INTERGROUP
ON THE WELFARE
& CONSERVATION
OF ANIMALS

Ms Marija Vučković
Minister for Agriculture
Ministry for Agriculture
Ulica grada Vukovara 78
10000 Zagreb
Croatia

Brussels, 29th January 2020

Bureau Members

President:

Anja Hazekamp MEP

Honorary President:

Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP

Vice-Presidents:

Petras Auštrevičius MEP
Klaus Buchner MEP
Martin Buschmann MEP
Pascal Durand MEP
Eleonora Evi MEP
Fredrick Federley MEP
Niels Fuglsang MEP
Francisco Guerreiro MEP
Martin Hojsík MEP
Tilly Metz MEP
Maria Noichl MEP
Emil Radev MEP
Jadwiga Wiśniewska MEP

Secretariat:

Eurogroup for Animals

6, rue des Patriotes
B- 1000 Brussels

T: +32-2 740 08 20
F: +32- 2 740 08 29
www.animalwelfareintergroup.eu
info@eurogroupforanimals.org

Established in 1983

Dear Minister Vučković,

Re: Lack of implementation of national legislation preventing an end to the illegal keeping of brown bears in Croatia

On behalf of the Intergroup for the Welfare and Conservation of Animals we would like to bring to your attention the current situation of brown bears kept in apparent violation of the Croatian Animal Welfare Act. With this letter we appeal to the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia to comply with the legislation and to end the illegal keeping of brown bears in the country.

In October 2017 the Government of Croatia adopted a new Animal Welfare law that bans the keeping and display of bears outside scientifically managed and officially licensed zoos and wildlife rescue centres with a transitional period until the 31st of December 2018.

In December 2018 international animal welfare organisation FOUR PAWS (VIER PFOTEN) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia with the common objective to support the implementation of the Animal Welfare Act and to end the illegal private keeping of bears in Croatia by relocating the individuals to licensed wildlife sanctuaries and rehabilitation centres in Croatia and abroad. Thanks to a confiscation initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia in July 2019, two illegally kept brown bears could be rescued by FOUR PAWS (VIER PFOTEN) and relocated to sanctuaries in Croatia and abroad.

Despite these efforts, the illegal keeping of brown bears in Croatia continues to exist. Two brown bears are still kept in captivity as a tourist attraction next to a restaurant called "Macola" in the town Korenica, a facility which is neither registered as a zoo nor as a sanctuary and therefore is illegal based on the Animal Welfare Act. However, authorities have not ordered a confiscation of the two concerned bears. We strongly recommend the consistent enforcement and insist that urgent action is needed to comply with national legislation.

While the ban on the keeping and display of bears outside scientifically managed and officially licensed zoos and wildlife rescue centres is a positive step, protection for other wild animals such as big cats still falls short in the Republic of Croatia.

INTERGROUP
ON THE WELFARE
& CONSERVATION
OF ANIMALS

We highly recommend the adoption of a Positive list (similar to lists as enforced by Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) which determine few species are allowed to be kept privately and as such expands protection to other species.
With this letter we appeal to the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia to enforce the new Croatia Animal Welfare act and to end the illegal keeping of brown bears in Croatia once and for all.

Please keep us informed of any progress in the current situation.

Looking forward to your reply we send you our best regards,

Anja Hazekamp, MEP
President of the Animal Welfare Intergroup