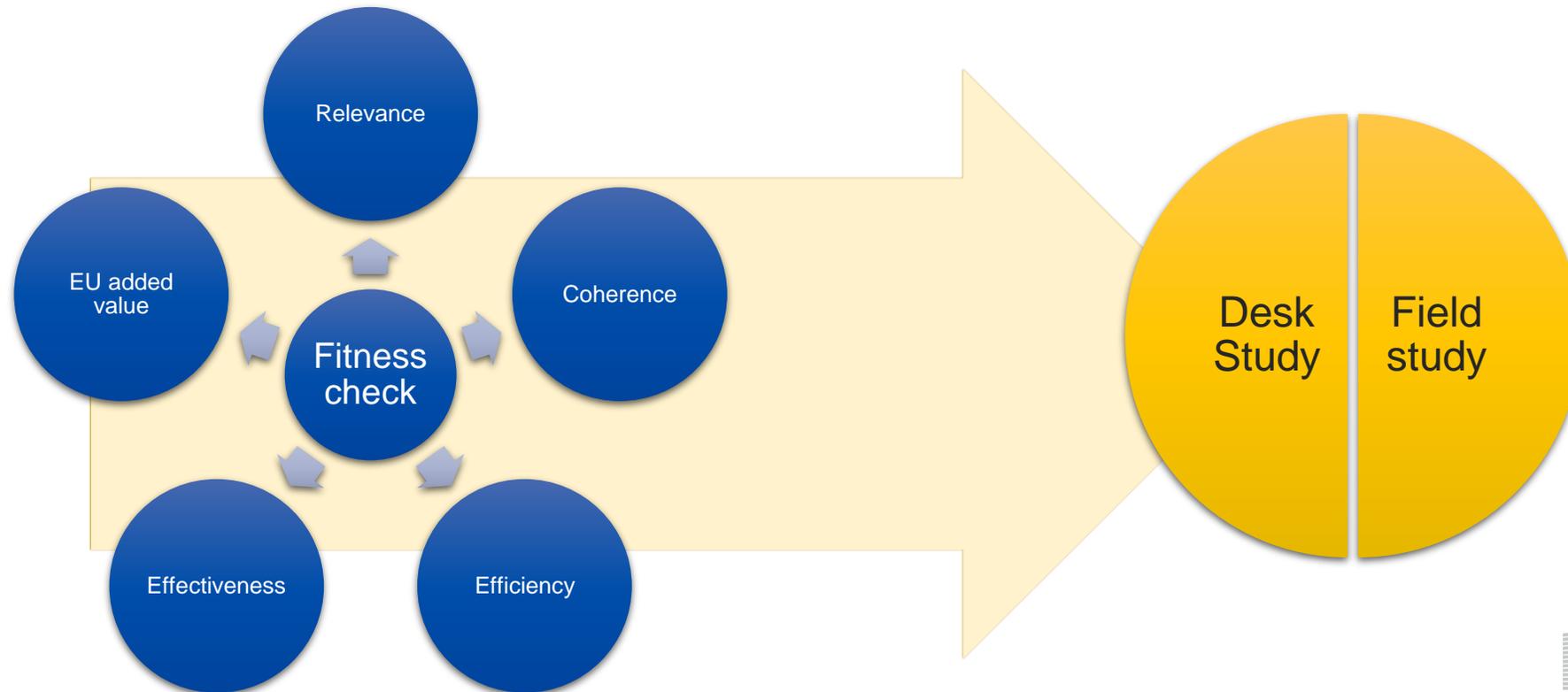
Mandate*	Agreed deadline
Transport	June 2022
Pigs	June 2022
Broilers**	December 2022
Laying hens**	December 2022
Calves	March 2023
Ducks, geese, quail	March 2023
Dairy cows	March 2023

- Mandates for rabbits and for slaughter are already available.
- ** Also addressing broiler breeders, pullets and layer breeders.

Fitness Check

Evaluation of the existing EU animal welfare legislation

Started in May 2020 - Conclusion by September 2022



Fitness Check: preliminary results



Improvement of lives of many animals



Lack of clarity of certain provisions



Lack of specific, updated and detailed requirements.



Lack of tools to monitor, measure and report.



Lack of training and competencies.



Insufficient and uneven information to consumers.

