



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Directorate G – Crisis management in food animals and plants  
**Director**

Brussels,  
SANTE G2/MKU/ch (2018) 4105877

Dear Petitioner,

**Subject: Petition to ban the use of wild animals in circuses**

Commissioner Andriukatis asked me to thank for your email presenting a petition<sup>1</sup> calling to ban the use of wild animals in circuses and to reply on his behalf.

Circus animals such as elephants are covered by some pieces of European legislation such as Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 which deals with the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein<sup>2</sup> in the framework of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and lays down the provisions (including procedures and documents) for import, export and re-export as well as internal EU trade in specimens, as well as by the legislation on animal health requirements for ungulates.

The overall purpose of the so-called "Zoos Directive" related to the keeping of wild animals in zoos<sup>3</sup> is to promote the role of zoos in the conservation of biodiversity. Circuses have been explicitly excluded from the scope of the directive.

The European Commission is however not competent for the regulation of circuses and wild animals are not covered by the specific EU animal welfare legislation. The regulation of circuses and the welfare of animals in circuses remains the responsibility of the Member States. You may therefore wish to address your concerns to the authorities of the Member State concerned.

The Commission is not currently considering any legislative initiatives which would specifically cover the welfare of circus animals.

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<sup>1</sup> Your e-mail refers to a "petition", which in the framework of EU Law is used for petitions addressed to the European Parliament pursuant to Article 227 TFEU. Your letter is dealt with by the Commission according to the rules for correspondence with citizens.

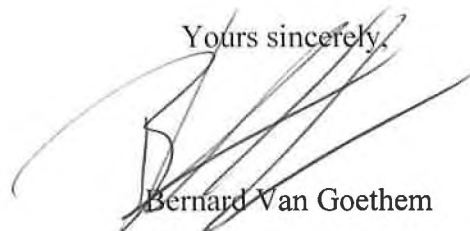
<sup>2</sup> OJ L 061 3.3.1997, p. 1

<sup>3</sup> Council Directive 1999/22/EC relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos; OJ L94, 9.4.1999, p.24: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1999:094:0024:0026:EN:PDF>

Please note that this letter expresses the views of the Commission services and does not commit the European Commission. Only the Court of Justice of the European Union is competent to authoritatively interpret Union law.

I would like to thank you for your commitment to protecting animals.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping, fluid strokes that form a stylized representation of the name Bernard Van Goethem.

Bernard Van Goethem