

**For Immediate Release**

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**European Circus Association Challenges Performing Animal Bans**

*Brussels, Belgium* – The European Circus Association (ECA) today announced the filing of legal actions against Austria and the City of Luxembourg to challenge their bans on animals in the circus. ECA President Urs Pilz made the announcement at the European Parliament where the ECA and its partners delivered a report to MEP Doris Pack, Chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Education, on next steps for the Parliament's 2005 circus resolution which noted the desirability of further recognition of the classical circus, including the presentation of animals, as part of European culture.

"We have waited nearly five years for the European Commission to take up its responsibilities and challenge the Austrian ban," Mr. Pilz said. "The right to present well-cared for animals under good welfare conditions in the classical circus in Europe must be established once and for all. Equal treatment for the circus community and enforcement of law also means that bans established by local authorities such as the City of Luxembourg must be invalidated."

Austria instituted a ban on non-domesticated animals in the circus in January 2005. The European Commission determined that the Austrian ban violated Article 49 of the European Treaty and opened legal proceedings against Austria. However, the Commission dropped the case under pressure from animal rights activists. In June 2009, the European Ombudsman concluded his investigation, finding that the Commission had "abdicated its role as Guardian of the Treaty." He recommended that the Commission reinstate the action or provide a legally valid reason for not doing so.

Mr. Pilz emphasized the ongoing popularity of performing circus animals across Europe. Data from the Irish Arts Council shows that more Irish visited circuses in 2006 than opera, contemporary dance, and ballet combined. Independent market research determined that 6.4 million Germans visited a circus in either 2006 or 2007. A random sampling of the German public in 2008 found that 86% of the persons surveyed believe that animals are an essential part of the circus.

The ECA reaffirmed its strong commitment to animal welfare. It also announced a new Pledge programme under which ECA members would report on their achievements to the public and its intention to identify one European circus each year for excellence and innovation in animal care.

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