THEME
ARE WE DOING ENOUGH TO STOP THE NEXT PANDEMIC?

INTERVIEW
Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President of the European Commission

JOINING FORCES
Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?

MAKING A DIFFERENCE
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On World Animal Day, Dutch poultry farmer and innovator Ruud Zanders announced that next year, he will launch ‘VEGGS’ a plant-based egg made from yeast and soy-protein. Ruud has a fascinating history. He took over the intensive laying hen farm from his father and at a certain moment realised: this system is wrong: bad for nature, the animals and the farmers. He took a bold step and introduced the state of the art sustainable and high animal welfare laying hen farming concept called Kipster, which has been a huge success in the Netherlands and beyond. Wherever Ruud speaks he doesn’t shy away from saying that moving to plant-based or other alternatives is the only way forward.

After the release of the EU Green Deal’s Farm to Fork strategy, one can wonder if Ruud’s story is illustrative of the evolution we are witnessing in terms of EU food policy? Honestly I believe EU decision makers are still with one foot in the old agricultural mindset and the other in a new food paradigm. As you will read in this magazine, we are over the moon that the outdated animal welfare legislation will be reviewed. But does this genuinely herald a most urgent systemic change or will it just upgrade the status quo?

At the moment things are still very unclear but the opportunities on the political and policy horizons are rosier than ever. Over the coming years the EU will be working on a food policy framework law which could include a shift towards innovative and sustainable food production such as regenerative agriculture and cultivated meat.

As soon as the COVID-19 situation allows for it, I will invite Ruud to come to Brussels to share his story and conviction with EU leaders. His journey illustrates that business innovation in agriculture is possible and very exciting. If you want to hear more about Ruud and the developments in food policy in Brussels, do listen to my interview with him in our brand new podcast Animals in Europe. I hope you enjoy the read!
Wild and domestic animals have carried viruses and bacteria for millennia. What has changed is the way we interact with them. The legal and illegal wildlife trade, urbanisation and the destruction of wildlife’s natural habitats for agricultural purposes are combining to push humans, wildlife and other animals closer than ever before. At the same time, practices within the industrial livestock sector are leading to rising antimicrobial resistance and putting public health at greater risk of both viral and food-borne zoonotic diseases.

COVID-19 emerged in China. However, the disease could have originated in Europe. There is a growing trend in the EU of people keeping exotic pets, including primates, reptiles, and amphibians. The Commission is stepping up efforts to combat the illegal wildlife trade, but even those that are legally sold undergo few or no sanitary controls. However, a bigger potential threat to human health lies in what is now the norm in food production in most developed parts of the world: intensive farming. Farmed animals kept by the billions (trillions, if we consider fish in aquaculture) are reservoirs and pathways for diseases that can be dangerous, if not devastating, for humans and wild animals.

The hundreds of millions of pigs and billions of chickens kept in industrial conditions in the EU could be incubators of the next zoonotic disease – that will be only harder to treat thanks to the resistance built up through the excessive use of antibiotics in intensive farming.

The world has seen a number of animal diseases dangerous to humans linked to industrial farming practices in recent years. Notably in Europe, the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) outbreak was caused by animal feed including meat and bone meal, while the prevalence of H7N7, or bird flu, is only possible under the conditions of intensive poultry production.

Time for a bold paradigm shift in farming

Eurogroup for Animals highlighted these dangers in an open letter to the European Commission, Stop pandemics? Start here, and some of these concerns were addressed by its policy. However, the role of industrial livestock production in spreading zoonotic diseases is remarkably absent from the Farm to Fork Strategy and should be addressed in its implementation. We need to see substantial moves to curb intensive systems and more whole–hearted promotion of a diversified diet, including the production of pulses for human consumption, alongside backing for innovation in the plant–based sector, for instance by supporting the research and development of cultivated meat. Only decisive measures in this direction will drive the necessary shift in
consumption away from farm animals as the main source of dietary proteins in the EU.

**To ensure food safety and security, we urgently need to rethink our food system and supply chains – and animal welfare is key to achieving these aims.** For instance, establishing a new sustainable framework will require robust financial measures to support farmers in the transition towards nature-inclusive agriculture and higher animal welfare systems. And method-of-production labelling for all animal products would allow consumers to make informed choices, creating incentives for better conditions for farm animals, which in turn will lower the risk of a disease passing from animals to humans.

