

Table of contents

Foreword (<i>Hanna Machińska</i>)	7
Index of abbreviations	9
PART I: LEGISLATION	
1. EC Zoos Directive 1999/22: success, failure – or work in progress? (<i>Daniel Turner</i>)	15
2. Directive 1999/22/EC as an element of the EU policy for ensuring the conservation and welfare of animals (<i>Oksana Cabaj</i>)	30
3. Council Directive 1999/22/EC as an instrument for the harmonisation of EU member states' laws with respect to the regulations concerning the welfare of wild animals kept in zoos (<i>Teresa Gardocka and Agnieszka Gruszczynska</i>)	44
4. National legal regulations on the functioning of zoos (<i>Anna Ronikier-Dolańska</i>)	82
5. How the zoo licensing system in Great Britain works (<i>Brian Bertram</i>)	89
PART II: THE WELFARE OF ZOO ANIMALS	
1. Animal welfare: a matter of mutual interest (<i>David van Gennep and Godelieve Kranendonk</i>)	101
2. The behaviour of animals kept in zoos and their welfare (<i>Tadeusz Kaleta</i>)	110
3. The welfare of primates in zoos (<i>Kirsten Pullen</i>)	118
4. The welfare of captive bears (<i>Agnieszka Sergiel and Robert Maślak</i>)	129
5. The welfare of elephants in zoos (<i>Moira Harris</i>)	140
PART III: THE ROLE OF ZOOS	
1. Zoological gardens on a mission to preserve endangered fauna – what more can we do? (<i>Andrzej Kruszewicz</i>)	153

2. The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) vs. non-associated zoos – similarities and differences <i>(Radosław Ratajszczak)</i>	161
About authors	167
About sponsors	
Born Free Foundation	170
ENDCAP	171
Vier Pfoten	172
Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, University of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS)	173

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Foreword

There is an important place for the issue of animal welfare in public debate. This situation is reflected in the commitment of the European Union and the Council of Europe to the process of developing legal standards for animal protection. Both the EU and the Council recognise that animals are sentient beings. As a result, both systems provide for legal standards of animal welfare. Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union places the Union and its member states under an obligation to pay regard, in implementing various EU policies, to the welfare requirements of animals. Numerous conventions of the Council of Europe, including the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, the European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes, and the European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter clearly state the need for protecting animals and sparing them suffering and pain.¹

In its Recommendation 1084 (1988), the Parliamentary Assembly considers that adequate care should be provided for animals and that the highest standards should be maintained with regard to living conditions and the management of animals in zoos. Furthermore, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers should organise the awarding of a European Zoo Prize to the establishment which best meets the standards of care; ensure that each member maintains a registry of zoos and provides licences for their operation; promote educational projects concerning zoos; and ensure that zoos are under continuous and adequate veterinary supervision.²

¹ Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats of 19 September 1979; European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes of 10 March 1976; European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter of 10 May 1979.

² Recommendation 1084 (1988), Situation of zoos in Europe, Parliamentary Assembly.

These issues have recently gained particular significance with regard to the debate on ritual slaughter and the protection of animals during transportation. In developing the Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of animals 2012–2015, the European Union invokes the general aspects of animal welfare contained in Council Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, as well as the specific aspects contained in a number of other directives, including Council Directive 1999/22/EC on the keeping of wild animals in zoos.³ The scope of the EU Strategy is obviously much wider, however many of its elements are directly related to animals kept in zoos. In particular, the Strategy identifies the main factors that affect the welfare of animals within the Union, such as the lack of enforcement of EU legislation by member states. This, in turn, is related to cultural perceptions of animal welfare and a need to simplify and develop clear principles for animal welfare. In the context of zoos, this need is mentioned in reference to Article 3 of Council Directive 1999/22/EC laying down the requirements for accommodating animals under adequate conditions.

The European Union sees the opportunity to improve this situation in the adoption of the Strategy focused on a number of aspects, *inter alia*, assessing the current legislative framework, improving compliance, supporting international cooperation, and improving information and education policies. It is also worth mentioning the EU call for examining how animal welfare could be integrated in the framework of the European neighbourhood policy and promoting the Union's standards for animal welfare at an international and global level. Such activities undertaken with respect to non-EU zoos will greatly contribute to the improvement of their animals' welfare. However, apart from the possible legislative proposal for a simplified EU legislative framework for animal welfare, the specific actions foreseen in the 2012–2015 Strategy include no actions directly related to zoos.

Discussing the role of zoos, the EU legislative framework and policies, including the aforementioned Strategy, national regulations and the functioning of the British zoo licensing system, this publication is devoted to problems related to the quality of life and the welfare of animals kept in zoos. It explores crucial and very relevant issues concerning animal welfare and is a valuable contribution to further debate on how to improve the functioning of zoos both within and outside the borders of the European Union.

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee on the European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012–2015, Brussels, 19 January 2012, COM(2012) 6.