

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT
Natural Capital
The Director

Brussels
ENV.D.3/HDG/NN/UG

Dear Petitioner,

Thank you for your petition concerning the captive breeding of orcas in EU zoos to which Commissioner Sinkevičius has asked me to respond.

Council Directive 1999/22/EC relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos (the Zoos Directive) was adopted with the objective to promote the protection and conservation of wild animal species by strengthening the role of zoos in the conservation of biodiversity. This is to be achieved by Member States adopting measures for the licencing and inspection of zoos in order to ensure that zoos respect the foreseen conservation and protection measures.

In order to obtain a licence, zoos are, inter alia, required to carry out one or more of the following conservation measures: participating in research from which conservation benefits accrue to the species, and/or training in relevant conservation skills, and/or exchange of information relating to species conservation, and/or where appropriate, captive breeding, repopulation or reintroduction of species into the wild

It is up to zoos to choose between these measures, among which captive breeding should thus aim at contributing to the conservation of the species. It is for the national competent authorities to verify the implementation and adequacy of conservation actions during their regular inspections of the zoos.

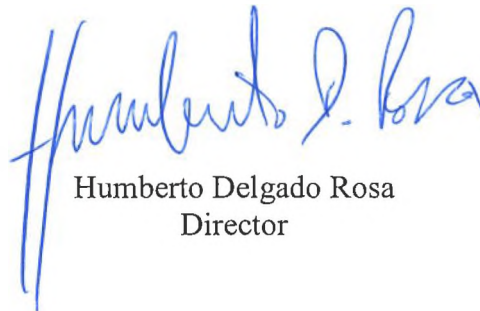
The Zoos Directive only allows for captive breeding of animals provided that all licencing obligations are met. These licencing obligations also require zoos to accommodate their animals under conditions which aim to satisfy the biological and conservation requirements of the individual species, inter alia, by providing species specific enrichment of the enclosures; and maintaining a high standard of animal husbandry with a developed programme of preventive and curative veterinary care and nutrition.

In the case of the recent deaths of two orcas at Loro Parque, the Commission has no evidence to prove whether these were caused or not by breaches of the Zoos Directive's requirements.

In the event of non-compliance with the licencing conditions, national authorities shall impose obligations to rectify the situation within a given timeframe or close the zoo or part thereof. Should you have continued concerns about Loro Parque's captive orcas, I would therefore encourage you to bring these to the attention of the national competent authorities inspecting the zoo.

I thank you for taking the time to express your views and hope you will find the provided information useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Humberto Delgado Rosa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long vertical stroke on the left side.

Humberto Delgado Rosa
Director