As 12 MEPs put it in a letter to Commission Executive Vice-President Timmermans, “To show political leadership and ambition we call on the Commission to recognise this explicitly, and not only to hide behind terms such as ‘more sustainable diets’. We ask you to say it clearly: Europe consumes and produces too much meat and dairy, produces too much industrially, and we intend to reverse this trend and incentivise farmers to transition to new, more plant-based food systems.”

**HEADING OFF INVASION**

While the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 stresses that efforts to reduce wildlife trade and consumption are crucial to both preventing and building resilience to future zoonosis outbreaks, it overlooks the fact that the unregulated trade in live wild animals not only increases the potential for the introduction of invasive alien species, but also the transmission of zoonotic diseases.

In 2003, for example, a pet trade shipment from Ghana of rodents carrying the monkeypox virus made people in six US states ill – the virus had spread to prairie dogs held in the same pet trade facility, which were then sold to the public and led to the animal-to-human transmission.

Specific measures to better regulate and limit the trade in wild animals in the EU need to be promptly adopted. An EU-wide Positive List for exotic pets, specifying which animal species are suitable and safe to be kept as pets subject to strict criteria, would be an important component of such measures.

The “Do no harm” principle promoted in the Green Deal should be applied more thoroughly as both these strategies are implemented. In view of the colossal impact of the current pandemic, it would be unforgivable to lose sight of how intimately people’s health is linked to animal welfare and how the health and wellbeing of people, animals and the environment are interdependent.
INTERVIEW

FRANS TIMMERMANS

(European Commission Vice-President for the EU Green Deal)

What do animals mean to you personally?

I have always loved animals. One animal that fascinates me is the wolf. It’s a truly wild animal with strong social bonds and an amazing survival instinct. They also tell us a lot about nature and the state of the environment.

When it comes to pets, I am definitely a dog person. A happy one for that, as our dog family at home keeps growing! With dogs, it’s always a warm welcome when you come home. We’ll probably keep adding pets and animals to our household as we go along. I hope one day to have a donkey as well – or rather two, as donkeys are happiest when they are together.

Tens of millions of Europeans have found comfort in their pets during lockdowns across our Union. In this period of remote working, do you have any “pet colleagues”?

Absolutely. As my followers on Facebook and Instagram will know, we have three dogs at home: Ouzo our white Labrador, Aiofe our black Labrador, and Zita, a perky 9-year old Cairns terrier. Ouzo came first, we adopted him from an animal shelter in Maastricht. When sweet, playful Aiofe joined us five years ago, she and Ouzo quickly became inseparable. And thanks to her, Ouzo became much less anxious.

Zita is our most recent addition to the family. She’s the smallest of the pack but of course she dominates the others. Or at least she thinks so! And like anyone working at home will have experienced, sometimes your housemates invite themselves into your professional life. A while back, when I was live on Dutch radio someone rang the doorbell. Of course that was the one time when the dogs would not stop barking. I think they went on for a full five minutes. Fortunately, the host – clearly a dog lover himself – did not mind the intermission at all.

Improving animal welfare is one of the priorities of the Farm to Fork strategy — one of key the pillars of the European Green Deal. How does improving animal welfare fit in with the broad objective of making the EU truly sustainable?

The way we treat animals reflects on our relationship with nature. We have much to improve there – the COVID-19 pandemic is grave evidence of that. We are now evaluating our legal framework for animal welfare, looking into every angle so that we can build a new approach. It will need to follow the latest scientific evidence, and above all, it will have to substantially improve our relationship with nature.

Animal welfare is a key component of sustainability in our food chain, which is also a reason why we included it in the Farm to Fork Strategy. The strategy helps us rethink our approach to food. For decades, quantity and price have been at the forefront of agricultural policies. But consumers increasingly want this to change: they want healthy food which has been produced sustainably, in full respect of animal welfare. There is clearly an ethical, climate, and business case to make as well for not carting animals across Europe or cramping them into cages and small places.

Farmed animals, kept by the billions, (trillions if we consider aquaculture) are reservoirs and pathways for diseases that can be dangerous, if not devastating, for humans. COVID-19 has brutally highlighted this threat. How does the Green Deal (Farm to Fork) help to make our food systems more resilient?