Inception Impact Assessment (IIA)



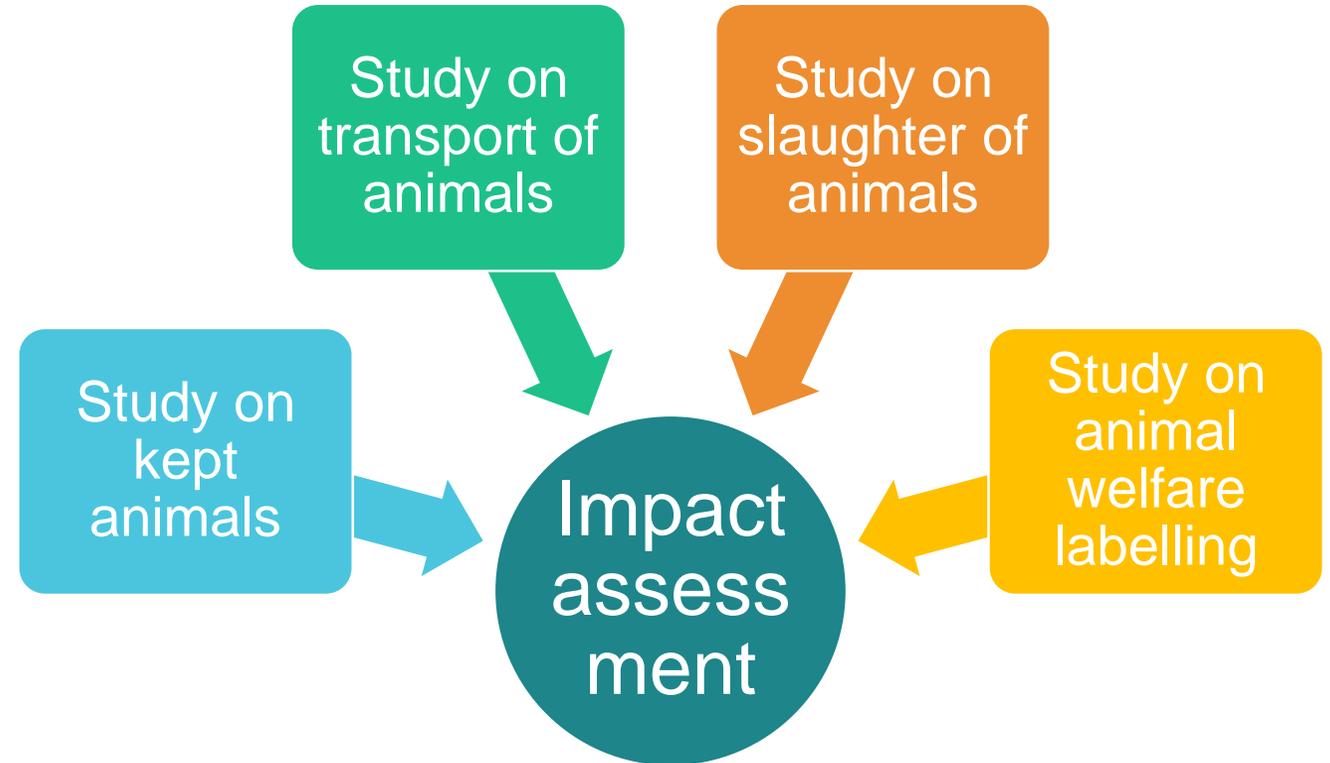
Ref. Ares(2021)4402068 - 06/07/2021

INCEPTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT	
Inception Impact Assessments aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's plans in order to allow them to provide feedback on the intended initiative and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to make available any relevant information that they may have, including on possible impacts of the different options.	
TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	Revision of the EU legislation on animal welfare
LEAD DG (RESPONSIBLE UNIT)	SANTE (Unit G5: Animal Welfare and Antimicrobial Resistance)
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	Legislative proposal of the European Parliament and of the Council
INDICATIVE PLANNING	Q4 2023
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/strategy/evaluation-eu-legislation-welfare-farmed-animals_en
The Inception Impact Assessment is provided for information purposes only. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by the Inception impact assessment, including its timing, are subject to change.	
A. Context, Problem definition and Subsidiarity Check	
Context	
EU animal welfare policy scope and principles derive from Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, which recognises animals as sentient beings. Article 13 also recognises the need to respect the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage.	
The EU legislation on the welfare of farmed animals consists of a Directive concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes and four Directives laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens , broilers , pigs and calves : one Regulation on animal transport and one Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing . In other words, it regulates animal welfare at farm level, during transport and at slaughter.	
The objectives of the EU legislation on animal welfare are to ensure by uniform application and enforcement the welfare of farmed animals, while at the same time allowing rational production and fair competition for EU business operators within the single market, and addressing expectations among citizens and consumers.	
