

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1679/09
by Magor Imre Csibi (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Revision of Directive 1999/22/EC relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos

Article 3 of Directive 1999/22/EC¹ requires zoos to ensure their animals are accommodated under conditions which aim to satisfy the biological and conservation requirements of the individual species and to provide species with specific environmental enrichment. The directive as it stands provides no further guidance or explanation to the competent authorities as to how this should be interpreted.

Article 4, concerning the licensing and inspection of zoos, stipulates that all zoos (as defined) are compliant with the requirements of Article 3, and that the competent authorities, by means of regular inspection, must take appropriate steps to ensure such compliance.

Evidence provided by ENDCAP (a pan-European coalition of NGOs which aims to raise welfare standards for wild animals in captivity in Europe) at the European Parliament in November 2008 demonstrated that zoos in the majority of, if not all, Member States are failing to provide their animals with conditions that meet even their basic living requirements. Wild animals in zoos in Europe are still being kept in sub-standard conditions.

Recognising that all animal are sentient beings and can experience pain, suffering and distress, does the Commission not feel that it is appropriate to ensure, as an absolute minimum, that animals kept in zoos are housed in conditions that meet their five freedoms (provision of food and water; a suitable environment; health care; ability to express all normal behaviour; and protection from fear and distress), as advocated by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and others?

Recognising the Community's Action Plan to improve standards in the welfare and protection of animals, will the Commission consider a revision of Directive 1999/22/EC with a view to stipulating under Article 3 that all animals should, at all times, be kept in conditions which at least meet their five freedoms? In the same context, could the Commission provide supporting information to assist the competent authority and the zoos to satisfy this requirement?

¹ OJ L 94, 9.4.1999, p. 24.