The increase in animal and animal-borne diseases is also one of the consequences of climate change. The critical situation with African Swine Fever is a very sad example: mild winters have led to big increases in the populations of wild boar, from where the virus transmits to pigs. With increasingly erratic weather and recurring disasters like floods, drought and forest fires, food systems across the planet need to become more resilient. Whatever some people may say about our efforts to tackle climate change, the effects of climate change are the real threats to our food security.

This mostly concerns farmers and we will need to make sure that the Common Agricultural Policy provides the right
support for the transition towards more sustainable and more resilient production methods, using less pesticides, antimicrobials, and fertilisers. But it is also about us, consumers. What we put into our shopping baskets every day, what we put onto our plates has an enormous effect as well. More and more citizens know this already. The Commission will overhaul food labelling legislation to help everyone make the most sustainable choices, is also considering looking at the most animal-friendly choices. Millions of Europeans now await the first EU law on animal welfare in over a decade with bated breath. Which, of the priorities listed in Farm to Fork, do you most look forward to seeing realised?

The Farm to Fork Strategy contains a comprehensive set of actions. Back in May, when we adopted the Strategy, a lot of focus went to the targets. I am happy to see that the Strategy is now being seen for what it really is, for the opportunities it represents for farmers, consumers and everyone along the food chain.

In the countryside, I hope to see more biodiversity and more trees. For that, we need to reduce the use and the risk of pesticides. I also really look forward to building a proper food environment, one that centres on sustainability and health. Amongst other things, we’ll need to reduce the excessive use of antimicrobials to get there. Right now, this leads to 33,000 deaths every year in the EU. And I hope to see a true race to the top among supermarkets about who offers healthier and more sustainable food to their customers.

In June of this year, the EP approved by a very large majority the setting up of a “Committee of Inquiry” on the Protection of Animals during Transport which is now commonly called by its abbreviation, the ANIT Committee.

For about one year, this Committee will investigate the failures to enforce EU rules on protecting animals during transport with an unprecedented authority, scope and depth, leading to a comprehensive investigation report as an outcome. Almost half of ANIT’s 30 Members and 25 substitutes are also Members of the EP Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals which was a driving force in calling for its creation.

The handling of transported animals, long distance journeys, the prevention of delays, the transport of unfit and unweaned animals will be among the subjects of investigation. The ANIT Committee will also look into the alleged failure of the EU’s executive and national authorities to enforce EU rules on the welfare of transported animals to third countries. All this will be carried out with a series of hearings and exchange of views with Commission and Member State officials as well as with stakeholders and experts. Fact Finding missions will play an important role in the investigations.

All this is the result of a long battle of committed MEPs that has lasted for almost three years with several drawbacks but also important intermediate steps as the Dohrmann report on the implementation of Council Regulation No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport within and outside the EU, which was adopted at the end of last term.

**Andreas Erler,**
Senior Political Adviser
**ANIMAL NEWS IN EUROPE**

**#Act4Wildlife**

**ESTONIA TOOK A HISTORIC STEP TOWARDS BANNING FUR FARMS**

Estonia took an important step towards banning fur farms on October 18th when the draft Act for the amendment of Animal Protection and Nature Conservation Act passed the first reading in the Riigikogu (Estonian Parliament). The Riigikogu has discussed banning fur farms twice – in 2017 and in 2019. The draft act was rejected both times, which is why our Estonian member Loomus is very excited to see a draft act pass this critical hurdle now.

According to a recent survey carried out by Kantar Emor, 75% of people living in Estonia are not in favour of raising and killing animals such as foxes and minks for their fur. The percentage of supporters of closing fur farms is not only high in urban areas, but also in rural ones. 74% of the people living in Tallinn do not support fur farming, same goes to 78% of the people living in other towns, and 72% of people living in rural areas. If successful, Estonia will join the 7 other EU countries who have already adopted a ban on fur farming, a trend recently accelerated due to the COVID-19 infections found in mink farms.

**#Act4LabAnimals**

**NORWEGIAN NATIONAL EXPERIMENTAL ANIMALS COMMITTEE NEW FIGUREHEAD FOR EUROPE’S TRANSITION TO NON-ANIMAL SCIENCE**

Despite political goals to limit the use of animals in science, a high number of animals are used in experiments in Norway compared with other European countries. Norway is the only Scandinavian country that does not have an independent 3Rs centre with long-term, state funding to coordinate efforts for the development of alternatives to animal testing.

