

BULLFIGHTING

Further to your email regarding subsidies for bull fighting, I undertook to research the matter in more detail.

The treaty of Amsterdam, in force since May 1999, included for the first time a special protocol requiring the EU institutions and EU countries to pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals in EU agricultural, transport, internal market and research policies and in the implementation of these policies at national level.

To my knowledge, there has never been a 'campaign' by MEP's to have bullfighting recognised as part of Europe's cultural heritage. However, the protocol also states that the EU must respect national cultural traditions. Bullfighting is considered to be a cultural tradition and part of the regional heritage of those member states which allow it under Protocol 33 of the EC Treaty. Bullfighting as a spectacle or for entertainment is not regulated under any EU law.

MEP's and the European Commission have received, and continue to receive, many submissions from animal welfare organisations and concerned citizens questioning the aid allegedly given to support bullfighting. In the framework of the common agricultural policy (CAP), there is no specific Community aid designed to support the breeding of bulls for fighting. Furthermore the 2003 reform of the CAP fundamentally changed the way direct payments are granted to farmers.

This reform established a single farm payment, which is not linked to any specific type and level of agricultural production systems, among which is the breeding of bulls. Today, a premium for male animals is granted only in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Slovenia. With the Health Check of the CAP (Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009), this will also, be fully decoupled by 1 January 2012 at the latest.

More generally, I recall that a couple of years ago there was a campaign here at the European Parliament for a bullfighting free Europe. The focus of the campaign was ending the subsidies that were given to those who bred bulls for the purpose of fighting. You might be interested in having a look at their website: www.bullfightingfreeeurope.org.

Ultimately, however, this is a matter that will have to be decided in the countries where bullfights actually take place. With the recent news that Cataluña in Spain has outlawed bullfighting in the region, it may be that other regions and countries will follow in their footsteps. However it is certainly my view that this is a matter to be determined within the country and through the normal parliamentary procedures.

I hope this information is helpful.