



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) 2617554

**Subject: Ending the suffering of stray dogs and cats in Romania and in other Eastern European countries**

Dear Petitioner,

Commissioner Várhelyi asked me to thank you for your email of 17 February 2026 presenting a petition <sup>(1)</sup> calling on the European Commission to improve the situation of dogs and cats in Romania but also in some others EU countries through a nationwide sterilization program and the implementation of EU animal welfare legislation and educational programs.

The European Commission is deeply concerned by the information you provided, and the suffering inflicted to the animals. The Commission condemns any form of cruelty towards animals inspired by the words of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which recognizes animals as sentient beings.

However, animal welfare is one of the fields in which Member States partially retain their own legislative and administrative competences. Current EU animal welfare legislation focuses on specific fields such as farming, transport and slaughter but does not include general rules on the welfare of animals.

The welfare of stray dogs and cats is not covered by the existing EU animal welfare legislation, except during transport in connection with an economic activity. It is subject to Member States' national legislation. The Commission can only act within its legal remits. Therefore, the Commission has no legal competence to intervene in the matters described in your emails, which remain solely under the competencies of the Member States.

However, having assessed the need for action at EU level, the Commission adopted in December 2023, a proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability <sup>(2)</sup>. Following the co-decision process, the Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the new Regulation on 25 November

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<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.

<sup>(2)</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52023PC0769>

2025 <sup>(3)</sup>. The provisional agreement now requires formal adoption by both institutions before it becomes final very likely in the next months and enters into force.

Once adopted and implemented, the Regulation will, for the first time ever, establish uniform EU rules for the welfare of dogs and cats that are bred or kept in breeding establishments, selling establishments, shelters and foster homes. Uniform welfare standards will apply across the EU when it comes to breeding, housing and care of dogs and cats in professional establishments. For example, breeders, sellers and shelters will need to provide outdoor access to dogs and will not be able to keep dogs and cats in containers. Minimum space allowance rules are also set for breeders and sellers. Animal caretakers in breeding, selling establishments or shelters will need to have sufficient competence to look after dogs and cats. At least one caretaker per establishment will need to follow specific training approved by the competent authorities.

In addition, the regulation will establish a robust traceability system to ensure the welfare and fight fraud in the trade of dogs and cats. This measure will help animal shelters as they also supply dogs and cats, either by selling, giving in adoption, or re-homing rescued, stray or unwanted dogs and cats.

Furthermore, according to the available information on the abovementioned provisional agreement, the new rules will require the mandatory identification and registration of all dogs and cats, including by pet owners, following a long transition period. The Commission considers this development, alongside other provisions for an EU-wide enhanced traceability system for dogs and cats and provisions on responsible ownership, as an important step to reducing the abandonment of owned dogs and cats, that is a common source of stray animals.

I would also like to inform you that the Commission provides financial support to the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) for the implementation of the Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe <sup>(4)</sup>, which aims to improve animal welfare through priority topics, including stray dog population control. We also support WOAH's work to adopt and revise existing standards, such as those related to dog population management. All EU Member States are members of WOAH.

Thank you very much for your commitment to animal welfare.

Yours sincerely,

*[e-signed]*

Bernard Van Goethem

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<sup>(3)</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2024\\_2029/plmrep/COMMITTEES/AGRI/LA/2026/01-12/1334329EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2024_2029/plmrep/COMMITTEES/AGRI/LA/2026/01-12/1334329EN.pdf)

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://rr-europe.woah.org/en/Projects/animal-welfare-platform-europe/>

