

Brussels, 24 October 2006

Shame on Spain for ignoring the EU law on the protection of animals in zoos

Eurogroup for Animals is today calling on the European Commission to act against the Spanish authorities for not implementing a 1999 Directive on the keeping of wild animals in zoos¹. According to this EU law, Member States had to inspect and register all their zoos by April 2005 at the very latest. In case a zoo did not respect the criteria for animal welfare, education and scientific research set by the Directive it had to be closed down and animals rehomed in suitable facilities.

So far Spain has disrespected its obligations, as many substandard zoos continue their lucrative activities, and completely ignore the welfare of the animals, not to mention their educational and research role.

Eurogroup has been pushing for several years the Spanish authorities to act, yet with little success. In 2006, in collaboration with other NGOs active in Spain², a detailed study of 8 zoos was conducted. The results³ show that most of the visited zoos do not participate in research programmes with conservation objectives and do not have educational activities, as required by the zoo Directive. Additionally many animals are kept in small and unsuitable enclosures in which they cannot express their natural behaviour. It is clear from the study that many of these zoos should either improve drastically or otherwise be closed.

Sonja Van Tichelen, Director of Eurogroup, says: *“Spain is ignoring its duties according to EU law. In some of the autonomous communities, it is not even clear which department, between environment and agriculture, is responsible for the application of the zoo legislation. No structures nor procedures are in place to conduct the initial inspections needed to evaluate zoos. Meanwhile zoo animals continue to suffer. We call on the Commission to act urgently to stop zoos continuing to work illegally.”*

Eurogroup for Animals has today sent a fully documented complaint to Commissioner Dimas and his services and will be following up on the Commission action to push the Spanish authorities to finally respect this ignored Directive.

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For further information, footage and/or a copy of the report, contact:
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¹ Council Directive 1999/22/EC of 29 March 1999 relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos

² DEPANA and Born Free Foundation

³ La Salud de los Zoos – adecuación de los parques zoológicos a la Ley 31/2003. InfoZoos, 2006, 125 p.