Under the Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F), the Commission committed to revise this legislation and consider options for animal welfare labelling. The purpose of the revision is to ensure a higher level of animal welfare, broaden the scope of the EU animal welfare legislation, align it with the latest scientific evidence and current political priorities as well as citizen's expectations and make it easier to enforce. Animal welfare is a key component of sustainability in our food chain.	
On 30 June 2021, the Commission announced in its reply to the 'End of Cages' citizens' initiative that it will put forward a legislative proposal to phase out and finally prohibit the use of cages for certain species in the EU.	
The revision of the EU animal welfare legislation covers animals – including fish and fur animals – bred and kept for farming purposes, as well as cats and dogs insofar as transport for commercial purposes is concerned. It does not cover wild animals, experimental or laboratory animals (with exception for their welfare during transport) or any invertebrate animals.	
To gather evidence to feed into such revision, the Commission initiated in 2020 a fitness check of the current rules on the welfare of animals at farm, during transport and at slaughter, to be concluded in 2022. While the fitness check is still ongoing, available information points to weaknesses in the design, implementation, compliance and enforcement of the EU animal welfare legislation. Among others, the current rules seem to be outdated in light of new science and technology, and the lack of clarity of certain provisions results in divergent transposition and implementation across the EU Member States. In turn, this creates an uneven playing field for EU business operators and poses additional challenges to a proper, effective and uniform enforcement by the competent	

- Published July 2021
- Commission's preliminary policy options
- 4 welfare areas: on the farm, during transport, at the time of killing and animal welfare labelling
- Feedback period: 06/07-24/08/2021 (i.e. seven weeks)
- 983 contributions received.

Impact Assessment

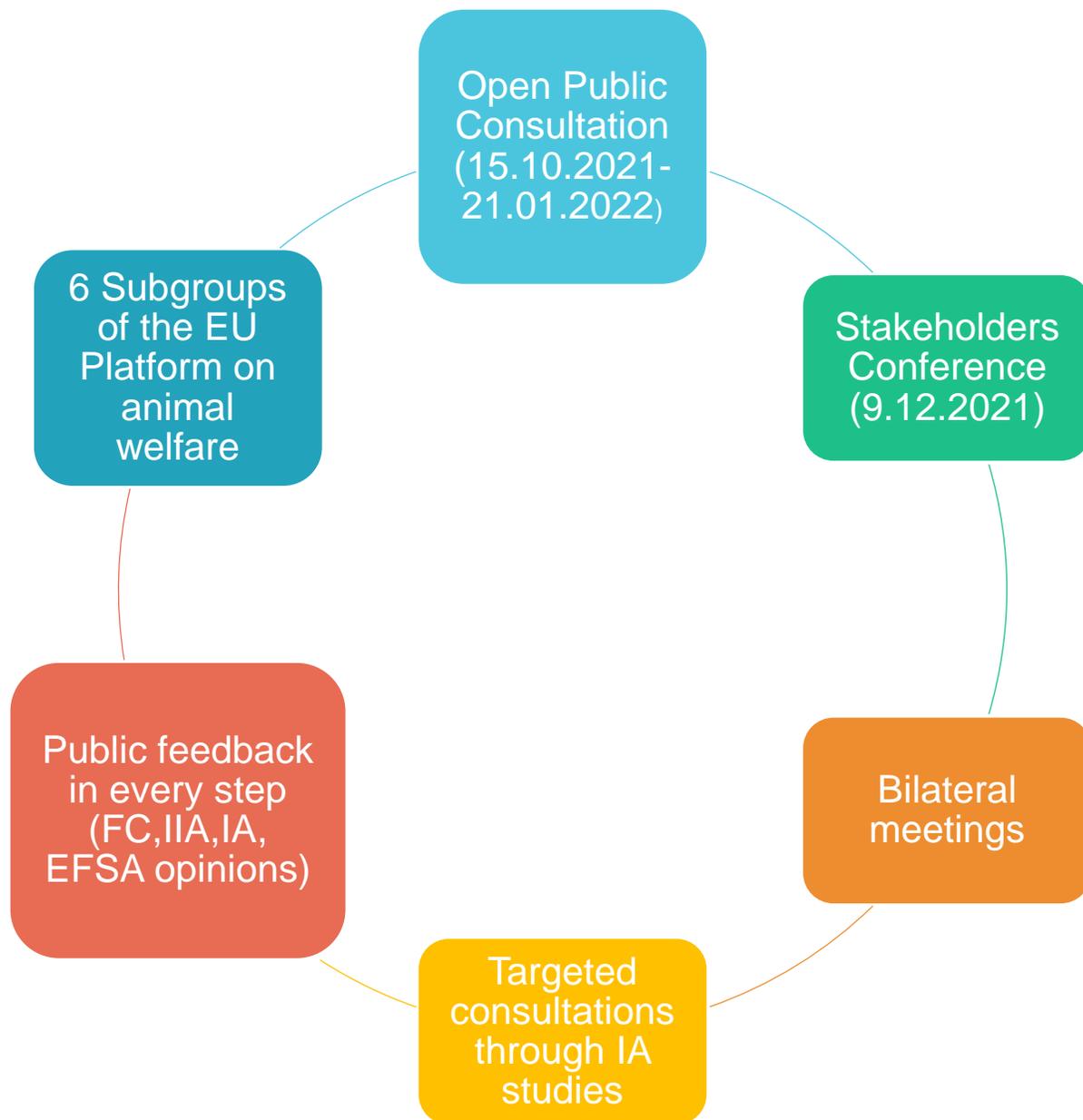
- Ongoing studies on the economic, social and environmental impacts of different policy options
- Conclusion first half 2023



