

European Animal Welfare Centre

Background:

The Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006 - 2010 highlighted the need for the setting up of a European Centre. The Centre would facilitate the promotion of market based measures such as consumer information and would also assist in providing input in relevant socio-economic studies and impact assessments.

The Commission has asked Civic Consulting to prepare a feasibility study on the setting up of such a centre, due to be ready by the end of 2009.

As a key stakeholder in the development of EU animal welfare policy Eurogroup considers to be ideally placed to comment on both the need for this centre and its terms of reference. Eurogroup is experiencing on a day-to-day basis the call for more information and advice from authorities, industry and operators as well as the need to have a central and trusted source of information and advice on what is a relatively new and complex civil society issue touching on concerns of human and animal health, industry standards, and communication.

Terms of reference

What it should not do;

- **Duplicate** what other EU agencies are already doing:
 - EFSA: Science
 - FVO: Enforcement and control
 - EU funded project under FP7: Research into animal welfare
 - ECVAM: Animal testing and alternatives
 - JRC: Science to support legislation
- Have a political mandate or **be involved in politically sensitive issue** such as preparing statements on policy options
- **Have a commercially sensitive role** like approving production systems or schemes

What it should do;

- Fill the need for a **centralized information centre** which can provide information and advice on the scientific, technical, legal, marketing and communication aspects of animal welfare
- The Centre should be the support tool for EU institutions and member states assisting in the development and implementation of animal welfare policy. To this end activities should include:
 - Central **database of existing legislation, research and market initiatives**
There is at this moment no central place where this information can be found making the research for best practice or state-of-the-art very time-consuming
 - Provide **training and education tools** for authorities and operators
Several EU laws require the setting up of training courses (EU Pigs Directive, Live transport Regulation, Commission Proposal on Slaughter, etc). Whilst member states may lack the resources to design these courses, centralising the design of such courses is very cost efficient. The courses could then be used by all member states thus achieving a harmonised level of implementation.
 - Provide **best practice** advice regarding **enforcement of legislation**.
*All member states could benefit by guidance for enforcement such as the drafting of checklist for inspection of transport or on-farm legislation. Over the years animal welfare organisations have produced such lists for inspection in zoos (Eurogroup for Animals) and during transport (Animals' Angels).
These have been hugely appreciated by enforcement authorities.*
- Advice on consumer perception of animal welfare and consumer communication needs and market based approaches

The **Animal Welfare Action Plan** includes market mechanisms to promote products from high welfare production. To this end it is important to understand how these mechanisms are working and how they can be integrated in a policy framework.

The Centre could be involved in consumer research, such as testing the efficiency of proposed labelling schemes on the target group itself, and become a centre of excellence on consumer communication on animal welfare.

For this reason the Centre should monitor important trends in citizens and consumer preferences and concerns and collect surveys and research in this area. The Centre should also be fully informed about developments in other areas of consumer related issues.

- Support the development of future animal welfare related policy including information for the preparation of impact assessments and stakeholders consultation

The Centre could become a one-stop shop information source to help an informed debate on animal welfare.

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