

Brussels, 31 January 2007

Call to stop suffering of pigs slaughtered in Romania without being stunned

Two leading animal welfare organisations are calling for an end to the Romanian practice of slaughtering pigs at home for Christmas without stunning them first.

An investigation by Eurogroup for Animals and VIER PFOTEN Romania has uncovered that the cruel practice is still widespread in the country despite contravening a European Union directive stating animals must be killed without unnecessary suffering.

The two groups have now written to Markos Kyprianou, Commissioner for Health at the European Commission, to demand EU action on the backyard slaughter that affects as many as 1.5 million pigs each year.

Many Romanian families kill one or two pigs in the festive season by slitting the animals' throats. 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. Romania is asking an exemption to the directive on religious grounds.

Eurogroup and VIER PFOTEN want the Commission to take steps to make sure Romania complies with European animal welfare legislation.

Sonja Van Tichelen, director of Eurogroup for Animals, said: "Although the celebrations themselves might be tradition in Romania, there is nothing religious about the way these animals are being killed. "There is no reason for animals to be suffering so much when it can be avoided."

Dr Marlene Wartenberg, director of VIER PFOTEN European Policy Office, added: "It is time for Romania to bring its slaughter practices in line with European legislation. "There is no place for such a medieval practice in a modern state."

Eurogroup is offering to help Romania adjust to the change by giving advice and training.

- ENDS -

For more information, journalists can call Steven Blaakman, senior press officer at Eurogroup, on 00 32 (0)27400823 or email him on s.blaakman@eurogroupforanimals.org. This is for media inquiries only.

