



Statement regarding the petition N° 0475/2016 on pets and stray dogs in Bulgaria on behalf of 18 Bulgarian Societies for Welfare and 464 signatures

The Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals is deeply concerned about the issues raised in petition N° 0475/2016 on pets and stray dogs in Bulgaria as it gives evidence for the unbearable suffering of many pets and stray animal populations in Bulgaria. The mass illegal breeding, selling and keeping of pets as well as the lack of identification registration and vaccination poses indeed serious public health and safety related risks.

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The call for an EU legal framework on pets and stray control management as suggested by the European Parliament resolution 2012/2043(INI) of 4 July 2012 on the European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012–2015 should indeed be pursued as an objective possibly in a new framework law on animal welfare. Non-legislative actions, like EU guidance of good practice could be considered in the short term.

For the time being, only the Bulgarian authorities have the required competence to deal with pet population management issues as rightly pointed out in the European Commission's reply to the petitioner.

To overcome the obvious discrepancies of point of view between the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency and the 18 animal welfare organisations who are at the origin of this petition we would suggest to organise regular stakeholder meetings with the goal to assess the current situation in an objective way and to work on joint solutions. A selected member of the EP Animal Welfare Intergroup could be involved in key meetings.

For the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals it is important that pet population management measures are achieved in a humane manner and ultimately lead to an improvement of the welfare of pets.

There is no single intervention that will work for all situations. Therefore, we strongly advocate the need for a thorough and honest assessment worked out jointly by the authorities and NGOs and the consideration of all potential relevant factors before deciding on a programme. The only concept we consider universal is the need for a comprehensive programme that is focused on the causes and not solely on treating the symptom.