The National Experimental Animals Committee (NEAC) has reviewed the statement “Transition to non-animal research” written by their Dutch equivalent, the NCad. On the basis of this review, as well as information on special Norwegian conditions, the NEAC has now taken a major leap forward by formulating concrete recommendations on how to limit the use of animals in experiments. One of those recommendations concerns the undertaking of a Norwegian public study (NOU) that can map the potential for a transition to research without experimental animals, formulate clear objectives, and present a concrete plan for the transition.

If Norway follows NEAC’s recommendations, it will be the only concrete step to date on the European continent to phase out the use of animals in science. In addition, a national, state-funded 3R centre is now meant to see the light to coordinate efforts from all actors involved and accelerate the development of alternatives to animal testing through an associated research and development fund.
#Act4Pets

NEW LAW SAYS GERMANS MUST WALK THEIR DOGS TWICE A DAY

Germany’s dog owners will soon be ordered by law to walk their pets twice a day. The country’s Agriculture Minister, Julia Klöckner, said she is introducing the new law based on evidence that many of the nation’s 9.4 million dogs are not getting the exercise or stimuli they need. Under the new regulations owners will not get away with a quick jog round the block, but will be required to take their dogs out for at least one hour on each occasion.

Klöckner said the rules were based on new scientific findings that show dogs need a “sufficient measure of activity and contact with environmental stimuli”, including other animals, nature and people. The tethering of dogs on a chain or a lead for long periods also faces an all-out ban and it will no longer be possible to leave dogs alone at home all day.

#Act4Wildlife

FRENCH MINISTER ANNOUNCES STRONG MEASURES IN FAVOR OF WILD ANIMALS’ WELFARE

Following a long period of consultations, the French government recently announced a series of breakthrough measures to advance the welfare of wild animals in France. Besides a gradual ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses and on mink farming, dolphins and orcas will no longer be held captive in inadequate dolphinaria, and the conditions of wild animals in zoos are expected to be improved.

This huge breakthrough for wild animals in France would not have been possible without the hard work of the various French animal protection organisations, including five of our members: Fondation Brigitte Bardot, C’est Assez!, Code Animal, Fondation Droit Animal Éthique & Sciences and L214 Éthique & Animaux.

#Act4Equines

THE SLAUGHTER OF EQUIDAE IS NOW PROHIBITED BY LAW IN GREECE

Since July 29th, the slaughter of horses is prohibited in Greece and therefore their use in the production of meat, leather, medicines and various other consumption products. This was achieved by simply adding equidae to an existing rural law banning the consumption (and killing) of dogs and cats and is the fruit of a joint campaign by our member organisations Ippothesis and Hellenic Animal Welfare Federation. In Greece there are no authorised slaughterhouses for the slaughter of horses. However, due to the increased use for horse racing and equestrian sports, in recent years there has been a worrying increase in illegal slaughtering. A next step to further improve the protection of equidae will be for Greece, in respect of EU legislation, to develop a national horse registry as currently there is no national database nor an identification obligation. Although there are many countries in Europe where horsemeat is not consumed for cultural reasons, most of these countries export horses for slaughter. Greece is currently the only country in Europe to have such a ban in place.

#Act4FarmAnimals

CZECHIA SETS EXAMPLE FOR EU AND BANS CAGES FOR HENS

Yes, one more EU country joins the ranks of those guiding their egg industry in going cage free. With this new ban on cages, the Czech Republic will make sure the 4.5 million hens raised in cages each year get a better life from 2027 onwards. The new ban, which still needs formal approval by the upper house of the Czech Parliament and the President, will cover cages for both laying hens and laying breeders.

In the EU, barren cages for hens have been banned, yet the so-called ‘enriched’ cages are still allowed. These ‘enriched’ cages are equally cruel, restricting each hen to a space equivalent to an A4 sheet of paper and preventing them from performing many natural behaviors, such as dustbathing and wing-flapping.
Wolves have made it back from the brink of extinction in some areas of Europe, but their slow recovery has led to calls to reduce their protection. Happily, 93% of interviewed adults across six EU countries believe wolves have a right to exist in the wild. Still, more efforts are needed to secure harmonious coexistence with large carnivores across the EU.
2020 saw the births of three wolf cubs in the Netherlands, the first recorded in the Benelux area for over 200 years. And despite a spate of attacks on farm animals by a suspected lupine visitor to the country from Germany, the Dutch people are keener than ever on the new residents, with almost half looking forward to an encounter with a wolf in the wild.

