

Current study on EU live exports by sea

High risk transports for crews, animals, and the environment

NGOs are calling for a live export ban

Paris, 17 June 2021 – The EU is exporting its surplus production of live animals to third countries on livestock vessels. A current study by [Robin des Bois \(France\)](#), [Animal Welfare Foundation \(AWF, Germany\)](#), and [Tierschutzbund Zürich \(TSB Zürich, Switzerland\)](#) examines the seaworthiness of 78 EU-certified livestock carriers for the first time. In addition to their own research, the authors also refer to official data such as the international Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MoU) and the MARPOL international Convention for the prevention of pollution from ships. The study reaches a devastating verdict with regards to safety, animal, and environmental protection of EU live exports by sea. "Livestock carriers are the most dangerous vessels in the world. With an average of 41 years of age, the vessels are too old, they contribute to the pollution of the seas, are the cause of enormous animal suffering, mostly drive under black flags of convenience and have been approved as seaworthy by dubious companies," the authors sum up the result.

This new study lists each vessel used for the transport of animals individually. Out of the 78 EU certified vessels, only five were purpose built for the transport of live animals. 73 ships were previously used as container ships, ferries, or freighters. "The global average age for scrapping vessels is 30 years. The 78 evaluated vessels, however, already averaged 29 years when they were converted into EU-approved livestock carriers. They already had one ship's life behind them", the authors criticise. Moreover, such conversions do not consider the behaviour and needs of animals during sea transports, or which species will be transported. Only 6% of the EU-approved vessels were originally built to transport animals, this means that 94% of the vessels were built without considering species-specific needs.

Frequent changes of ownership, registration under flags of convenience and classifications of ships at internationally non-recognised companies increase the risk for crew, animals, and the environment. According to the Paris MoU, 43 ships (55%) sail under flags from risk and high-risk countries. "The export by sea of livestock produced by the European Union's agriculture should be carried out exclusively on vessels flying a performing flag included on the whitelist published by Paris MoU. We believe that all export vessels should fly a European flag", the NGOs formulate their minimum requirement for the committee of inquiry of the European Parliament.

The conversion of the old ships involves increased security risks. They were not originally designed for additional loads. Increased, additional loading decks are a problem. They shift the vessels' centre of gravity further upwards. In heavy seas and with moving cargo such as animals, the ship loses stability more quickly. This has been the cause for several accidents in recent years the authors report.

Only 23 EU-certified livestock carriers were tested for shipping and sea safety by the International Association of Classification Societies, IACS, according to the standards of the Paris MoU. 55 ships (71%) passed the "vessel inspection" at various other companies. The quality of these companies has been classified as low to very low. AWF, TSB and Robin des Bois emphasise that these audit companies have issued certificates to many banned, multi-detained substandard ships.

Most owners are small shipping companies. They operate only a couple of vessels or even only one. Their limited financial resources cannot ensure a proper maintenance of their ships, decent working and living conditions to the crews, not to mention animal welfare during transport.

Out of 78 approved vessels, only 21 belong to shipowners based in the European Union. Eleven of these 21 vessels are established in the European Union, but for financial reasons, they relocate their vessels offshore, which allows them to bypass European standards with regards to wages and social protection for crews.

The authors list several cases in which shipowners avoided prosecution and the assumption of costs after accidents by organising their bankruptcy on their own. Ships are then quickly sold to other companies and former owners continue using other company names.

Only five of the 78 livestock carriers did not have to face detentions yet. 53 vessels have been detained several times due to massive violations to Paris MoU. "Despite continued animal welfare violations and endangerment of the seas, the vessel operators remain in business", criticise Robin des Bois, AWF, and TSB Zurich the inadequate controls by the EU Commission.

The list of violations is long. In the last two years alone, 2,504 violations were officially recorded on the 78 EU-approved livestock carriers. These include a high proportion of essential technical requirements for the safe transport of animals and crew on board. Non compliances (deficiencies) were reported in 90% of the ships with regard the safety of navigation, in 78% with regard life saving appliances, in 64% with regard pollution prevention, in 62% with regard water and weathertight conditions.

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[Robin des Bois](#) is an NGO for the protection of Man and the environment founded in France in 1985. It campaigns internationally among others for safer seas and for animal protection through in-depth investigation. Since 2006, Robin des Bois has published "Shipbreaking", a bulletin dedicated to ship demolition which is a worldwide reference.

The [Animal Welfare Foundation e.V. \(AWF\)](#) and [Tierschutzbund Zürich \(TSB\)](#) are independent, non-profit, and internationally active animal welfare organisations. With their own investigation teams and animal welfare projects, both organisations are committed to improving the lives of so-called "farm" animals.

Paris MoU:

The organisation consists of 27 participating maritime Administrations and covers the waters of the European coastal States and the North Atlantic basin from North America to Europe.

Mission is to eliminate the operation of sub-standard ships through a harmonized system of port State control.

Annually more than 17.000 inspections take place on board foreign ships in the Paris MoU ports, ensuring that these ships meet international safety, security and environmental standards, and that crew members have adequate living and working conditions.

MARPOL:

The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) is the main international convention covering prevention of pollution of the marine environment by ships from operational or accidental causes.