

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000051/26
to the Commission
Cristina Guarda (Verts/ALE)
(8 January 2026)**

Subject: Spiridon II and animal welfare

According to independent associations and observers, the livestock transport ship *Spiridon II* undertook a journey of more than two months that had serious problems, including numerous deaths, inadequate on-board conditions and poor sanitary management. In addition, the authorities had difficulty tracing its route after it deactivated its automatic identification system (AIS). The ship was also reported to have transited or anchored in Member States' waters without any activation of the mandatory controls, before docking in Libya and Lebanon. This raises questions about the effectiveness of EU measures to protect animal welfare and the suitability of the vessels used.

In view of the above:

1. Can the Commission provide details of the information gathered by the competent authorities on the *Spiridon II*'s journey (sanitary conditions, deaths, unloading and waste management), the extent to which Member States along the route fulfilled their obligations and the steps that will be taken if shortcomings are identified?
2. What is its assessment of the frequency of incidents during the transport of live animals by sea, and does it believe that such events reveal structural problems, in particular with regard to the suitability of vessels and actual journey times?
3. Will it relaunch, as a matter of urgency, the revision of the EU regulation on the transport of live animals in order to limit long-distance maritime transport, ensure that all hours between loading and unloading are counted, tighten up the technical requirements for ships, and ensure that they can always be traced, including by keeping their AIS switched on at all times?

Submitted: 8.1.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(31 March 2026)**

1. The EU legislation on the protection of animals during transport is not applicable to transports between third countries and the Commission is not aware of any Member State or an EU operator involved in the case described by the Honourable Member.
2. Incidents related to the suitability of vessels may still occasionally occur. For this reason, in 2023, the Commission adopted tertiary legislation strengthening official controls on transports by livestock vessels ⁽¹⁾, ⁽²⁾. In 2025-2026, the Commission is carrying out a series of audits on the implementation of this recent legislation. This will contribute to improving transports of animals by sea, as far as such transports depart from the EU.

Furthermore, in its 2023 proposal for a new Regulation on animal transport ⁽³⁾, the Commission proposed stricter rules at export, increasing space allowance, approval of feeding systems for unweaned animals, rules for livestock vessels, and certification bodies.

3. The above-mentioned Commission proposal is currently pending with the co-legislators. The proposal offers the opportunity to modernise technical requirements for animal transport, including transports by sea, to achieve concrete improvements for animals while maintaining the competitiveness of the EU livestock sector. The primary responsibility for the vessel, its safety and operations rests with the flag state.

⁽¹⁾ COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2023/842 of 17 February 2023 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards rules for the performance of official controls to verify compliance with animal welfare requirements for the transport of animals by livestock vessels.

⁽²⁾ COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2023/372 of 17 February 2023 laying down rules on the recording, storing and sharing of written records of official controls performed on livestock vessels, on contingency plans for livestock vessels in the event of emergencies, on the approval of livestock vessels and on minimum requirements applicable to exit points.

⁽³⁾ COM(2023) 770 final.