Policy options on poultry keeping under assessment *(non-conclusive list)*

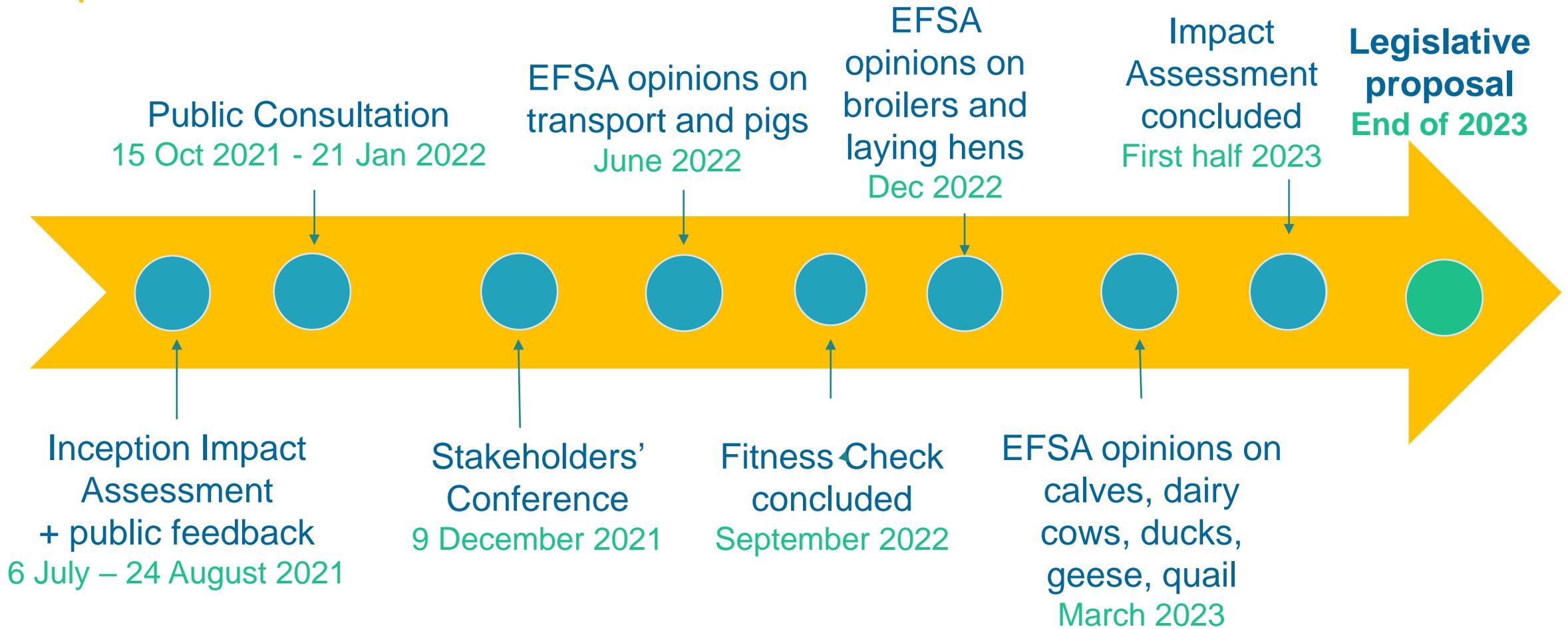
- Prohibition on cages
- Requirements for livestock farming systems
- Increased space allowances, Mutilations
- New species-specific animal welfare requirements
- Animal welfare indicators
- More precise terminology, definitions and requirements
- Competence of animal handlers

