



INTERGROUP ON THE WELFARE & CONSERVATION OF ANIMALS

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Established in 1983

Mrs Androulla Vassiliou
Commissioner for Health
European commission
Rue de la Loi, 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 9 October 2009
Ref. IV/4/2009

Dear Commissioner Vassiliou,

Support for the creation of a European network of reference centres

Recent Eurobarometers (2005, 2007) as well as some results of the WelfareQuality® project confirmed that European consumers are concerned about animal welfare and that most of them feel to be informed insufficiently on animal welfare issues in contemporary animal farming. Consumers require more accountability within the product supply chains.

Thanks to EU co-funding, the WelfareQuality® project integrated EU wide knowledge from several areas and disciplines to study the perception of consumers to animal welfare, to develop tools for assessing animal welfare on farms and at slaughter, and to study remedial solutions to welfare problems.

Important concepts have been developed, e.g. the four principles: good housing, good feeding, good health and appropriate behaviour that must be met in order to safeguard farm animal welfare, and the related twelve operational criteria for welfare assessment. Technical documents have been produced and practical welfare improvement strategies were developed. Web-based support tools are now available for data handling and the provision of technical information to improve animal welfare. These will greatly facilitate the implementation of the WelfareQuality® results.

The Intergroup is aware that a formal body must be established to regularly upgrade welfare assessment tools like the Welfare Quality® system, to support implementation trajectories, and to ensure that welfare claims are relevant and appropriately transmitted to all stakeholders, including consumers. In this context, it is important to note that neither the provision of information for consumers nor the promotion of accountability require the labelling of products on welfare grounds.

With this letter Intergroup Members want to assure their support to the Commission for the creation of a European network of reference centres on the protection and welfare of animals. We consider that such an integrated network or body is essential to develop and further maintain welfare indicators, assessment systems and improvement strategies as well as to ensure they are used fairly.

Can the Commission inform us about the latest state of developments concerning the creation of a European Centre or Laboratory for the protection and welfare of animals as this had been foreseen in the Animal Welfare Action Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Lucas MEP

C.c Isabelle Veissier INRA