

**Brussels, 7 April 2008**

## **EU rules no exemption on slaughtering for Romania**

The European Commission has refused to grant an exemption on cultural grounds to Romania over the home slaughter of pigs at Christmas. Many Romanian families kill one or two pigs in the festive season by slitting the animals' throats, but this contravenes a European directive that stipulates pigs, sheep and goats should be stunned first if they are being killed at home for own consumption. An investigation by Eurogroup for Animals and VIER PFOTEN Romania uncovered that the practice is still widespread in the country and wrote to the Commissioner for Health at the European Commission to alert them to the situation.

The Commission has now written back to the two organisations to admit that Romania is in breach of European legislation, and it has told the country to take action. Romania initially argued it should be given an exemption as they claimed it was a cultural tradition.

Philip Tod, spokesman for the Commissioner for Health, wrote in a letter to the two animal welfare organisations: "The Commission appreciates that the Romanian authorities may face practical difficulties, but denies having granted them any derogation. The Commission has on the contrary requested that they provide a specific action plan to address the situation as quickly as possible."

Sonja Van Tichelen, director of Eurogroup for Animals, welcomed the decision. "It is fantastic that the Commission is demanding immediate action on this medieval practice. Tradition should never be used as an excuse to make animals suffer unnecessarily. By being stunned first, these pigs can avoid a lot of agony."

Dr Marlene Wartenberg, director of VIER PFOTEN European Policy Office, added: "Romanians will still be able to keep pigs at home, but at least now the country has to reinvent the tradition in a more animal friendly way."

Eurogroup for Animals is offering to help Romania adjust to the change by giving advice and training. VIER PFOTEN is supporting the change by an information campaign, run by VIER PFOTEN's office in Romania.

- ENDS -

*For more information call Steven Blaakman, senior press officer at Eurogroup, on 0032 (0)27400823 or email him on [s.blaakman@eurogroupforanimals.org](mailto:s.blaakman@eurogroupforanimals.org). Outside office hours, he can be reached on 0475731066.*

*Pictures showing the slaughter of pigs in the Romanian village of Calugareni last December are available on request. They should be credited to VIER PFOTEN / Mihail Vasile*

Notes:

- Eurogroup for Animals represents animal welfare organisations in each of the European member states. Since it was launched in 1980, Eurogroup has succeeded in encouraging the European Union to adopt higher legal standards of animal protection. more information about Eurogroup, visit [www.eurogroupforanimals.org](http://www.eurogroupforanimals.org).
- VIER PFOTEN is an international charitable private foundation for animal welfare. more about VIER PFOTEN visit [www.vier-pfoten.eu](http://www.vier-pfoten.eu).
- About 1.5 million pigs are slaughtered in Romania each Christmas.
- The slaughter of pigs without stunning them contravenes article 9 of EC Directive 93/119/EC on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter.
- There can be exemptions to the directive for “religious rites” such as for the slaughter of animals according to Muslim or Jewish tradition.
- It is believed the home slaughter of pigs without stunning them first is also common practice in Bulgaria.