

Check against delivery

Workshop

“Stray Animals – our sentient fellow creatures”

Speech of Elisabeth Jeggle MEP

10 April 2014 - 10:00-11:15 am

Representation of Baden-Württemberg

Statement in Part I: European framework – status quo and outlook

Topic: Discussion about stray animals in the European Parliament since 2007

Thank you very much for the invitation to this event about stray animals. This event and the agenda show, how the perception and the importance of animal welfare within the European Union have changed in the last ten years.

To give you an idea about the discussion about stray animals in the European Parliament, about achievements and about work which is still to be done, I would like to go through the different resolutions and initiatives.

I would like to start in 2005 when I was rapporteur for the report on the **Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010**.

The report called on the Commission to further develop animal protection and to take full account of the protection and welfare of **all** animals.

At the same time the Parliament expressed its dissatisfaction that European policy on animal welfare is almost exclusively on the welfare and protection of farm animals.

So far, you might say, some things never seem to change. We still find ourselves in the situation where the EU has very little competences for pet or stray animals.

BUT: the whole framework and the whole legal basis changed when in 2009 the famous **Article 13 was introduced in the Lisbon Treaty** and recognized animals as sentient (sensient) beings. This clearly states that animal welfare is part of the fundamental values of the European Union.

Stray animals and especially stray dogs have been and still are a huge problem for some member states. The way some of them try to handle this problem is neither sustainable nor in line with Article 13.

This is why in 2011 I initiated with some colleagues the **Written declaration on dog population management in EU**. 400 colleagues signed this declaration and asked for comprehensive dog population management strategies which include measures such as dog control and anti-cruelty laws.

Since then, no solutions were found and the EU does still not have legal competences, but the pressure to take action steadily increased.

We, the Members of Parliament, get hundreds and thousands of mails from concerned citizens about dog killing. The only thing we can answer them is, that the EU has no legal right to intervene in the member states concerned. Everything we can do is appeal.

Of course this puts pressure on us, to find solutions. And we in return put more pressure on the European Commission to come up with ideas how to handle the problem on a European level.

In the report on the **Strategy for the protection and welfare of animals 2012-2015** which was voted in Parliament in 2012 we pointed out that there is no EU legislation on pet animal welfare, although the Lisbon Treaty states a responsibility for all animals.

Once again we asked for concrete measures to manage the stray dog population (including mandatory identification and registration and responsible ownership)

In addition we asked this time for a European Animal Welfare Framework Law which is based on validated science and proven experience and covers all kept and abandoned animals, including stray animals. We asked for the principle of duty of care for all responsible persons, which lies in a last consequence at Member States' authorities because of public health and safety related risks.

At the same time as the report on the animal welfare strategy, we voted on a **Resolution of the Petition Committee** which as well calls for a legal framework at EU level for the protection of pets and stray animals.

The Petition Committee reacted to a flood of mails, letters and calls from citizens regarding the treatment of stray animals in some member states.

In 2012 after the adoption of the report and the resolution the European Commission mentioned for the first time the possibility to evaluate how such a framework law for all animals might look like.

If you know the European Union you are aware that it can take a very long time from the moment the Commission mentions a possibility to the moment a concrete law is proposed and passed.

BUT you know as well that once things start moving on the European level you will not stop them, even if it takes time.

Mid-march the Committee on Agriculture adopted another **Resolution on stray animals** and calls on the Commission to draw up general guidelines on dealing with the problem of stray animals. With this resolution we reacted on a flood of messages from citizens who were shocked about the Rumanian way of trying to cope with the stray dog problems.

So far, the discussion compared to 2007 is still the same but things are moving.

In February this year, the Committee on Agriculture voted on the report on the **Animal Health Law**. For the first time in a legally binding text, we adopted a special definition for '*non-kept animals of domesticated species*' means stray animals and we adopted an article that asked member states to introduce a mandatory registration and identification system for dogs.

Some years ago, my colleagues would never ever have agreed on that. I am quite confident that we make plenary adopt this article as well. This means, that the European Parliament, the European Commission and the representatives of the Member states will for the first time have to discuss this registration requirement in a trilog on an EU-regulation.

As I said before, things move slowly but they keep moving. Looking at the developments from 2007 up to now I am quite optimistic that the European Union will get a European Animal Welfare Framework Law: not tomorrow and probably not the day after tomorrow, but for once I am glad to say that there is no way back.