

Supporting better implementation of the Zoos Directive

In order to improve implementation of the Zoos Directive, this project will be providing a forum for key zoo stakeholders to exchange knowledge, experience and best practice on different topics, by developing and organising pilot trainings for Member States' authorities and other relevant practitioners, particularly zoo managers, as well as by supporting Member States' competent authorities in using peer-to-peer mechanisms to spread best practice and transfer of know-how on zoo licensing and inspection.

The Zoos Directive (Council Directive 1999/22/EC) was adopted in 1999 with the objective to protect wild fauna and to conserve biodiversity, thereby strengthening the role of zoos as ex situ conservation entities in the conservation of biodiversity. The Directive responds to an ever growing need to halt biodiversity loss and as such implements CBD's (Convention on Biological Diversity) article 97, which requires CBD parties to adopt ex situ conservation measures, predominantly for the purpose of complementing in-situ measures. To achieve the Zoos Directive's objectives, Member States have to establish competent authorities as well as a functional licencing and inspection system. However, factors still impeding more effective implementation of the Directive's provisions are mainly linked to the national licencing and inspection systems. The main issues are a lack of capacity (particularly a lack of specialist knowledge on zoo animals and conservation issues) and resources in Member States' competent authorities and a lack of cooperation between authorities at different levels. Negative knock-on effects are unlicensed but operational zoos, a lack of inventory of all establishments falling under the Directive, long licencing procedures, a lack of measurable criteria for Article 3 measures in zoo inspections, incomplete inspection forms not covering all Article 3 criteria and problems regarding closure of non-compliant zoos. Article 3 conservation requirements are: participation in research and/or training and/or exchange of information from which conservation objectives may be achieved, and/or, where appropriate, captive breeding, repopulation, or reintroduction of species into the wild; promotion of public education and awareness by providing information about the species exhibited and their natural habitats; accommodating the animals under conditions that aim to satisfy the biological requirements of the species by providing specific enrichment to the enclosures, as well as maintaining high standards of animal husbandry and veterinary preventive and curative care; preventing the escape of the animals; and keeping appropriate records of the zoo's collection.