



European Partnership on
Animal Health and Welfare

STMs

Short-Term Missions

Case Study

The EUP AH&W provides small grants for Short-Term Missions (STMs) with the aim of sharing scientific expertise, methodologies, equipment, and facilities to harmonise the existing approaches and methodologies within the large EUP AH&W. They aim to drive research forward in a collaborative and non-duplicative fashion to strengthen both the scientific capacity within the EUP AH&W and promote Animal Health and Welfare across Europe. Additionally, STMs serve as a platform for creating and consolidating professional networks, fostering mutual trust among researchers and institutions, and establishing a strong foundation for future collaborative efforts.



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Title: **Integration of Animal Health & Welfare Assessment into Sustainability Assessment Tools**

EUP AH&W Thematic area: Surveillance/monitoring systems and risk assessment of animal health and welfare, Procedures, methodologies, and tools to assess animal health and animal welfare.
Home Institute: Teagasc, Ireland.
Mission hosting institute: Aarhus University, Denmark
Duration of mission: 3 months.

Summary

Sustainability assessments in livestock production often focus on environmental, economic, and social dimensions, while animal health and welfare remain difficult to integrate in a way that is measurable and comparable across dimensions. This Short-Term Mission (STM) aimed to establish animal health and welfare as a distinct sustainability dimension within assessment frameworks, supporting the objectives of the EUP AH&W partnership.

Through collaboration between the teams at Aarhus University and Teagasc, this STM contributed to the further development of an existing sustainability assessment framework. The work focused on integrating animal health and welfare, while making sure these could be compared fairly with other factors, such as environmental impact. Focusing on pig farming, the team selected simple and practical signs of animal welfare that could be measured across an entire production system. They created a welfare rating scale based on the best possible conditions for pigs: conditions that are known to support optimal welfare. They also developed a formula that looks at the animal's welfare over its whole life and takes into account the welfare of the parent animals, such as the sows (mothers) and boars (fathers).

The STM awardee also had the opportunity to support a related study on positive welfare in calves. This provided the STM awardee with hands-on experience with judgement bias techniques, which help researchers understand animals' emotional states. The skills gained are now supporting the development of a follow-up research project at Teagasc.

A shared publication is being prepared, that reviews and assesses how animal welfare is currently included in sustainability assessments, and presents a new method developed during the STM. It is planned for peer-review submission in 2026.

“ This Short-Term Mission (STM) made a valuable contribution to both my professional development and the objectives of the project that I am currently working on. I gained practical experience with novel methodologies, including judgement bias assessment. These newly acquired skills have already informed the development of a short follow-up project at my home institution. Overall, my STM strengthened international collaboration, contributed directly to my ongoing research, and provided methodological expertise that will have lasting value beyond the duration of the visit. ”

Francesca Pells Johansen
Research Officer

