EAZA members are experts in the profession of zoo keeping and are Europe’s leading zoos and aquariums; EAZA members undergo strict accreditation inspections before entry into the association. EAZA accreditation standards exceed national standards throughout the EU; EAZA strongly supports full implementation of the EU Zoos Directive across all member states; EAZA urges the Commission to undertake a proper, scientifically valid, independent assessment of its implementation; and, EAZA welcomes the consideration by the Commission of a study on the development of guidance and best practice for the implementation of the Directive and is available to provide advice and guidance, as the zoo and aquarium experts in Europe, if and when requested.

The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) represents 330 members from 36 countries, of which more than 280 are located in the European Union. EAZA collections house more than 250,000 animals, excluding fish and invertebrates. Maintaining healthy animals under good welfare conditions in EAZA collections is of crucial importance to achieve our main objectives of conservation, research and education. The ‘EAZA Minimum Standards for the Accommodation and Care of Animals in Zoos and Aquaria’ (revised 2008) include extensive paragraphs on animal welfare, health, hygiene, surveillance and veterinary aspects. In addition EAZA members must abide by strict codes of practice and ethics. EAZA believes that good welfare is a prerequisite for effective conservation work.

EAZA welcomed the introduction of the Zoos Directive as a means to enhance conservation efforts by zoos and aquariums and notes that the Directive has been implemented in a highly professional manner across many member states. However, EAZA further notes that translation into national legislation has been slow in some countries and urges regulators across the EU to ensure that high standards in zoos and aquariums are encouraged by effective legislation and competent inspectorates.

While EAZA can only regulate its own members EAZA is also concerned about animal welfare in zoos and aquariums in Europe which currently do not meet EAZA accreditation standards. EAZA seeks to improve animal welfare in these zoos in two practical and professional ways;

The EAZA Committee for Technical Assistance is made up of volunteers from EAZA member zoos, providing guidance and support to struggling zoos located predominantly in eastern Europe. EAZA identifies zoos which are willing to improve and then works with them to achieve better animal welfare and zoo management standards. EAZA has developed a manual on improving zoo standards for these struggling zoos which is available to the Commission as a possible tool for zoos and regulators across Member States.
The EAZA Academy is the training wing of EAZA and seeks to provide extensive training opportunities for staff across all member zoos. EAZA Academy courses are also being made available to non-members, and in November 2011, 81 zoo staff in Romania and Hungary were given training in animal welfare and environmental enrichment techniques via the Academy.

EAZA believes that by combining these approaches we are best placed to help assist in improving zoo and aquarium standards outside our own membership, whilst noting that improved regulation by Member States is the overall most effective means for the EU and national regulators to improve and maintain high standards.

The expertise of EAZA members is available to the Commission in relation to the Zoos Directive and any other matters pertaining to zoos. In addition, EAZA expertise is also available to national regulators where appropriate.

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About EAZA:

- The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) represents 326 members from 36 countries, 300 of which maintain public collections of animals. More than 280 institutions of the total EAZA membership are located within the European Union. EAZA member institutions receive approximately 140 million visitors a year and house more than 250,000 animals, excluding fish and invertebrates. EAZA member institutions employ 32,000 staff members, and contribute €2.5 billion annually to the EU economy;

- EAZA has a significant social role in educating European citizens about animals, their conservation, and overarching threat processes such as climate change, habitat loss and how consumer behaviour interacts with these global challenges. EAZA formally educated more than 5 million children and young people in 2010;

- EAZA has adopted the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (2005) which articulates the modern role of zoos and aquariums and their commitment to conservation. EAZA members annually spend €100 million on conservation in the wild;

- For more information about our association, please visit: [www.eaza.net](http://www.eaza.net)