



#EUforAnimals

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CALL TO ACTION – We need #EUforAnimals

The war in Ukraine is an unimaginable drama for millions of humans. It also has a devastating impact on animals – both companion animals and those confined to industrial farms in the conflict-affected country.

The European Commission recommended simplifying procedures for the non-commercial movement of companion animals. As a result, member states have introduced temporary procedures to allow the import of up to 5 companion animals that do not meet the necessary EU requirements. However, there is no uniform procedure in place. Each EU Member State under Article 32 of EU Regulation 576/2013 may authorize non-commercial movements on its own territory, including the decision to place the animal in isolation for a specified period of time, not exceeding 6 months.

Some EU member states allow the import of more than 5 non-EU compliant animals to accompany refugees from Ukraine. Unfortunately, there is a problem with the evacuation of animal shelters, sanctuaries, and homeless animals, whose transport without compliance with the requirements stipulated for commercial transport may even end in an order to euthanize the animals. Moreover, no measures have been taken to allow the export of farmed animals from areas covered by warfare. The introduction of animals other than those accompanying refugees, including farmed breeding animals, is carried out in accordance with the applicable rules set out in European Union regulations for commercial transport. An unimaginable number of animals confined in industrial farms die due to bombing and starvation without any chance of rescue. In relation to horses, the conditions for their entry into the EU were only indirectly simplified by changing the rules for issuing health certificates (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/497).

Many organizations from across the EU have joined in helping the animals of Ukraine, but it is essential that the European Commission takes the lead and offers coordination of the efforts of the third sector. The war shows that the European Union must become a leader in protecting all non-human animals. Now more than ever we need systemic help for animals. It is time that empathy, a community value through Article 13 of the TFEU, which recognizes animals as sentient beings, becomes the trigger for genuine care for all non-human animals.

Immediate action is needed to make it a reality that the welfare of all animals is a priority not only for EU citizens but also for the European Commission. It is necessary to make it clear who the Commissioner responsible for animal welfare is, which would entail changing the name of the post to Commissioner for 'Health, Food Safety, and Animal Welfare'. This would greatly promote legislative progress and proper enforcement, but would also make it easier to appoint specific persons responsible for directly coordinating assistance to animals affected by the war in Ukraine, which is currently one of the most pressing problems. This would also be facilitated by the creation of a specific directorate for animal welfare within the Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), thus giving due recognition to the special importance of the principle of protecting animal welfare as expressed in the TFEU. It is also necessary to initiate a debate on giving more powers to the EU Commissioner for Animal Welfare.

Last 28 April, for the second time 127 MEPs, the largest number ever for a thematic oral question in the history of the European Parliament, tabled oral question 16/2022, which replaces the previous 1/2022, not scheduled for debate within the three-month deadline.

This oral question is directly linked to the #EUforAnimals campaign, also supported by over 170,000 signatures of the online petition on the euforanimals.eu website.

Increased responsibility for animal welfare in the EU institutions is desirable, as the humanitarian crisis caused by Russia's attack on Ukraine, involving not only humans but also animals, makes clear. Today we need coordinated action by the EU. We need a Commissioner for Animal Welfare.

Michel Vandenbosch
President, GAIA

Adolfo Sansolini
Coordinator, #EUforAnimals