Nearly thirty years ago, the EU Habitats Directive reinforced the status of wolves as a protected species, established ten years previously under the Bern Convention. Thanks to these pan-European nature conservation measures, wolves have returned from the brink of extinction and are making a slow recovery in certain areas of Europe.

Inevitably, the increasing presence of a large carnivore in a highly populated continent like Europe has led to growing calls in some Member States to allow more flexibility in using derogations to the EU Habitats Directive to manage conflicts with wolves. Hunters and farmers are consistently urging the European Commission to demote the wolf from being a strictly protected species as defined in the Directive. The European Parliament has also adopted Resolutions in this ill-advised direction alongside similar attempts under the Bern Convention.

WOLVES ARE POPULAR

Such moves could result in higher hunting quotas and put wolves at risk of more lethal handling when they come into conflict with farming interests. While losses of farm animals are certainly devastating for farmers, more than 80 projects funded through the European Commission LIFE programme since 1992 have demonstrated that coexistence with large carnivores is possible. And public opinion is broadly against lowering protection for wolves, as clearly shown in a poll commissioned by Eurogroup for Animals.

There was a high level of support for wolf protection among the 6,137 EU adults from six countries who responded, particularly in Poland, Spain and Italy, and 79% agreed that the return of wolves is beneficial for the natural environment and biodiversity of the country. The majority say killing wolves is rarely or never acceptable, even when they have attacked farm animals (55%) or as a means to keep their population under control (55%).

86% agree that national governments and the EU should fund and equip farmers with the tools to protect farm animals from wolf attacks. 89% concur that wolves belong to our natural environment just like foxes, deer or hares. Over three quarters (78%) think farmers and people living in rural areas should coexist with wolves and other wild animals without harming them.

And support extends beyond the EU. “The Swiss population wants to strengthen and not weaken species protection,” insisted Gabor von Bethlenfalvy, large carnivore specialist at WWF Switzerland, after more than half of Swiss voters rejected an amended hunting law, which would have made it easier to shoot a wolf.
COMMISSION RESISTANCE

Fortunately, the European Commission does not intend to add more flexibility to interpretation of derogations – its evaluation of the Habitats Directive has shown it is fit for purpose and does not currently require revision. Also, the Commission is expected to confirm its stance with the release of the updated guidance document on how to apply the Directive by the end of 2020.

But the stream of calls to lower protection for wolves is unlikely to abate. The risk is that farmer and hunter organisations will continue to mobilise the European Council and MEPs, possibly leading to a Resolution explicitly calling for less protection – which would be difficult for the Commission to ignore.

CRYING WOLF

To counter this pressure, Eurogroup for Animals members have joined forces to persuade decision-makers that farmers and hunters are not representative of all Europeans, and the majority want to preserve the current level of protection. The action was launched in June 2020 and will run until the release of the updated guidance document by the Commission.

Our members are using their newsletters, social media channels and websites to highlight the results of our opinion poll and provide information about living alongside wolves. They are sharing the best practices for protecting livestock of farmers who successfully coexist, and accurate data about accidents to reduce public fear of the animals. As well as myth busting, there are stories to tell about the positive ecological role of wolves and the problems caused by lethal management of conflicts.

But beyond giving the wolf a better image in the eyes of the public, we are encouraging the European Commission to commit to maintaining the present level of protection for wolves and to continuing the promotion of coexistence and the development of non-lethal solutions to conflicts.

Finally, our opinion poll found that only 39% of people say they would know how to behave if they were to encounter a wolf. Obviously, more needs to be done to help the people of today learn to live alongside wolves again!

“This research unequivocally demonstrates that European citizens strongly support protection for wolves, and oppose their killing in any circumstances. We hope EU institutions and Member States’ politicians will now work together to ensure that current protection levels are maintained while national and EU funding are made available to develop and provide farmers with innovative tools to protect farm animals from wolf attack and increase tolerance and social acceptability. In fact, the recently published EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 calls on Member States to commit to not deteriorate the conservation of protected species, like the wolf.”

