

Code Animal  
(Pour le collectif et la Fondation Brigitte Bardot)  
Maison des Associations  
1A Place des Orphelins  
67000 Strasbourg

Madame la Ministre Elisabeth Borne  
Ministère de la transition écologique et solidaire  
Hôtel de Roquelaure  
246 boulevard Saint-Germain  
75007 Paris

Strasbourg, September 25th, 2019

Dear Minister Elisabeth Borne,

On behalf of the undersigned organisations, we would like to warmly congratulate you on assuming office as Minister of the Ecological and Solidary Transition and wish you a fruitful term. We would like to take this opportunity to respectfully call on you to implement a national ban on the use of wild animals in circuses in France.

There are growing concerns about the ethics of using wild animals for public entertainment in our societies. More and more calls are made from the citizens across the European Union to put an end to this outdated form of entertainment. In fact, there are now 24 countries out of 28 in the EU that have passed or announced legislation to restrict or ban the use of wild animals in circuses. Unfortunately, **France is not on the list**, even though 67% of the French population is in favour of having a national regulation on banning the use of wild animals in circuses<sup>1</sup>.

There is widespread acknowledgement that wild animals do not belong in circuses due to the unnatural performances, the constant travelling and the temporary accommodation which greatly compromises the welfare of wild animals. The use of wild animals in circuses is also a threat to the public health and security as these wild animals may carry zoonoses and are dangerous, because they remain as unpredictable as their counterparts in the wild.

The story of Mevy, the tiger who escaped from the circus in the middle of Paris in 2017, is one of the examples that could have been even more disastrous if human victims were to be deplored. Due to the proximity of the public with wild animals and the nature of the travelling circuses, the latest can never be 100% safe. Many animals escape and are found wandering on public roads.<sup>2</sup>

A study by *Eurogroup for Animals* indicates that during the past 22 years, over 300 incidents involving wild animals in circuses were recorded in the European Union. New incidents keep being reported on a regular basis all around Europe. France is, together with Germany, one of the countries where the largest number of accidents occurs.<sup>3</sup>

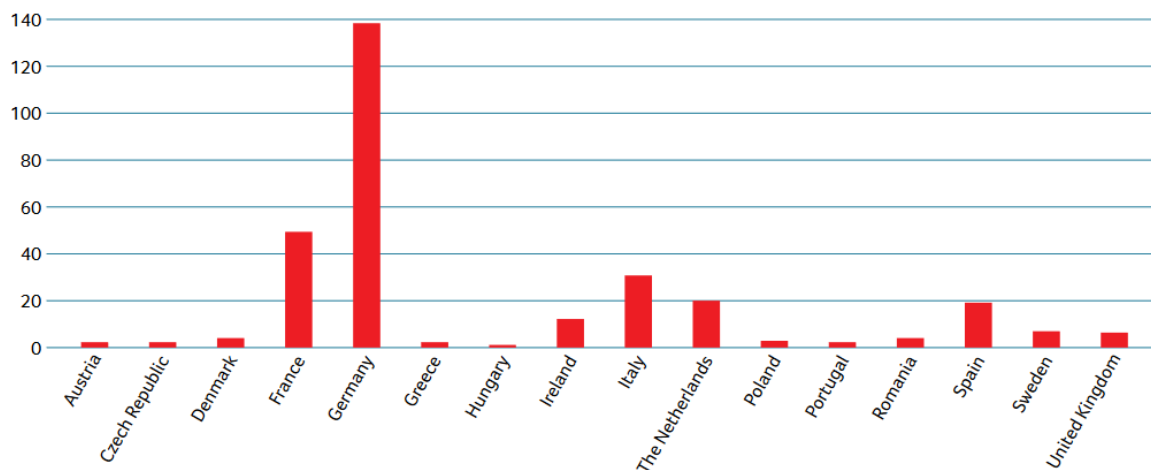
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.30millionsdamis.fr/actualites/article/13229-animaux-6-mesures-phares-exigees-par-les-francais-en-2018/>

