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(Sophia Society for the Protection of Animals)
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European Council
Economic and Financial Council
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175
B-1048 Bruxelles/Brussels
Belgique/Belgium

Subject: *VAT rates on veterinary services*

Amsterdam, July 10, 2018

To the European Council, to Whom It May Concern,

We are contacting you for the following reason. In the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and many other European countries, veterinary services are scaled under the high VAT rates. Governments are profiting from tax incomes at the cost of animals in need of medical care. An unfair and unacceptable situation, according to the Sophia Society for the Protection of Animals (Sophia-Society), Global Action in the Interest of Animals (GAIA) and the Associazione Nazionale Medici Veterinari Italiani (ANMVI). We would very much like European countries to be given the possibility to lower the VAT rates on veterinary services. Pets may not be considered a necessity, but veterinary care is.

Pet owners do have a legal duty to care for their animals, but they don't always have the financial means to do so. Organizations like ours receive requests from pet owners for financial support on a regular basis. People reach out to us because they are no longer able to pay for their pets medical bills and fail to take their animal to the vet in time. This can result in terrible suffering for the animal. Apart from that, timely accurate veterinary care is essential for the prudent use of antibiotics and AMR control.

When veterinary services become more accessible, more pet owners will be capable to provide the necessary medical care for their animals. Now that the European VAT rates are under negotiation, we would like to ask you to not put veterinary care on the negative list. If so, European Member States can individually decide if the high or the low VAT rate for veterinary services should be applied in their country. This way countries are able to reduce animal suffering by making veterinary services more accessible for their citizens.

In many European countries, among which Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, lowering the high VAT rates on veterinary care has been the subject of debate for a while now, both politically as socially. In the Netherlands alone, over 37.000 people signed a petition on the matter. In Italy, a petition by ANMVI reached more than 75.000 subscribers.

We hope you'll be willing to take all this in consideration for the next Economic and Financial Council on the 13th of July. Of course we are more than willing to provide you with more information if needed. If you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us. We await your reply with interest.

Sincerely,

Steffie van Horck
General Director Sophia Society

Marco Melosi
Board Director ANMVI

Ann de Greef
General Director GAIA