

...the EU should ban caged farming

1 Improving animal welfare

Cages severely restrict animals' movement, prevent them from engaging in natural behaviours, such as foraging and nesting, and thwart proper social interaction between animals, as confirmed by the European Food Safety Authority. Banning cages would follow scientific recommendations and improve the living conditions and welfare of hundreds of millions of animals across the EU.

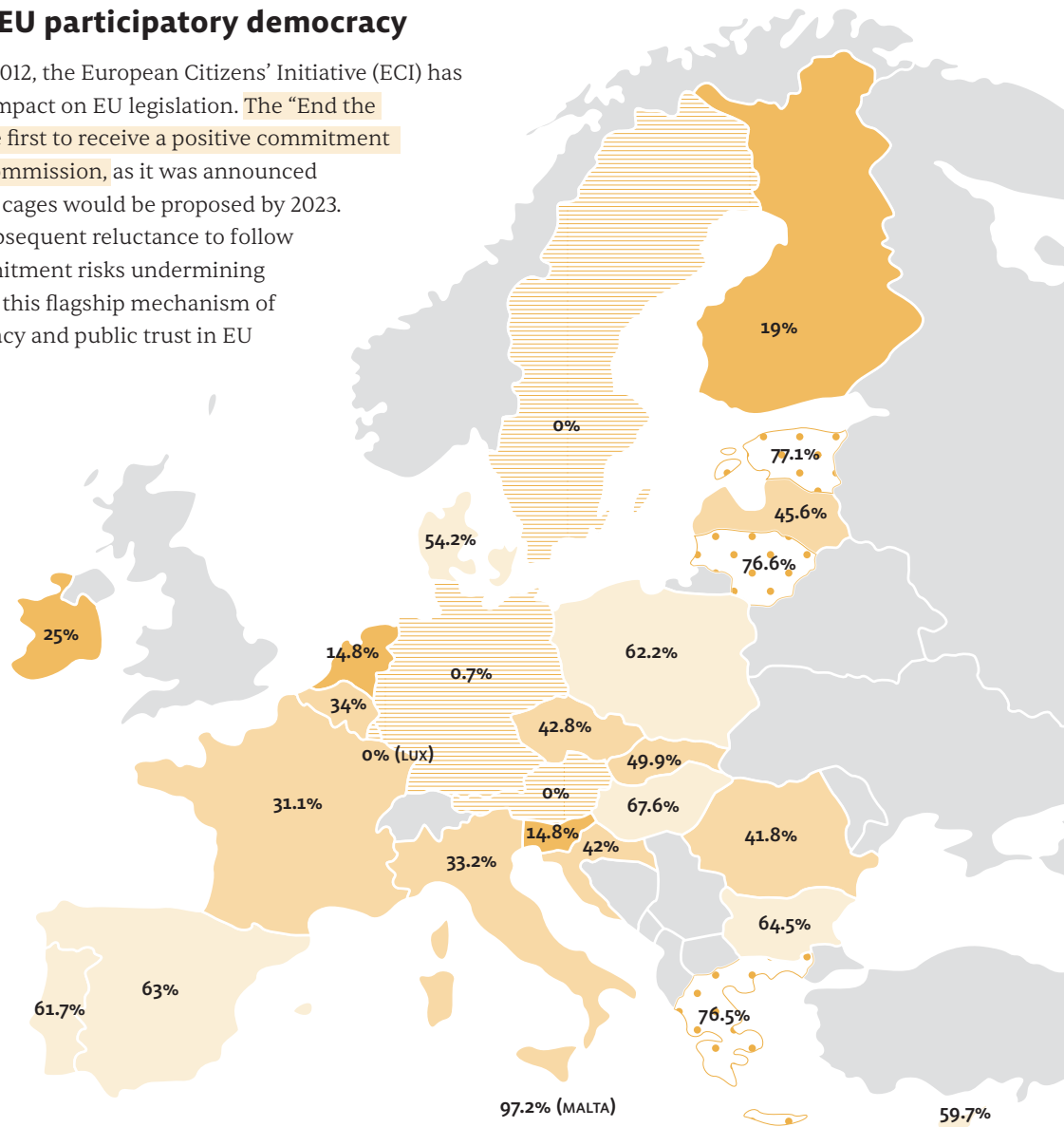
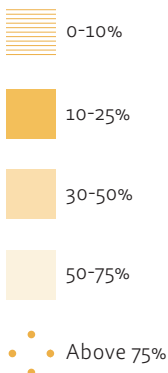
2 Responding to public expectations

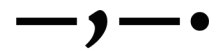
European citizens increasingly expect higher animal welfare standards in food production. Support for phasing out cages is constantly high among EU citizens, reaching 89% in a 2023 Eurobarometer and 98-99% in a 2025 public consultation on the modernization of animal welfare rules.

3 Strengthening EU participatory democracy

Despite its launch in 2012, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) has had limited tangible impact on EU legislation. The "End the Cage Age" ECI was the first to receive a positive commitment from the European Commission, as it was announced that legislation to ban cages would be proposed by 2023. The Commission's subsequent reluctance to follow through on this commitment risks undermining both the credibility of this flagship mechanism of participatory democracy and public trust in EU institutions.

Percentage of laying hens kept in enriched cages (data from 2020, 2023, 2024 & 2025)





4 Reflecting evolving market dynamics

Many businesses across the EU have recognised the shift in consumer expectations and adapted to the demand. This is most notable in the egg sector, as a method-of-production labelling of shelled eggs provides consumers with information on housing conditions for hens and enables them to choose more welfare-friendly options. As a result, hundreds of companies, including major market players, have committed to eliminating eggs from caged hens from their supply chains.

5 Establishing a level playing field

The regulatory landscape across the EU currently varies, with some Member States going beyond the minimum of EU animal welfare standards by adopting national bans on cages for laying hens, gilts and sows, or rabbits. Addressing the resulting market distortions requires action at EU level. An EU-wide ban would harmonise housing standards across the bloc and help ensure comparable production conditions for EU producers.

6 Ensuring policy coherence

A ban on caged farming would help align animal welfare standards with the EU's broader policy framework on agriculture and food systems. It would reinforce the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy (2020) and reflect the ambition set out in the Vision for Agriculture and Food (2025), which foresees a phase-out of cages.

7 Providing regulatory certainty for farmers

While the European Commission announced plans to phase out cages in 2021, no legislative proposal has been adopted to date, and delays continue. This situation provides little clarity for farmers who require regulatory certainty when making investment decisions. In particular, farmers operating older facilities face uncertainty as they consider whether to invest in caged systems or alternative housing solutions.

8 Promoting innovation in agriculture

Many of the housing systems and management practices currently used in animal agriculture are not fit for purpose. Phasing out cages would promote and further stimulate innovation towards more welfare-friendly animal husbandry.

9 Promoting more sustainable farming models

Agriculture in the EU must move towards sustainable and resilient models that can respond to future regulatory, environmental, and societal expectations. This inevitably requires addressing current animal farming systems, such as caged housing, which is a staple of intensive industrial production focused on short-term cost efficiency but overlooking its long-term negative consequences.

10 Maintaining the EU's global leadership in animal welfare

The EU aspires to be a global leader in animal welfare. Achieving this goal requires continued progress in farming practices. Phasing out the use of cages would offer a clear opportunity for the EU to lead by example and contribute to raising standards internationally.