

## **Greeting of the Participants of the Workshop “Animal welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices” on November 12<sup>th</sup> 2015 in Brussels**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning!

On behalf of Minister Alexander Bonde, I welcome you to this international conference on “Animal welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices”. This is a follow-up to the workshop carried out in April 2014 on “Stray animals” here in Brussels.

It’s a great pleasure to have this conference here in the permanent representation of Baden-Württemberg in Brussels again and to discuss with all of you the so called illegal trade of pets in and outside of the EU.

First of all I want to thank the mixed team from Brussels and Baden-Württemberg that organized with great efforts and engagement this conference – I especially want to thank my colleagues Dr. Alexandra Kostorz and Dr. Karin Hipper from Brussels and Dr. Rebecca Holmes from Stuttgart.

I also want to thank "Four Paws", “Eurogroup 4 animals” and “Tasso” for their financial support of the workshop. Today we will have the opportunity to watch and discuss a “Four Paws” documentary about illegal puppy-trade in Europe. Thank you very much!

I am sure that we have all been confronted with shocking pictures and documentaries on puppy mills, whereby motherdogs lie apathetically in the corners of dirty former pig sties or are kept in small cages, neglected and always gestating or feeding puppies.

These puppies are raised under poor conditions without much principle and smuggled to other Member States by intermediate dealers some at an age of 8 weeks and younger where they are sold by small scale dealers via internet-platforms.

Their vaccination documents are often forged by veterinarians. Many of the puppies are sick and require costly medical care. The weakest amongst them die within the first couple of days after arrival. Many of

these mass-producers and puppy dealers form a trader network selling puppies on a large scale at a great gain.

We have got together today to discuss and reflect which steps we can take, to prevent these young sick and suffering puppies to be hauled across Europe, sold to innocent buyers putting them and other animals at health risks.

Which measures can the authorities take and which support do they need to prevent this grievance effectively? (We speak about a huge grey market with an high economic impact.)

Is the potential owner able to identify the underlying illegal trade when he is interested in purchasing a dog? And if so, how? Which legislation protect the interest of the owner?

We want to identify which role the NGOs can play in stopping illegal puppy trade.

I am sure, during this workshop we will gain great insight into the current situations and which possible options for future initiatives on the animal health and welfare are foreseen.

We are pleased that Mr. Gavinelli will be presenting the findings of the study on dogs and cats involved in commercial practices mandated in 2013 by the Commission in the framework of the EU strategy for the protection and welfare of animals 2012-2015.

The study examines the extent to which initiatives would be necessary to achieve key objectives including the proper functioning of the internal market, protection of the consumer, public health, and the health and welfare of animals.

In the end we hopefully will be able to make proposals to the EU, Member States, other stakeholders and animal welfare organizations, how to further develop their strategies for solutions in handling puppy mass-production and illegal trade.

I am looking forward to the presentations and discussion and wish us all a very successful day together here in Brussels.

Let me finish by appealing to you all to seize this opportunity to push matters forward – to play your part in shedding light on this consisting grey market in Europe.

Thank you in advance for your active participation.