Reineke Hameleers, CEO, Eurogroup for Animals
JOIN THE MOVEMENT FOR HUMANE SCIENCE!

Luisa Bastos, Animals in Science Programme Leader

September 22nd, the European Day for Humane Science, marked the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the EU Directive on Animals in Science. Unfortunately, latest reports reveal that in practice, almost nothing has changed and the number of animals used for scientific purposes remains high. This is why we have decided to run a campaign with our members and partners, called Join the Movement for Humane Science.

Despite the clear objective of the Animal in Science Directive to reduce and ultimately bring to zero the number of animals used in science, the 2020 reports of the European Commission revealed that in 2017 more than 23 million animals were impacted by scientific practices in the EU. Almost 60% of these animals were killed in EU laboratories without actually being used in experiments at all - a slap in the face of the Directive’s ethos.

While we see the use of non-animal methods growing in some areas, like safety testing of chemicals and drug development, recent decades have also seen increases in the number of animals used for genetic manipulations. 43% of all animals impacted by science in 2017 in the EU were associated with the creation, maintenance or use of genetically altered animals. These genetically modified animals are mainly used as human disease models in an attempt to “humanise” aspects of their biology.

The COVID-19 crisis is forcing our society to question our relationship with animals, and also how we use them in science. The options at play to find treatments and vaccines for this disease are showing how important innovation and collaboration are to save animal and human lives.

Civil society continues to demand the replacement of animal experiments, and a growing scientific community calls for a change of the current animal-based paradigm. We are now working with our members to gather the support from the European Parliament, national governments, the EU Council, and the European Commission for a concerted strategy to phase out the use of animals in research, testing, and education.

PUSHING THE WORST ANIMAL PRODUCTS OFF THE SHELVES

Ines Grenho Ajuda, Farm Animals Programme Leader

A label has the power to tell consumers how the products they buy are produced and it’s time to make sure animal welfare is properly addressed there too.

The European market for animal products is inundated with labels while almost half of European citizens do not believe supermarkets and other shops offer a sufficient choice of animal welfare-friendly food products (Eurobarometer, 2016). The few labels that do relate to animal welfare (in Member States such as Germany, The Netherlands and Denmark) either only identify products that have higher animal welfare standards, or are not very transparent or trustworthy as they simply identify all animal products produced in the EU as higher animal welfare. This lack of transparency doesn’t allow the identification of the worst products on the shelves, which is a great concern especially since it is well known that compliance with the EU legislation is not widespread in several animal production practices (e.g. the majority of the Member States still tail dock their pigs). Moreover, we know now through research, that the EU animal welfare legislation urgently needs to be updated to have a meaningful impact on the welfare of farmed animals.

This is why we want to see a mandatory Method of Production Plus (MOP+) label, that includes the entire supply chain (from breeding to slaughter). This label would combine method-of-production marking (such as ‘outdoor’ or ‘indoor intensive’) with simple information on animal welfare, based on a core set of animal welfare indicators (such as for example water quality). Because it would provide information about all the animal products that citizens purchase and not just the high quality ones, it has the potential to stigmatize the worst produce and allows us to mobilise consumers through campaigns to push the worst products off the supermarket shelves.

Responding to the plea of EU citizens to have more information and also to harmonise the information they receive, the EU is expected to put forward a proposal for a harmonised food labelling scheme in the context of its Farm to Fork strategy. For the German presidency, food labelling is a priority and our team is actively influencing the discussion - so if you too are concerned by the consumer choices you make – make sure to follow our work and support our call for a Method of Production Plus label.
FIGHTING THE EU-MERCOSUR TRADE AGREEMENT

Stephanie Ghislain, Trade and Animal Welfare Programme Leader

In June 2020, the European Commission announced the conclusion of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement. This deal, as it stands, is a bad deal for animals. By granting more access to the EU market for animal products, without any condition related to animal welfare or sustainability aspects, it is likely to further fuel intensification of these productions, in the Mercosur countries but also in the EU. With the foreseen increase in lower welfare imports into the EU, there will also be more pressure not to further improve EU standards, at a time where finally opportunities open for us with the publication of the EU’s Farm to Fork Strategy. The potential negative impacts of the agreement will thus be very concrete and more immediate, while any long-term positive progress that could be fostered by the text, notably through provisions on animal welfare cooperation and on Trade and Sustainable Development, remain uncertain, depending on political willingness and resources.

