

Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans  
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 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 States<sup>1</sup> 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 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

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

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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,

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Rosa D'Amato  
Martin Buschmann  
Sarah Wiener  
Sirpa Pietikäinen  
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