



INTERGROUP ON THE WELFARE & CONSERVATION OF ANIMALS

Ms Julia Klöckner
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RE: Ban on the use of wild animals in circuses in Germany

Brussels, 18th December 2020

Dear Minister Klöckner,

The European Parliament's Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals - convening 94 Members of the European Parliament – urges the German government to introduce modern, 21st century legislation to end the use of all 'wild' animals in circuses.

The circus experience has nothing to do with the reality of 'wild' animals' life and behaviour. Wild animals in circuses are bought and sold, frequently transported in small compartments on trucks, prematurely separated from their mothers and then from companions, confined or chained and forced to stand for hours. They are required to behave in ways never seen in nature and although some of these animals have been bred for tens of generations in captivity, they still perform the behaviour typical of their wild counterparts. In short, the welfare of wild animals in circuses is always severely compromised.

The use of 'wild' animals in circuses also represents a serious threat to public security, as it regularly leads to accidents involving animal tamers, circus employees and the public¹. Wild animals may also be a vector of dangerous zoonoses. The temporary nature of traveling circuses and the close proximity of dangerous animals to the public mean that this type of entertainment can never be entirely safe.

Besides animal welfare and public safety arguments, there is also the widely supported conviction that animals used for public entertainment does not have any educational value and, on the contrary, may in fact have a negative impact on the public's perception of animals².

¹ https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/sites/eurogroup/files/2020-02/E4A-Circus_Report-Digital-OK-v2.pdf

² <http://annamariamanzoni.blogspot.com/p/documento-psicologi.html>

Travelling circuses cannot provide even the basic needs of their animals and the ongoing COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the situation³. Due to the scarcity of audiences and the dwindling number of municipalities or countries that allowed such performances, many circuses using wild animals were already in a precarious financial situation. The ongoing crisis is threatening them even more as performances are cancelled, and in some cases, circuses have been stuck on parking lots or other temporary locations. Some have asked for help from animal advocacy organisations or volunteers to feed the animals.

Consequently, we welcome the initiative of the German government to take decisive action by adopting legislation to finally end this cruel and anachronistic exploitation of wild animals. We are however concerned by the exclusion of some of the most relevant species of wild animals like big cats from the legislation under preparation. As multiple reports and studies have been undertaken on the welfare and needs of these animals, there is no scientific justification for excluding tigers, lions or other species from such a ban. Furthermore, as wild carnivores, big cats are subject to additional stressors in circuses where they often are kept in close proximity with their natural prey. They also constitute a higher danger to people, for trainers and spectators as much as for bystanders if they should escape.

Any attempts to improve the welfare of these animals in circuses have failed as these measures cannot adequately address the risks for animal welfare, public health, safety and security.

There is no argument that can justify the use of 'wild' animals in circuses today, and no acceptable alternatives to a full ban on the use of all species. We have the responsibility to show our children that such magnificent animals should be treated with respect and empathy and thrive in natural environments, not forced into an unnatural existence which involves significant physical and emotional suffering.

The Animal Welfare Intergroup hopes that Germany will soon join the growing list of European countries that have banned the use of all wild animals in circuses.

Yours sincerely,

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Manuela Ripa MEP

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³ <https://www.ouest-france.fr/sante/virus/coronavirus/confinement/saumur-un-don-de-luzerne-au-cirque-zavatta-confine-au-parc-du-breil-fe193f62-7503-11ea-8400-844e474b825e> <https://www.europapress.es/cultura/musica-00129/noticia-circos-reunidos-pide-rebaja-impuestos-ayudas-economicas-40-circos-varados-descampados-20200316151023.html>