

SUMMARY

Of the 68 estimated zoos (requiring a licence) in Italy, 25 zoos were evaluated against the legal requirements of the European Council Directive 1999/22/EC (relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos), the Legislative Decree 21 March 2005 n. 73 (Official Gazette n. 100, 02/05/2005): 'Attuazione della direttiva 1999/22/CE relativa alla custodia degli animali selvatici nei giardini zoologici' (as amended) and, where applicable, the Ministerial Decree n.469 (06/12/2001), concerning facilities that keep *Tursiops truncatus*. Furthermore, the Competent Authorities, the Ministry of Environment and the Protection of Territory and of the Sea and the Ministry of Health were asked to complete a Standard Member State Questionnaire, information from which was referred to in the investigation. Key findings were:

- **Many of the requirements applicable to zoos in Italy are more stringent than those required by the Directive.** The purpose of LD73/2005 is to strengthen the role of zoos in the protection of wildlife and to maintain genetic diversity (Article 1, LD73/2005).
- **Findings indicated that the Italian zoo law was not being effectively implemented and enforced, with significant numbers of zoos remaining unlicensed and unregulated, yet operational.** According to the Competent Authority, 5 zoos have been licensed, 21 are in the process of being licensed and at least 39 zoos are unlicensed and unregulated. **This does not fulfil the fundamental objective of Article 4 of the Directive.**
- **Findings concluded that few zoo inspections have taken place, the majority of zoos remain uninspected and many have yet to request an operational licence.** Animals remained in substandard conditions, zoos were failing to meet the legal requirements and penalties for non-compliance (under the LD73/2005) were not being applied. **This does not fulfil the fundamental objective of Articles 4 and 6 of the Directive.**
- Whilst some individual zoos were performing better than others, overall findings indicate that zoos in Italy were failing to comply with their legal obligations of LD73/2005. This does not meet the fundamental objective of Article 4 of the Directive.
- **Zoos that exhibited bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) did not appear to comply with the requirements of MD469/2001.**
- Despite the specific requirement for zoos in Italy to contribute to species conservation, particularly those species recognised as Threatened, **overall zoos appeared to be making an insignificant contribution to the conservation either globally or in Europe of species threatened with extinction. Few zoos were participating in meaningful scientific research and limited numbers of species were engaged in captive breeding programmes and species reintroduction.**
- **Species information was not available to the public for almost one third of the exhibited species holdings across the 25 zoos.**
- **While all zoos appeared to participate in educational activities, the majority of the animal demonstrations observed showed the animals performing unnatural behaviours, often to music, with an emphasis on entertainment rather than a portrayal of their natural attributes.**
- **Some zoos were not taking appropriate measures to prevent the escape of non-indigenous animals into the natural environment, which may have posed a threat to both local wildlife and the human population.**
- **Poor maintained enclosure fencing, a lack of stand-off barriers and a shortage of available zoo staff often placed the public at risk of injury and exposure to disease.**
- **The environmental quality of the assessed enclosures often failed to take into account species specific needs and lacked environmental enrichment.** Species were often housed in unsuitable environments where natural behaviour was compromised or prevented and animals were exposed to potential dangers and stress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of the Environment and the Protection of Territory and of the Sea should take the necessary measures to:

- 1) Revise the Legislative Decree 21 March 2005 n. 73 (Official Gazette n. 100, 02/05/2005), as amended ('LD73/2005'), to ensure that definitions and requirements specified by the Directive are accurately transposed and implemented. This should include: Article 3(3) (guidance on species-specific enrichment); Article 4 (licensing and inspection); and Article 6 (zoo closure).
- 2) Review and improve zoo licensing procedures to ensure that all permanent establishments open for seven days or more in a year, and display any number of wild animal species to the public, are licensed, receive regular inspections and meet all the specified requirements of LD73/2005 and, where applicable, the Ministerial Decree n.469 (06/12/2001) ('MD469/2001').
- 3) Ensure, through effective enforcement that all zoos (as defined by the Directive) abide by the requirements of national zoo law, the minimum standards in the Annexes to LD73/2005, and, where applicable, MD469/2001. Furthermore, apply existing available penalties (Articles 4(2)b and 8 of LD73/2005) to zoos, and facilities that exhibit bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), that fail to meet their legal obligations.
- 4) Ensure zoos comply with all the required obligations to scientific and conservation activities. Ensure zoos keep and conserve predominantly nationally protected and European Threatened species. All Threatened species, particularly European species kept by zoos, should be included in co-operative Species Management Programmes, but their capture from the wild should be strongly discouraged.
- 5) Ensure that all national and regional enforcement personnel and veterinarians involved in the inspection and regulation of zoos are equipped with relevant, regular training and skills pertaining to the care and welfare of wild animals in captivity.
- 6) Ensure that the necessary preventative measures are taken to minimise the risks posed by an escaped animal to public health and safety, and to the natural environment and indigenous species, particularly if the animal is listed as an Invasive Alien Species (IAS).
- 7) Review the species-specific minimum standards for the keeping of animals in zoos (Annexes to LD73/2005) to ensure that they are consistent with reliable and scientifically-validated standards of animal husbandry, including guidance on environmental enrichment, and to ensure that the animals' spatial, physical, physiological and behavioural needs are met. The compilation of the standards should be undertaken by an independent scientific body.
- 8) Ensure that all zoo employees with responsibility for animals have the necessary training and experience in animal care and husbandry.
- 9) Prohibit all public contact with 'hazardous animals' (SMZP) and those known to harbour zoonoses. All other public contact is to be discouraged but, where it does take place, must be supervised, controlled, limited, provide the animals with a significant rest period and must not be detrimental in any way to the welfare of the individual animals involved.
- 10) Publish guidance, as necessary, to assist zoos, enforcement personnel, veterinarians, NGOs and other stakeholders to effectively and consistently interpret the requirements of LD73/2005 and, where applicable, 'MD469/2001', specifically with regard to their participation in recognised peer-reviewed conservation and education programmes.