Consultations on the revision of legislation



- Open Public Consultation received nearly 60000 contributions
- 6 Subgroups of the EU Platform on:
poultry, pigs, calves and dairy cows, transport of animals, slaughter and animal welfare labelling

Timeline



Other key & supporting activities

- **EU Platform on Animal Welfare**

- A sub-group on the welfare of poultry since 2022
- All Platform meetings are webstreamed and recorded:
- https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-welfare/eu-platform-animal-welfare/platform-meetings_en



Press Release August 2022

Best Practice Hens launches a collection of Practice Abstracts highlighting best practices in cage-free systems

The Best Practice Hens project contributes to helping egg farmers transition to cage-free systems (indoor systems, and free-range or organic systems) by practical guidance on best practices for pullets and laying hens. The project aims to take the needs and realities of farmers into account. It focuses specifically – but not only – on the situation in Poland, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium (target countries) to provide valuable and targeted information. Best Practice Hens brings together European experts from academia, research institutes, a non-profit organization and a poultry specialized veterinarian company to join forces to improve the welfare of pullets and laying hens through changing to cage-free systems.

The egg sector is of great importance in EU food production. In the EU, we are self-sufficient in egg production and consumption. However, there are big differences in laying hen housing systems among EU countries. Animals are either kept in furnished cages or cage-free housing systems, including indoor, free-range, and organic systems. Around half of the total EU egg production comes from furnished cages, 33% from indoor cage-free systems, 12% from free-range, and 6% from organic systems. Among the top 10 egg producers in Europe, Germany, and The Netherlands stand out as countries with the highest percentage of cage-free systems. However, amongst the top egg producing countries, Poland, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium still have a relatively high percentage of hens kept in furnished cages.

The project launched a collection of Practice Abstracts (PA) on keeping and managing pullets and laying hens to ensure high welfare mainly during the transition to higher welfare egg production systems. These PAs are currently available in English and will shortly be translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Polish, German and French. They are structured in 2 pages to make the practice-oriented knowledge easily available. Its objective is to support the transition to cage-free systems within the EU, by showing best practices examples and solutions to main current problems in egg production. The Best Practices compiled in the different PAs will be relevant to all parties: egg producers and industries, representatives of farmer and advisor's associations, but also policymakers and animal welfare organizations.

Furthermore, transferring knowledge collected, validated and applied so far to egg producers on the diverse housing systems help producers decide on a possible switch to cage-free systems. Therefore, Best Practice Hens will organize dissemination events for egg producers and advisors in Belgium, Spain, Poland, and Portugal, in the coming months. If you are an egg producer or advisor in these countries, you are invited to participate in the national dissemination events. In these events, we will have a good look at the cage-free systems. This should help farmers to make better choices concerning developments and changes in the market, economic aspects, environmental issues and ensuring a high level of animal welfare. A final event will be organized in Brussels in 2023 after these national events. These events seek to help the egg industry across Europe (and beyond) to meet market demands by providing practical support to farmers.

The Best Practice Hens involves Utrecht University (coordinator), Wageningen University & Research (NL), the Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (BE), Aarhus University (DK), Neiker, Ecovalia (ES), and the Institute of Genetics and Biotechnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PL). Moreover, FairPoultry (NL) and Kipdip (PL) participate as subcontractors. The Best Practice Hens project is currently in its mid phase, as it will last for 2 years, ending in May 2023.

Stay tuned! Soon we will have more material to share in other languages and announce the events' dates.

www.bestpracticehens.eu

Contact information:

Project Leader: Prof. T. Bas Rodenburg (t.b.rodenburg@uu.nl)

Responsible for communication: Angela Morell Pérez (ecovalia.projects@ecovalia.org)



Targeted Commission Project

Pilot project on best practices for alternative egg production systems

- May 2021-May 2023
- Dissemination events in Belgium, Spain, Poland and Portugal
- Final event presenting results in 2023



Thank you!