



Policy Paper (short version)

Political Representation of Animals - Designing First Steps

This policy paper is published as part of our campaign #representinganimals. Read more on www.representinganimals.org (published soon)

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We urge political leaders throughout Europe to strengthen the voice of animals in public decision-making. In our view that means to acknowledge and deal with the fact that animals need an adequate political representation. This will shed light on a blind spot in democracy.

Representation is commonly understood as a basic element of democracies that enables the population to participate in decisions via proxies or agents. To date, the struggle for adequate political representation of vulnerable groups has largely excluded animals. It is time that states and state communities close this institutional 'void'. Human communities regulate the lives of animals, increasingly via laws, and so the latter deserve to be represented in human political institutions, too. We think the time is ripe to become explicit about representation of animals for at least two reasons.

- First, animal advocacy organisations emphasise the need for institutional reforms allowing them to and tackle the sources of animal suffering more effectively (see the campaign #EUforAnimals calling for an EU Commissioner for Animal Welfare). Such institutional reforms can be more successful when aligned to existing forms of democratic representation.
- The second reason is that theoretical reexaminations of political representation allow for an inclusion of animals. To acknowledge animal advocacy as a

genuine form of political representation is likely to encourage reforms and enhance the political status of animals.

We think there are good reasons animal advocacy should be understood as a form of political representation and as such receive more public attention and support. We consider the following steps to be important to achieve a future where animals are adequately represented:

- I We ask policy makers to acknowledge non-governmental animal advocacy as an integral part of political representation;
- II We encourage public institutions and animal advocates to agree on a list of interests of animals that should be promoted in politics;
- III We encourage policy-makers to enable transparency over the way they consider animal interests in their decisions;
- IV We encourage policy makers to design a new public institution which integrates the animal perspective into decision-making.

This policy paper serves as an opener for strategies and campaigns seeking to strengthen the political voice of animals. In the future we want to become more concrete on institutional processes and changes enabling political representation of animals.

For a more in-depth analysis on the changing concept of political representation and how animal needs and interests can and should be represented, please see the long version of our Policy Paper.

