

Evaluation of the Intergroup's activities during this term

speech by Jeppe Kofod MEP, 14th February 2019

Dear colleagues, dear assistants, dear guests,

I am honoured to present you today an evaluation of the Intergroup's activities during the last five years and I am happy to inform you that we can look back to a long list of big and smaller successes which have contributed to promote animal welfare during a difficult time for EU policy making in this field. Despite the general legislative stalemate, the Intergroup has succeeded to have an impact with initiatives and actions that have the potential for future positive developments.

In the almost four decades of the Intergroup's existence the Intergroup has never had such a high visibility which shows that despite being an unofficial body of the House, this Intergroup is considered as the focal point of discussion for animal welfare related issues in the House.

You can see some of our highlights on the pictures in the slideshow presentation.

The Intergroup has gathered on a monthly basis during each plenary session in Strasbourg which amounts so far to **54** sessions. Besides these meetings a large number of side events were organised which included high level conferences with Ministers, seminars to discuss specific animal welfare issues in more detail or also exhibitions which were held in the Parliament in Brussels and in Strasbourg.

With **114** registered Intergroup Members from all Political Groups and from **24** Member States the Intergroup has been one of the largest of its kind during this term and certainly one of the best attended. The average attendance was around **20 MEPs per session** which shows the considerable commitment of many MEPs for the welfare and conservation of animals.

The Intergroup had **two Presidents** during this term:

- **Janusz Wojciechowski** from the ECR Group from 2014- 2016

and then

- **Sirpa Pietikäinen** from the EPP Group. Both were helped in their work by a dedicated Board.

A novelty were **topic related working groups** which have the objective to highlight specific animal welfare issues and to make sure that related initiatives lead to a positive outcome.

Among these I would like to mention the working group on pig welfare which I have the honour to chair, the working group on animal transport and the working group for cage free farming.

The Intergroup has succeeded to keep the attention of EU decision makers for animal welfare. Clear evidence for this was the continued dialogue with the European Commission. Commissioner Andriukaitis addressed the Intergroup on a regular basis – sometimes even twice a year and also Cecilia Malmström, the Commissioner for Trade followed an invitation.

During this term, the Intergroup has operated on the basis of **strategic priorities** which were adopted at the beginning of this term. This has allowed to focus and to pursue strategically relevant opportunities.

THE OVERARCHING ISSUES

Among the overarching issues the Intergroup promoted a **motion for a resolution on a new animal welfare strategy for 2016-2020 (2015/2957(RSP))** which urged the Commission to propose a general EU animal welfare framework law

so as to fully implement the requirements of Article 13 of the Treaty. I would like to thank in particular **Intergroup Vice-President Anja Hazekamp** for her proactive promotion of this initiative. She has been of essential help in making sure that the House would debate this issue.

As outcome of this motion we were glad to hear that the Commission will work this year on an evaluation of the Animal Welfare Strategy 2012-2015. This can be seen as a possible starting point for the development of new initiatives in the next term.

The Intergroup has operated also **a watchdog for the implementation and enforcement of animal welfare related legislation** and has regularly put pressure on the Commission and Member States to seriously deal with this issue.

In this respect we welcome the establishment of the new EU **animal welfare reference centres for animal welfare as hubs of information on good practice**. However, we have seen with great concern that the latest animal welfare centre might also deal with the welfare of animals that are kept for fur production. I would like to use this opportunity to stress once again that fur farming should not be supported by scarce EU resources and call on Commissioner to reverse this decision.

We have also contributed to promoting the set-up of the **EU platform on animal welfare** which has the goal to support an enhanced dialogue on animal welfare issues between the European Commission and stakeholders including competent authorities, businesses, civil society and scientists. This Platform will assist the Commission with the development and exchange of coordinated actions on animal welfare.

FARM ANIMALS

Concerning our successes on farm animals I would like to start with **the welfare of pigs** as it is an issue which is particularly dear to me. As I said before, I have chaired the Intergroup's working group on pig welfare and we tirelessly remembered the European Commission and the Member States about the need for a better enforcement of the Pigs Directive.