<sup>2</sup> [The French associations Code Animal and Fondation Brigitte Bardot have been collecting the accidents occurring in France](#)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/wp-content/uploads/E4A-Circus\\_Report-Digital-OK-v2.pdf?utm\\_source=PDF&utm\\_campaign=CircusReport](http://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/wp-content/uploads/E4A-Circus_Report-Digital-OK-v2.pdf?utm_source=PDF&utm_campaign=CircusReport)

**Figure 1:** Incidents caused by wild animals in circuses in EU Member States between 1995 and 2017.



Many scientists including veterinarians already demonstrated the welfare requirements for wild animals can never be met in travelling circuses. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe clearly recommended in 2015 « all European and national competent authorities **to prohibit the use of wild mammals in travelling circuses** across Europe since there is by no means the possibility that their physiological, mental and social requirements can adequately be met. »<sup>4</sup> Numerous French veterinarians also support this position that they expressed in a joint video and press release<sup>5</sup>.

Finally, psychologists have alerted the public and the governments on the “anti-pedagogical value of the abuse of animals in circuses and performances”, underlining that “far from facilitating and promoting learning about the animals’ nature and needs, [circus performances] may promote a lack of respect for living beings, lead to the denial of pain messages and hinder the development of empathy which is critical during the development and growth process as they may solicit an incongruous response – that is, amusement and joy - to punishment, discomfort and injustice”<sup>6</sup>.

There is no argument that can justify the use of wild animals in circuses today.

Moreover, an increasing number of municipalities within the few remaining EU countries that have not yet passed national bans are taking a stand against the use of wild animals in circuses and urging the national government to do so as well.

France is no exception to this movement; there are now 367 cities in France which adopted a symbolic position against the use of wild animals in circuses and are asking the French government to pass a national bill<sup>7</sup>.

Your Ministry met with the French associations, the circus community and the members of the Government to discuss the issue of wild animals in circuses between April and July 2019. On the 3rd of July, during the conclusion meeting in the presence of François de Rugy, your predecessor, reports have been presented to justify the necessity for France to pass a bill to ban the use of wild animals in

<sup>4</sup> Please find attached to the letter.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cirques-de-france.fr/en-direct/les-v-t-rinaires-fran-ais-se-mobilisent-pour-des-cirques-sans-animaux> + <http://www.evadas.fr/2019/04/tribune-cirques-avec-animaux-sauvages-des-veterinaires-contestent-la-position-equivoque-de-leur-conseil-de-l-ordre.html>

<sup>6</sup> Please find attached to the letter.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cirques-de-france.fr/les-communes-qui-agissent-en-faveur-des-animaux>

circuses. You now have all the required elements in your hands to make an informed choice and join the countries which have taken a clear stand against the use of wild animals in circuses.

Stricter licensing and additional standards will always fall short as they cannot alleviate the pain and suffering the animals are experiencing every day and cannot adequately address the risks for public health, safety and security associated with the use of wild animals in circuses. Many circuses are also experiencing the fact that people simply do not want to see wild animals treated as clowns anymore; they are either in a compulsory liquidation situation or have decided to change and become a circus without any animal.

Our organisations are from European countries where the use of wild animals in circuses have been banned or is about to be. As we are all pleased with these developments in our own country, we urge you to take this necessary step forward with a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses in France together with a transitional arrangement to achieve this end.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours respectfully and sincerely,

Signatories:

AAP - Animal Advocacy and Protection

Animal Defenders International

Animal Friends Croatia

Animal Interfaith Alliance

ANDA

Djurens Rätt

Djurskyddet Sverige/Animal Welfare Sweden

Dyrenes Beskyttelse - Animal Protection Denmark

FAADA - Foundation for Advice and Action in the Defence of Animals

FOUR PAWS International

GAIA

Humane Society International/Europe

ISPCA - Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

LAV

Loomus

RSPCA

SEY - Finnish Federation for Animal Welfare Associations

Sloboda Zvierat