



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Crisis Preparedness in Food, Animals and Plants  
The Director

Brussels  
SANTE.G.3/MK/nc(2026) 5266152

**Subject: Urgent request regarding EU funds and the humane management of stray dogs**

Dear Petitioner,

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, asked me to thank you for your email presenting a petition <sup>(1)</sup>. She has asked me to reply to you on her behalf.

In the petition you are asking the European Commission whether EU funds are being used, directly or indirectly, for the culling of stray dogs and what concrete steps the Commission is taking to promote humane and sustainable alternatives. In your message, you state that culling is neither sustainable nor effective in dog population management and you support large-scale spay and neuter programs instead.

In response to your first question regarding potential use of EU funding for the culling of stray dogs, we would like to clarify that the most relevant EU funding mechanisms support measures determined and designed by Member States themselves. This is because these mechanisms have specific objectives linking the funding to national or local development priorities and circumstances (for example, the LEADER approach - community led local development, the Common Agricultural Policy plans, the EU funding under cohesion policy). It is therefore, at the discretion of each Member State to pursue certain types of measures appropriate for their national or local context and allocate any EU funding to the chosen direction. In general, the specific measures are not explicitly approved by the Commission.

Regarding your second question about the Commission's steps to promote humane and sustainable alternatives to killing for population management, we would like to clarify that the Commission does not have a role in imposing any specific measures on Member States approaches in managing stray dog populations. This is because the welfare of stray dogs is not covered by the existing EU animal welfare legislation, and because of that the Commission has no legal competence to intervene on this issue, which remains solely under the competencies of the Member States.

That said, EU Member States are members of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and as such, they are bound to its standards for dog population management, and the related requirements concerning euthanasia and sterilisation. WOAH's standards

---

<sup>(1)</sup> Your e-mail refers to a "petition", which in the framework of EU Law is used for petitions addressed to the European Parliament pursuant to Article 227 TFEU. Your letter is dealt with by the Commission according to the rules for correspondence with citizens.

recommend that dog population management programs are adapted to the national or local circumstances of each member country. At the same time, WOAAH requires euthanasia to be performed in a humane manner, not as the sole population control measure but only as part of a broader dog population management program (see Chapter 7.7 of the WOAAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code <sup>(2)</sup>).

The Commission consistently supports WOAAH's work to adopt and revise existing standards, including those related to dog population management. It also provides financial support to WOAAH for the implementation of the Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe <sup>(3)</sup>, which aims to improve animal welfare through priority topics, including stray dog population control.

We hope that the above information clarifies your questions and would like to thank you for your commitment to animal welfare.

Yours sincerely,

*[e-signed]*

Bernard Van Goethem

---

<sup>(2)</sup> [https://www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health\\_standards/tahc/2018/en\\_chapitre\\_aw\\_stray\\_dog.htm](https://www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahc/2018/en_chapitre_aw_stray_dog.htm)

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://rr-europe.woah.org/en/Projects/animal-welfare-platform-europe/>