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Amsterdam, 26 February 2016

The Honourable Minister Ben Weyts  
Government of Flanders  
Martelaarsplein 7  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

Dear Minister Ben Weyts,

I am writing you on behalf of the Fur Free Alliance, an international coalition of 42 animal protection organisations representing millions of supporters worldwide.

An increasing number of European countries are legislating against fur farming. The ethical concerns of a large majority of the European citizens and the inherent cruelty of fur farming have led more and more countries to close down fur farms in recent years. We are very pleased to see Belgium is taking similar steps and is part of the forefront of a Europe that respects animal welfare.

Fur is a non-essential luxury item. An increasing majority of the population finds it unjustifiable to subject animals to prolonged suffering for trivial ends, such as fur coats or fashion accessories. In a democratic society, the public's long-standing opposition to fur farming and our changed ethical perception of animals should be properly reflected by law.

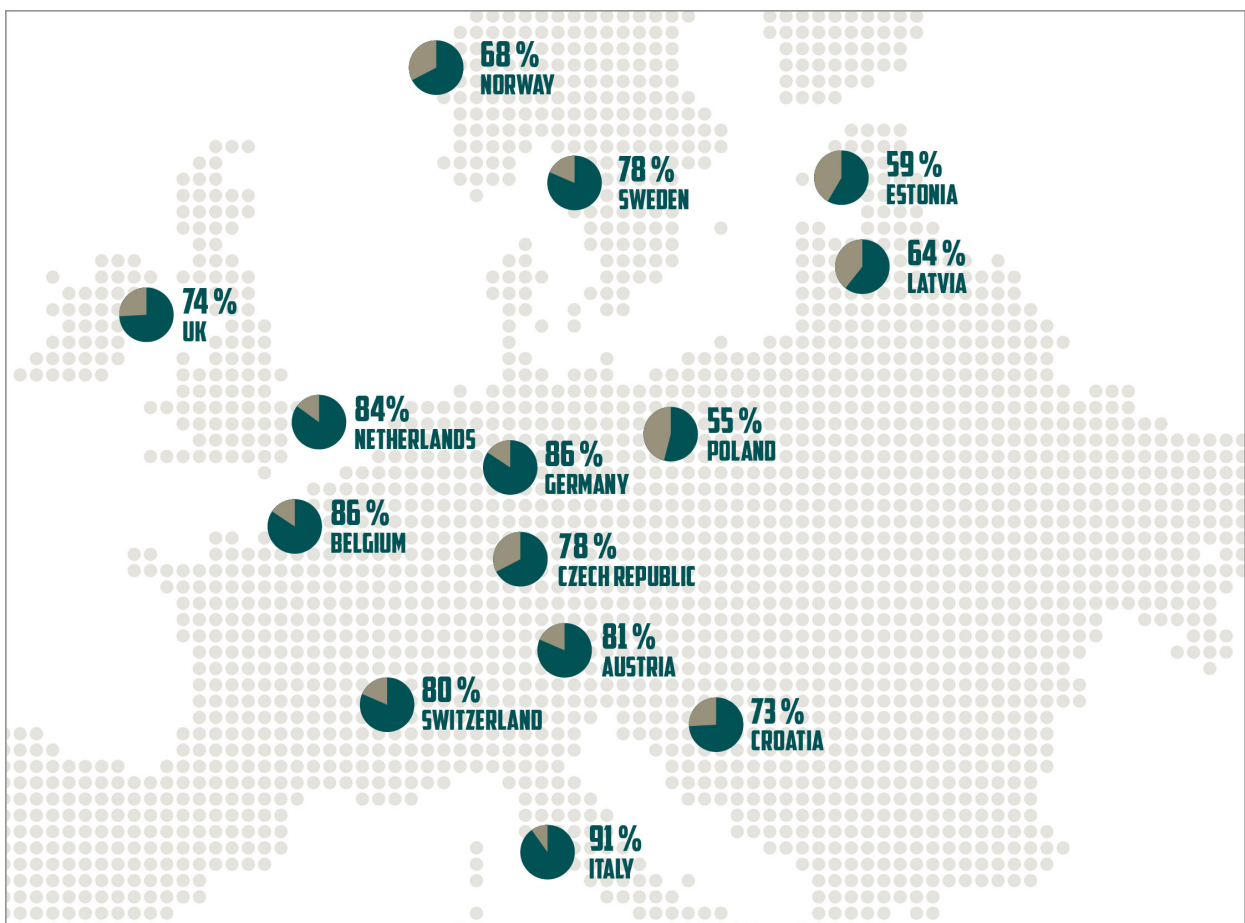
Over a decade ago the UK was the first country in Europe to ban fur farming and buyout fur farmers on the ground of 'public morality'. Other European countries that decided to ban fur farming since are Austria, The Netherlands, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia and Slovenia.

**As the Fur Free Alliance we strongly support an immediate fur farming ban that reflects the public morality of the Belgian citizens. In line with European developments, we encourage the Flemish Government to close down fur farms and provide compensation measures to existing businesses.**

Closing down fur farms on moral grounds is widely supported by the Belgian population. A large majority of 86 percent of the Belgian citizens considers that the breeding of animals for fur should not be allowed, regardless the circumstances.

Local Belgian communities have frequently protested against building plans of mink farms, due to the direct adverse affects on their environment as animal noises and odours and escaped mink killing chickens of local farmers. Furthermore, fur production is widely criticized for its high environmental costs and is known as an intensely polluting and energy-consumptive process.<sup>1</sup>

Belgium is among the European countries with the highest support – of almost 9 out of 10 citizens - of a fur ban. The percentages of EU member state populations that find fur farming unacceptable are considerably high and increasing:



**Closing fur farms is in line with scientific data, the public interest and the increasing integration of animal ethics in society.**

The serious animal welfare problems that result from keeping of what are essentially wild animals in barren enclosures are confirmed by numerous, extensive scientific research

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.furfreealliance.com/environment-and-health/>



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studies.<sup>2</sup> The confinement of non-domesticated predators in small cages without a possibility to perform species-specific behaviour inevitably causes suffering.

Severe welfare problems are inherent to fur production and animals on all fur farms have been found to exhibit serious health issues and stress-related symptoms as infected wounds, self-mutilation, infanticide, cannibalism and stereotypical behavior. Since mink are essentially wild, solitary animals their behavioral needs cannot be met in fur farms. Fur bans are the only legitimate solution to the serious animal welfare problems in the fur industry.

**As the Fur Free Alliance we urge the Flemish government to take a strong stance and ban fur farming. We encourage you to follow the example of the Fur Farming (Prohibition) Act 2000<sup>3</sup> in the UK, which implemented a ban of a similar-sized industry and compensated fur farmers for income losses.**

The world continues to look at the Flemish government to fulfill its commitment to end fur farming particularly as actions are increasingly being taken around the world to legislate against fur farming.

We look forward to your reply and providing assistance to your government in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Joh Vinding  
Chairman of the Fur Free Alliance

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<sup>2</sup> Pickett, H. and Harris, S. (2015) The Case Against Fur Factory Farming: A Scientific Review of Animal Welfare Standards and WelFur.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/33/introduction>