

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0165/02
by Christel Fiebiger (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Protection of wild animals

As a Member of the European Parliament, I am increasingly being approached by members of the public with requests for help or with complaints regarding the protection of wild animals, almost always relating to cruelty to animals. The following are two examples:

- Trade in wild common (brown) hares: There was outrage in Germany following a television report about wild hares being caught in nets in a well-planned and highly organised manner by the Polish army in eastern Poland and then being transported thousands of kilometres to southern France in awful conditions. Hundreds of thousands of hares are shipped this way every year, but not so that they can be resettled for ecological reasons. What happens is more than just cruelty to animals, for it is a conventional business operation designed to satisfy people's passion for killing. The shooting of the hares, which first have direction-finding devices fitted to them, is not huntsmanship but murder.
- The Biomedical Primate Research Centre (BPRC) in Rijswijk, Netherlands: Conditions at this centre, which holds 1500 primates, including 120 chimpanzees, are reportedly intolerable with, for instance, more than 500 macaques, which in the wild live in troops, each languishing in isolation in an extremely small metal cage. The Centre is allegedly funded by the European Union to the tune of EUR 2.21 million a year.

Will the Commission therefore state:

What means or plans it has for taking legal action in respect of cases of cruelty to animals perpetrated in areas which fall within the remit of the Member States, especially since the Amsterdam Treaty explicitly only requires the European Institutions to take due account of the welfare requirements of animals in the context of Community policies (under the relevant protocol to the Treaty)?

Whether the trade in common hares is compatible with the Berne Convention (Council Decision 82/72/EEC¹ of 3 December 1981), and if it intends, irrespective thereof, to press for the prohibition of such trade vis-à-vis importing EU Member States and exporting candidate countries, and, if so, how?

Whether it can and will demand repayment of EU funding if the reports about the BPRC should turn out to be correct?

¹ OJ L 38, 10.2.1982, p. 1.