



European Association of Zoos and Aquaria expels Russian zoo from Candidate for Membership programme

Amsterdam, 6 October 2020: The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) has announced its decision to end its relationship with Rostov-on-Don zoo in Russia following the institution's unethical and unscientific decision to transfer a three-year old elephant calf to a circus in Moscow. Rostov-on-Don zoo had recently joined EAZA's Candidate for Membership programme, a system that matches developing zoos to experienced mentors from EAZA Members. As a condition of the zoo's continued participation, EAZA had required the zoo to restore the animal to its social group at the zoo as soon as possible, a demand that was not met to any serious degree; as a result, the EAZA Council, the elected body for the regulation of Standards and Codes among Members, decided unanimously to terminate the relationship with immediate effect.

EAZA does not consider circuses to be appropriate destinations for zoo animals and prohibits the practice in its Standards and population management regulations. Experts from the Asian elephant EAZA Ex situ Programme (EEP) also emphasise the importance of a family structure for elephant cows and their calves. The management procedures of the EEP state that elephant cows may only be transported to appropriate destinations if they stay together with other females that they are related to. Furthermore, calves should not be separated from their mothers, especially not at such a young age. Regardless of the membership status of the zoo, EAZA therefore calls on Rostov-on-Don Zoo to retrieve the calf immediately to reunite it with its mother. If the zoo fails to do so, EAZA appeals to the circus to restore the calf to the zoo. The Asian elephant EEP is available at any time to share knowledge and expertise with regards to re-socialising the calf and the best care and management of the elephant herd held at Rostov-on-Don zoo.

The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) is the membership organisation of the most progressive zoos and aquariums in Europe and Western Asia. The Association comprises over 400 Members in 48 countries, including zoological institutions and their partners in conservation, education, animal welfare and research. EAZA administers the EEP (EAZA Ex situ Programmes), a state of the art population management structure that provides scientifically-led *ex situ* support to holistic efforts to save and protect animal species worldwide.

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