Eurogroup for Animals and its member organisations have followed the negotiations and are now deeply involved in the joint effort by civil society to stop this agreement. We published an analysis of the text last June, and since then, have been advocating for the deal to be rejected. As of today, several Member States among which France, Austria, Luxembourg and Ireland, have already declared they will oppose the ratification of the text as it stands. The Dutch Parliament has also adopted a similar position, as well as two Belgian regions. Most recently, it is even the European Parliament that adopted an amendment in plenary opposing the ratification. The debate will now move to discussing “pre-ratification conditions” and Eurogroup for Animals will continue the fight to avoid the adoption of a too mild compromise.

MORE EU MEMBER STATES THINK POSITIVE!

Ilaria di Silvestre, Wildlife Programme Leader

AAP Animal Advocacy and Protection and Eurogroup for Animals have jointly run the THINK POSITIVE campaign since 2013, with the aim to regulate (and restrict) the keeping of exotic animals as pets. Over the years, we jointly managed to convince a growing number of critical stakeholders, including decision-makers, that introducing a ‘Positive List’ - a list establishing which species are suitable and allowed to be kept as pets - was the most cost-effective way to control the keeping of exotics.

Today 5 Member States - Belgium, Netherlands, Malta, Croatia and Luxembourg - have already adopted the Positive List system. The COVID-19 pandemic, exposing the health risks originating from the trade in wild animals, has pushed even more countries to reconsider their legislation on wildlife trade and our Positive List campaign has benefited from renewed interest.

It’s great to see our Lithuanian member organisation GATO finally pick the fruits of years of intensive lobby efforts, now that Lithuania amended its law on wildlife protection and introduced the Positive List system to identify which species can be kept as pets. We are impatient to see the list itself which is now being drafted by a group of national experts. And in Belgium, the Walloon and Brussels regions, following the example of the Flemish region’s reptiles’ list introduced back in 2018, have now agreed to it as well.

We are convinced the time is ripe, now that a growing number of Member States adopt restrictions on the trading and keeping of exotic pets, to call for a harmonised EU Positive List. Bolstered by the support of a group of committed MEPs, our member organisations and EU public opinion, we will exploit the opportunities offered by the 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy through our Stop pandemics, Start here campaign to gain the EU’s support for such an EU wide Positive list.
GET TO KNOW US

PODCAST: ANIMALS IN EUROPE

We launched our podcast “Animals in Europe” with an interview with Philip Lymbery, President of Eurogroup for Animals and CEO of our member organisation Compassion in World Farming. “Animals in Europe” is a bi-weekly appointment where you can meet animal advocates, decision-makers and experts building together a Europe that cares for animals.

Every two weeks we’ll discuss campaigns, political actions and animal welfare issues with our guests in order to bring to light the challenges and successes from the European animal advocacy movement. The brain and voice behind “Animals in Europe” is our CEO Reineke Hameleers, while our Senior Political Adviser Joe Moran is commenting on the most recent and important EU animals news.

Animals in Europe is available on:

We hope you enjoy these first episodes!
In the aftermath of the blasts devastating Lebanon’s capital, many of our member organisations have stepped up their support to help relieve the most urgent animal suffering in the capital. Offering financial and logistical support, they bring back a testimony of resilience and are determined to help the Lebanese care for their four-pawed companions.

**IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

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**OUR MEMBERS**

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**IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

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If you want to donate to this crisis, please support our local partner [Animals Lebanon](https://www.animalslebanon.org), or one of our members organisations providing direct assistance (Animals Australia, Four Paws, Foundation Brigitte Bardot and World Animal Protection).
EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS IS A STRONG VOICE FOR ANIMALS IN EUROPE. OUR STRENGTH COMES FROM OUR MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND PARTNERS WITH WHOM WE RELENTLESSLY ADVOCATE TO IMPROVE THE WELFARE OF THE MILLIONS OF ANIMALS LIVING BY OUR SIDES.

But this is an uphill battle. This is why we constantly strive to attract new supporters to join our movement and why we also need your help. Animal suffering is a reality, but there is an alternative. So come and join your forces to ours to fight for a better future for all animals.

There are many ways to help: visit our website, sign our latest petition, follow us on social media, share our posts or contact us to become a member or make a donation.

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