

Animal Welfare.
Worldwide.



FUR FREE
EUROPE



European Citizens' Initiative for a

FUR

FREE

EUROPE





Introduction

A new European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) for a "Fur Free Europe"¹ has been approved and successfully registered by the European Commission and it was launched on 18 May 2022. If the ECI reaches 1 million validated signatures within a year, the European Commission will decide on what action to take and may propose a legal act.

Together with the European animal welfare umbrella organisation Eurogroup for Animals, FOUR PAWS is campaigning with the ECI for an end to fur farming and farmed products in the EU.

The specific aim of the ECI is to:

1. end the breeding, keeping, and killing of animals for the sole or main purpose of fur production
2. to ban the placement of farmed animal fur, and products containing such fur, on the EU market

As an MEP, this is an excellent opportunity to join the movement and call on the European Commission to put an end to fur farming and the animal welfare, health, environmental and species protection problems that go with them once and for all!

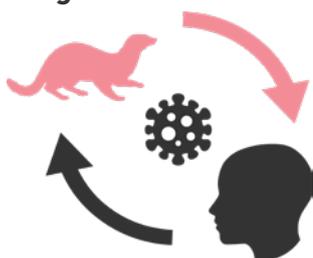
Why must the European Union ban fur farming?

Fur farming is a cruel practice that will never meet any acceptable, or high welfare standards



Keeping conditions on fur farms do not meet wild animals species, such as mink and foxes, natural needs or the Five Domains² which, even with improved keeping, can never be met. Animals are kept in small wire cages with no access to the outdoors or water for swimming, running, and digging. Due to the poor keeping conditions, animals suffer from permanent stress, severe behavioural disorders, self-mutilation and cannibalism. Fur animals are killed and skinned as young animals at the age of about 8 months. For this purpose, they are usually killed by gassing (mink), electrocution (fox, raccoon dog) or by breaking their necks (chinchilla).

Fur farms are the perfect breeding ground for viruses and diseases



The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that fur farming poses significant risks to human and animal health. Under the intensive keeping

conditions the disease spreads quickly among the animals, mutates easily and then infects humans³. Worldwide, the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been detected in more than 450 mink farms, mainly in EU countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Italy, France, Greece, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania⁴. In order to eliminate this SARS-CoV-2 reservoir and the occurrence of potentially dangerous virus vari-

ants, the Netherlands and Denmark took drastic measures and urgently killed the entire mink population on the affected farms. Non-infected minks were also culled as a preventive health measure to contain the pandemic. A total of about 20 million individuals were killed⁵.

Fur production is intensively polluting and toxic



Fur production has adverse impacts on the environment. Waste from industrial fur farms directly impacts local soil, waterways, and air quality. Furthermore, the use of toxic chemicals, including heavy metals, carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, and water toxins, for the processing of hides in tanneries has severe consequences for the environment⁶.

Fur farms pose a risk to native species and biodiversity



Alien invasive species are recognised as one main threat to biodiversity globally. In Europe, various species such as American mink, raccoon dog or muskrat were introduced by the fur industry. Populations of such species can negatively affect native animals and create severe dynamic shifts in ecosystems causing a decrease of biodiversity⁷. The handling of these species is costly and is regularly associated with animal welfare issues.

Why is it the right time to ban fur farming?

The European Commission is currently revising the Animal Welfare Legislation

The Animal Welfare Legislation includes the General Farming Directive 98/58/EC⁸ - laying down requirements for the protection of animals that are kept and bred for farming purposes, including for fur production. The revision of this piece of legislation will take place in 2023 and should include a ban on cages for some specific species as a result of the ECI “End the Cage Age”⁹. This provides an excellent opportunity to end fur farming.

The European Commission is competent to prohibit fur farming

In its Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/482 of 16 March 2022¹⁰ which approves the ECI, the Commission recognised its competence to present proposals for legal acts to achieve an EU ban on both fur farming and sales on the basis of Article 114 TFEU or Article 43(2) TFEU.

Fur production in Europe is decreasing significantly

Due to reduced demand of the fashion sector with leading brands ditching real fur, the European fur farming sector has been declining dramatically in Europe over the past years, which was accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of active mink farms in the EU has dropped from 4350 in 2018, to 2800 in 2019, to 759 in 2020. The number of animals killed on fur farms (mainly mink, but also foxes and raccoon dogs) dropped from about 37 million in 2018 to 17 million in 2020. For 2021, a further decline to about 10 million is forecast. These numbers show the strongly decreasing economic relevance of an outdated industry that has no acceptance in Europe anymore.

Many EU Member States call for an EU-ban on fur farming

At present, 14 European Member States have a total ban or stricter welfare regulations that have led to a phasing out of fur production, 3 Member States have stricter regulations or partial bans and 5 Member States are considering the adoption of legislation to ban fur farming¹¹. In addition to national bans, many Member States would welcome an EU ban on fur farming. At the 2021 June’s Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting, 12 EU countries have publicly called on the Commission to ban fur farming¹².

A majority of European citizens oppose fur farming

Public opinion polls show that most European citizens are in favour of closing fur farms. 80% to 91% of the population in 8 EU Member States consider the keeping and killing animals for fur for the fashion industry unjustifiable and are in favour of a ban¹³.



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As an MEP, how can you support?



- Sign the [Fur Free Europe ECI](#) and promote it on your social media channels, to EU media or correspondents of national media.



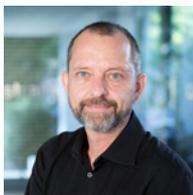
- Raise awareness on the various adverse effects of fur farming and promote the ECI during debates on this topic in your EP Committee.



- Initiate actions towards the European Commission, within your delegation or political group – such as letters, meetings, events – and call on the EU to ban fur farming and sales.



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