

Vytenis Andriukaitis
Commissioner, Health & Food Safety
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

10 February 2017

Dear Commissioner Andriukaitis,

We are writing to you in order to congratulate the European Commission on establishing the new EU Platform on Animal Welfare. This is a timely opportunity to engage the different EU institutions, Member States and NGOs in a direct dialogue on a topic that is so close to the heart of the vast majority of EU citizens.

Regarding the themes to be discussed under this new format, we take note of the Commission's Decision of 24 January 2017 establishing the Platform, as well as the Call for Applications for the Selection of Members of the Platform as indications of the scope of the Platform. The welfare of food producing animals, the food supply chain and the "market value of Union products at global level" are clearly the main foci of the Platform. These are important topics indeed, and we welcome their inclusion.

However, it is absolutely essential that other animal species are similarly covered by the Platform on Animal Welfare. At the moment there is very little EU legislation to protect the welfare of the 63 million owned dogs and 72 million owned cats. Issues such as the illegal trade in dogs and cats in the EU can only be addressed at EU level, through a comprehensive approach involving the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States, including agencies and border and veterinary authorities. The Platform is therefore an ideal forum for the EU to be able to take an active approach in tackling this abominable trade, through engagement, dialogue and a focus on better enforcement and implementation of existing legislation.

We therefore call upon the European Commission to ensure that the welfare of companion animals is included as a topic under the new Platform on Animal Welfare, and that the issue of the illegal trade in dogs and cats is adequately addressed under the Platform. This includes ensuring that companion animal experts are selected to sit on the panel as part of the selection process.

The Commission has, indeed, regularly been giving indications that it will address this illegal trade under the Platform, including in its replies to Written Questions E-003662/16 and E-002848/2016. It has also repeatedly stated that it is up to the Member States to develop the necessary tools and procedures, in order to perform the official controls to verify the compliance with the applicable rules and to better enforce existing EU and national legislation. The Member States do have their role to play in resolving the illegal trade, but we believe this should be primarily coordinated at the EU level, particularly since the implications of the illegal trade which go beyond animal welfare, such

as risks to public health, consumer protection and the smooth functioning of the EU internal market, have no national boundaries.

We trust that you will take the appropriate steps to ensure that the welfare of companion animals is included as a thematic issue under of the Platform on Animal Welfare. This is an ideal opportunity to address the illegal trade in dogs and cats, and to make the important step towards ensuring that the European Union adequately protects the millions of companion animals whose welfare is so close to the hearts of the Union's citizens.

Yours sincerely,

Marlene Mizzi (S&D, Malta)

Isabella Adinolfi (EFDD, Italy)

Petras Auštrevičius (ALDE, Lithuania)

Georges Bach (EPP, Luxembourg)

Brando Benifei (S&D, Italy)

Mark Demesmaeker (ECR, Belgium)

Isabella De Monte (S&D, Italy)

Anneliese Dodds (S&D, United Kingdom)

Stefan Eck (GUE/NGL, Germany)

Jill Evans (Greens/EFA, United Kingdom)

Jacqueline Foster (ECR, United Kingdom)

Julie Girling (ECR, United Kingdom)

Michela Giuffrida (S&D, Italy)

Jytte Guteland (S&D, Sweden)

Anja Hazekamp (GUE/NGL, Netherlands)

Alex Mayer (S&D, United Kingdom)

Maria Noichl (S&D, Germany)

Younous Omarjee (GUE/NGL, France)

Pavel Poc (S&D, Czech Republic)

Emil Radev (EPP, Bulgaria)

Sofia Ribeiro (EPP, Portugal)

Davor Škrlec (Greens/EFA, Croatia)

Renate Sommer (EPP, Germany)

Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu (S&D, Romania)

Derek Vaughan (S&D, United Kingdom)

Julie Ward (S&D, United Kingdom)