

# «Stray animals – our sentient fellow creatures»

## One Health – One Welfare

Workshop with Experts  
Representation of the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg, Brussels

### Conclusions - 10 April 2014

**The participants of the Workshop are concerned about the treatment of stray animals in Europe, as documented in particular in Romania since September 2013. This is in basic contradiction to the Treaty of Lisbon, where the principle of animal welfare is established by the status of animals as sentient beings, giving us humans full responsibility for the animals who are dependent on us and who are our fellow creatures. They declare the following:**

*Whereas,*

- *animal welfare is recognised as a strong social demand across Europe;*
- *animal welfare is recognised as a common good;*
- *there is an evident link between animal and human health and between animal and human welfare;*
- *the protection of the weakest members of our society is a characteristic European value and an aspect of European culture;*
- *the killing of unwanted healthy dogs and cats in Europe in general is not consistent with the understanding of the human-animal relationship held by the vast majority of European citizens in the 21st century, as confirmed by massive protests to the governments of the respective countries, the EU Member States and the EU institutions over more than ten years;*
- *this attitude is underlined by numerous activities of the European Parliament, which approved a resolution on 18 March 2014<sup>i</sup>;*
- *the Council of Europe, which early on was aware of problems caused by the growing overpopulation of animals in the streets, in 1987, focusing on social issues, drafted the Pet Convention<sup>ii</sup> which nowadays is outdated in some points;*
- *in reality, many of the signatories are ignoring even these standards;*
- *since 1995, no consultancy meeting has been held, as fixed within the convention;*
- *the OIE, with its background in developing countries with severe rabies problems and high mortality rates among children, has produced terrestrial guidelines including rules for stray animals, giving a direction to prioritise methods other than killing (2012);*
- *although there is no legal competence for companion animals as such in the European Union, any cruelty towards helpless creatures is in contradiction to Art 13 Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) expressing a European value;*
- *the Council has mandated the EU Commission with studies on companion animals in the EU by council conclusions (2010 and 2012);*

- *it has to be recognised that within 40 years the European Union has reached higher animal welfare standards than other continents, having Art 13 TFEU, and it should not tolerate a rollback policy of Member States on animal welfare;*
- *at the same time, the European Commission is gradually including animal welfare into all its policy areas (holistic approach);*
- *keeping companion animals is part of our 'innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes' (biophilia) and is a unique feature belonging to the typical human lifestyle since already time immemorial;*
- *dogs have the longest history of domestication among all animals, even if they live in the streets and have offspring they remain domestic animals biologically and are basically different from wild animals;*
- *beyond the animal welfare aspects, stray animals, in particular when outside human control, can also represent a health risk to humans through zoonotic diseases, and to public safety through bites or as a cause of car accidents;*
- *there is insufficient harmonisation at the European level of the role of veterinarians, including in relation to the necessity to have sufficient veterinarians able to perform neutering of companion animals, both in urban and rural areas;*
- *health risks are rising through the increase in illegal puppy farming and the transport of unvaccinated dogs and cats all over Europe;*

**a Pan-European solution strategy must be developed, bringing into balance the safety and health of citizens and the protection of all animals as our fellow creatures in Europe, by means of controlled and responsible dog and cat ownership.**

The participants in consequence call on:

#### **The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)**

- **With regard to the upcoming European Strategy including stray dog population control, to add a clear reference to public-private partnerships of governments with animal welfare organisations to develop sustainable programmes based on systematic vaccination, systematic birth control, and mandatory identification and registration, and to state that killing healthy stray dogs is the *ultima ratio* only if all other methods have failed;**

#### **The Council of Europe**

- **To appoint a new Chair of the TAP role, which has been vacant;**
- **To convene a multilateral consultation, based on Art 15 I of the Pet Convention missing for the years 2000, 2005 and 2010, in particular to enable the signatories since 1995 to share information and reports;**
- **To update parts of the Pet Convention where necessary;**

### The European Commission

- To join the Pet Convention;
- As 'Guardian of the Treaties', to operate according to the principles laid down in the Treaties including Art 13 TFEU also with regard to the Member States;
- To use the full range of the Union's Policy on the Environment, which shall contribute to protecting human health in the EU<sup>iii</sup>;
- To establish responsible dog and cat ownership as a Europe-wide principle in policy and legislation;
- To work on the Animal Health Law with regard to responsible ownership and strengthening an EU-wide compatible mandatory identification and registration system also for dogs as a principle for the public health, worked out by delegated acts;

### The governments of Members of the Council of Europe and European Member States, Candidates and potential candidates

- Based on the responsibility to guarantee by a balanced programme of public safety and responsible dog ownership in the country, to reach an adequate number of controlled and owned dogs and cats by a sustainable national action plan with regional and local projects;
- To set up a multiannual common action plan with stakeholders (animal welfare organisations, veterinarians, schools) including a compatible system for having healthy, identified and registered dogs and cats, achieved by systematic neutering (being aware of best national practices, such as the Italian legislation and Belgium's cat castration, and stray animal clinics in big cities such as Odessa and Sofia);
- To make available sufficient funding – both from public budgets and through solidarity at the national and international level - in order to achieve proper dog management activities, and transparency about the use of such funds is necessary in order to maximise their effects;
- To draft such short-, mid- and long-term sustainable common national action plans with the following measures:
  - Communication strategy (information, education, training);
  - Clear legislation and proper enforcement;
  - Systematic birth control by the neutering of all animals - ensuring that proper anesthesia and analgesia are used - not to be determined for breeding, combined with vaccination;
  - Mandatory identification and registration of all dogs (and cats), meaning in private households, in shelters and in the streets, by a tailor-made national enforcement solution, in close cooperation with NGOs and veterinarian organisations, using a compatible set of data and registering, to enable a Europe-wide system with permanent access to these databases, so that action can be taken in case of an epidemic outbreak or in case of disaster relief to reunite animals with their owners, and to enable control of the puppy trade;

- **Motivate owners to neuter their dogs through incentives when necessary, e.g. tax benefits;**
- **Registration of breeders to eliminate illegal breeding and trading;**
- **Strengthen the culture of adoption.**

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<sup>i</sup> On 18 March 2014, the AGRI-Committee of the European Parliament adopted a "Motion for a Resolution on dealing with the problem of stray animals": "The European Parliament, having regard to Rule 120 of its Rules of Procedure ... 1. Calls on the Commission to draw up general guidelines on dealing with the problem of stray animals in accordance with general animal welfare principles; 2. Calls on the Member States to use part of their structural funding to address the problem of stray animals, focusing first and foremost on the areas in which the problem is most acute."

<sup>ii</sup> Council of Europe - ETS no. 125 - European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals, Strasbourg, 13. XI. 1987

<sup>iii</sup> Art. 191 TFEU: "1. Union policy on the environment shall contribute to pursuit of the following objectives: - preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment, - protecting human health, ..."