

Press Release

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CoE, EU and OIE agree on a joint declaration on animal welfare in Europe

Strasbourg, 24.11.2006 – The Council of Europe (CoE), the European Union (EU) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) today adopted a joint declaration entitled "Animal Welfare in Europe: achievements and future prospects". The Declaration, which commits to greater cooperation on all aspects of animal welfare, was adopted at the close of a one-and-a-half day international workshop aimed at bridging the gap between animal welfare legislation and its practical application.

Senior government and veterinary representatives from 50 countries in the European region took part in the workshop, which was hosted by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, in cooperation with the European Union and the OIE. They had the opportunity to exchange best practice solutions and discuss ways to overcome social, legal, and economic obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of animal welfare guidelines throughout Europe. The workshop also allowed the CoE, EU and OIE to consider how their existing activities could complement each other, with a view to maximising the efforts being made to improve animal welfare in Europe.

In the Declaration adopted today, the Council of Europe, the OIE and the European Union commit to providing mutual support and cooperating on all aspects of animal welfare, from the elaboration of legislation, to the training of veterinary professionals and para-professionals, to raising public awareness of the societal value of animal welfare. The important link between animal welfare and the need for adequate scientific and veterinary expertise is stressed in the document.

Furthermore, the Declaration commits to efficiently assisting countries to comply with, develop or enforce animal welfare laws, standards and guidelines at a national level.

Additional media information

"It should be recalled that the Council of Europe's work on animal protection started in the 1960s," said Guy De Vel, Director General of Legal Affairs at the Council of Europe. "The Council of Europe does not work alone on animal welfare issues. As you know, the political and technical value of the working methods of standard setting activities in the area of animal welfare is based on close collaboration with member states and also with non-governmental organisations representing the different sectors concerned such as veterinarians, animal protection associations, animal behaviour specialists, farmers and scientists. Therefore, the significance of this conference should not be underestimated. It marks the very first opportunity for international organisations and stakeholders (scientists, civil society and government) to debate animal welfare issues from a European perspective in a worldwide context."

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 46 member states.

Andrea Gavinelli, Deputy Head of Unit for Animal Welfare in the European Commission, said *“The European Commission is constantly working to ensure the highest possible level of animal welfare in the EU. A strong body of EU legislation is in place in this respect, which we review and update as necessary, in line with latest developments and scientific advice. We are also committed to promoting animal welfare standards internationally, as is reinforced in our Action Plan on Animal Welfare. This workshop has been an excellent opportunity for countries from the entire European region to come together to look for solutions to current obstacles and to share best practice experiences. We must continue to work towards the common goal of improving animal welfare, both domestically and at international level.”*

“Proper animal welfare can be determined scientifically and this workshop was a great opportunity to stress its direct link with animal health and demonstrate it is a genuine domain of expertise that needs our full attention,” Dr Sarah Kahn, head of the OIE International Trade Department said.

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