Concrete outcomes of our working group were the successful adoption of a budgetary pilot project on the acceptance of meat from non-castrated pigs as well as an exhibition here in Strasbourg which highlighted the concerns of pig mutilations and intensive farming.

I am glad that the Intergroup has also been able to raise awareness for the petition "EndPigPain" which was supported by over one million EU citizens throughout the EU.

One of the biggest successes of this term was certainly the **own initiative report on minimum standards for the protection of farm rabbits**. It was the first time that the EP has dealt with this issue and despite fierce opposition from the industry, the House has come up with a meaningful report which calls among others on the Commission to come up with a legislative proposal on the protection of farmed rabbits. I salute the vigorous fight of Vice President **Stefan Eck** for the welfare of rabbits.

I would also like to mention the **motion for a resolution on the impact of industrial broiler farming** which was adopted rather unexpectedly, at the end of last year. This issue has been proactively promoted by the Intergroup Vice Presidents **Karin Kadenbach** and **Anja Hazekamp**.

The Intergroup has been particularly active in raising concerns about **the poor enforcement of the Animal Transport Regulation**. Based on clear evidence of breaches provided by NGOs, the Intergroup decided to promote the set-up of a **Committee of inquiry on animal transport** and succeeded to collect support signatures from 223 MEPs. Despite this broad support it was not possible to establish the Committee of inquiry and the Intergroup Members had to accept **the alternative option of an implementation report on the protection of animals during transport within and outside the EU**.

I would like to thank all Intergroup Members who have actively worked on this issue and cite in particular **Pascal Durand**, **Maria Noichl**, **Stefan Eck** and **Anja Hazekamp**. A special thanks goes also to **Jørn Dohrmann** for his good implementation report. Hopefully today in plenary, it will not be watered down by weakening amendments.

Several Intergroup Members have committed themselves for the **proactive promotion of the EU Citizens Initiative "End the Cage Age"**. We made good progress and reached 400.000 signatures but need to step up our efforts to promote the campaign and make sure we reach the million very soon. Colleagues, I would like to call all on you to help and reach out to supportive EU citizens in your home country!

ANIMALS USED IN RESEARCH

Regarding the Intergroup's activities for the protection of animals in research I would like to mention in particular the **motion for a resolution on a global ban to end animal testing for cosmetics** which was proactively promoted by our **President, Sirpa Pietikäinen**.

WILDLIFE

When it comes to the conservation of wildlife the Intergroup and the "MEPs for wildlife" have been able to promote several Resolutions. I won't cite them all as it would become a longer listing. However, I would like to pick out the **own Initiative report on an EU action plan against wildlife trafficking** which has been drafted by the Intergroup Member and Head of "**MEPs for Wildlife**", **Catherine Bearder**. Thanks to the help of **Intergroup member Zbigniew Kuźmiuk** it was also possible to adopt a budgetary pilot project on the assessment and dissemination of best practices for the humane management of invasive alien species.

COMPANION ANIMALS

On the welfare of companion animals, the **Intergroup Vice President Renate Sommer** initiated a motion for a resolution on the introduction of compatible systems for the registration of pet animals across Member States. This motion will hopefully incite the Member States to cooperate for the harmonisation of registration systems which will be essential to fight against illegal puppy trafficking.

Intergroup Member Julie Girling MEP was the rapporteur for an own initiative report on responsible ownership and care of Equidae which was adopted with a very large majority showing that this issue is dear to most MEPs in the House.

LEGISLATIVE REPORTS

Last but not least I would like to mention also the successes on legislative reports in particular the dossiers on a **new Animal Health Law, Organic production and labelling of organic products, official controls** and **novel foods**. The rapporteurs of these reports are or were members of the Animal Welfare Intergroup and have promoted the inclusion of animal welfare concerns in these dossiers.

CONCLUSION

Concluding I can say that we can look back to a series of successes. Even though most of them represent just intermediate steps they are all important for reaching our final objective.

Together with Sirpa Pietikäinen, the President of this Intergroup I would like to

thank all of you

for your proactive involvement in the promotion of the welfare and conservation of animals. I am aware that many of you have not been personally mentioned in my presentation but your contributions, be they big or small have made a change and helped to move on.