

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/eu-affairs/811144/ngos-complain-to-the-european-ombudsman-on-broken-promise-to-ban-cages-for-animals>

NGOs complain to the European Ombudsman on broken promise to ban cages for animals

Friday, 24 November 2023



Credit: The Brussels Times

For the very first time, over 30 animal welfare organisations submitted on Thursday a complaint to the European Ombudsman against the European Commission’s failure to fulfil a commitment to European citizens.

As [previously reported](#), in its response last year to the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) “End the Cage Age”, the Commission promised to put forward a legislative proposal by 2023 to prohibit the use of cages for millions of farmed animals. The ECI was supported by ca 1.4 million citizens across all EU member states. The proposal was expected to become part of the ongoing revision of the animal welfare legislation under the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Yet, in the recent work programme for the rest of the political term, the Kept Animals Regulation, which should have included the new legislation, was missing. This means that the regulation will now be left to the fate of the next Commission.

In their complaint to the Ombudsman, the organisations wrote that the Commission has failed to act in accordance with the rules governing the ECIs after generating legitimate expectations among European citizens. This is a case of maladministration, according to the complaint, as the purpose of the ECIs is to function as an instrument of transnational democracy.

Prior to backtracking from its promise, the Commission repeatedly confirmed that it was working towards the 2023 timeline, with multiple mentions of this date being made publicly by Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides, in answers to parliamentary questions, at the EU Platform on Animal Welfare, and in various communications on the Farm to Fork Strategy.

In another ECI, ca 1.5 million citizens also asked for a ban on fur farming and the placement of fur products on the European market. This was also expected to have been included in the Kept Animals Regulations, as transpired in a leaked Impact Assessment. In a recent [Eurobarometer](#), an overwhelming majority of European citizens clearly said they want the EU to do more to protect animals.

"The European Commission made clear expectations to citizens, but in the moment of truth, has let them down," commented Reineke Hameleers, CEO, Eurogroup for Animals. "This calls into question a core value of EU Institutions: democracy. The ECI was purposely launched to allow citizens to actively participate in policy-making processes."

The NGO added that a delay in reforming animal welfare legislation will also cost European farmers and food businesses. Unless they get a clear indication to the opposite, they might invest in systems that are not future-proof.

The Brussels Times