

Regulation of the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability: summary of the public feedback received after the adoption of the Commission Proposal.

Disclaimer: The contributions received represent the views of individual stakeholders and do not represent the official position of the Commission or its services.

1. FEEDBACK ON COMMISSION PROPOSAL FOR NEW RULES ON THE WELFARE OF DOGS AND CATS AND THEIR TRACEABILITY.

On 7 December 2023, The Commission adopted a proposal for new rules on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability with the following general objectives:

- To ensure a level-playing field within the internal market as regards animal welfare rules and a smooth functioning of the internal market of dogs and cats.
- To improve the welfare of dogs and cats placed on the Union market, and to address the associated public moral concerns, as well as the possible human health risks.
- To provide further control tools to tackle fraud in relation to the supply of dogs and cats on the Union market.

The Commission proposal includes rules to ensure minimum common animal welfare standards for the breeding, keeping, and placing on the market of dogs and cats bred or kept in establishments; to promote competence for animal caretakers in establishments; to ensure that establishments exporting dogs and cats to the Union apply the same standards of animal welfare as the Union or equivalent standards and supplementing existing rules for the import of dogs and cats with regards to traceability; to establish a solid EU-wide traceability system for dogs and cats supplied on the Union market, including via online marketplaces.

As part of the Commission's better regulation agenda, legislative proposals, which are put forward to the EU Parliament and Council, are opened for public feedback once they have been adopted by the Commission.

This document summarises the feedback on this Commission proposal submitted by citizens and stakeholders, through the Commission's 'Have your say' webpage, from 8 December 2023 to 15 March 2024.

2. BASIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON RESPONDENTS PROVIDING FEEDBACK

The complete feedback and statistics can be found in the 'Have your Say' portal (https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14061-Welfare-and-traceability-of-dogs-and-cats-new-rules-/feedback_en?p_id=32438423).

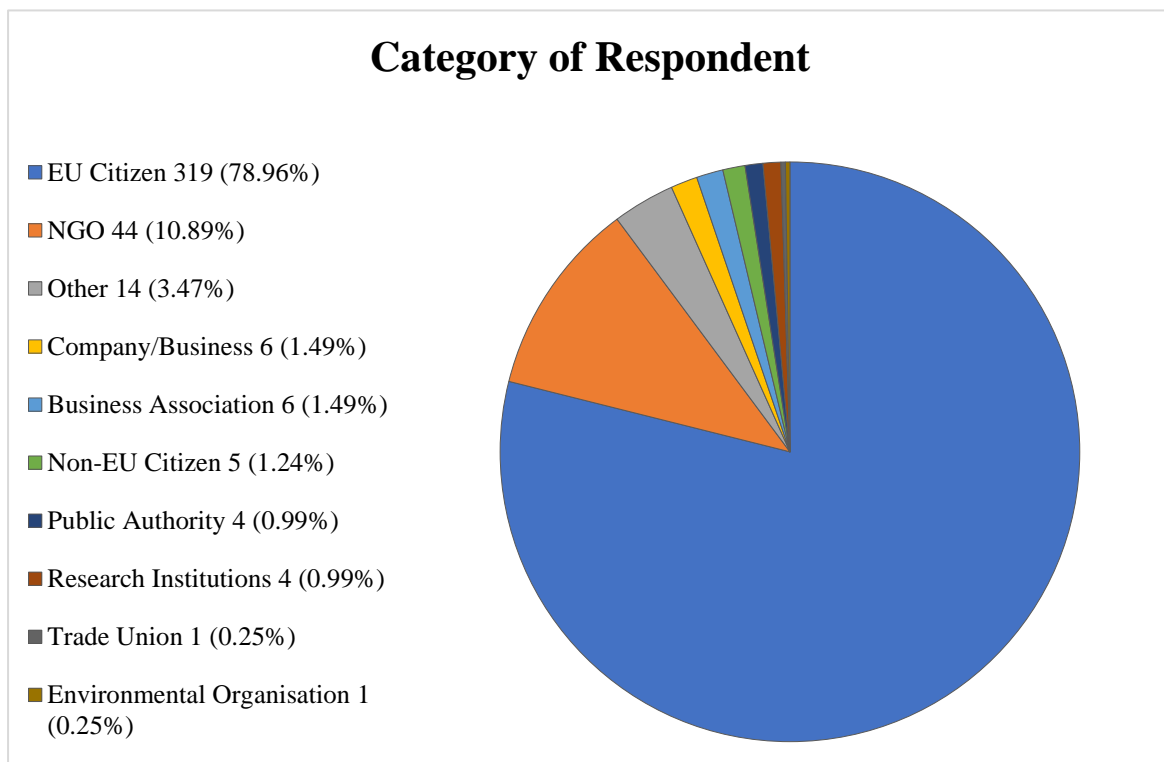
A total of 532 contributions were received. After an analysis carried out by Commission Services, a total of 404 individual contributions and two campaigns were retained for the analysis. Contributions not included in the analysis were 6 off-topic comments related to the proposal on the protection of animals during transport, all posted from EU citizens. In addition, 5 contributions were considered as successive and complementary input, and therefore

analysed but not counted as new contributions.¹ Finally, a total of 117 contributions were identified as part of two campaigns. The first campaign had 81 respondents, mostly from Germany (94%, 76 instances). The second campaign had 36 respondents, mostly from Austria (83%, 30 instances). In both campaigns, all contributions were sent from citizens.

The contributions retained for the analysis were submitted from a variety of respondents, including EU and non-EU citizens (324 instances), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (44 instances), companies/business organisations (6 instances), business associations (6 instances), public authorities (4 instances), academic/ research institutions (4 instances), trade unions (1 instance), environmental organisations (1 instance), and other institutions (14 instances).²

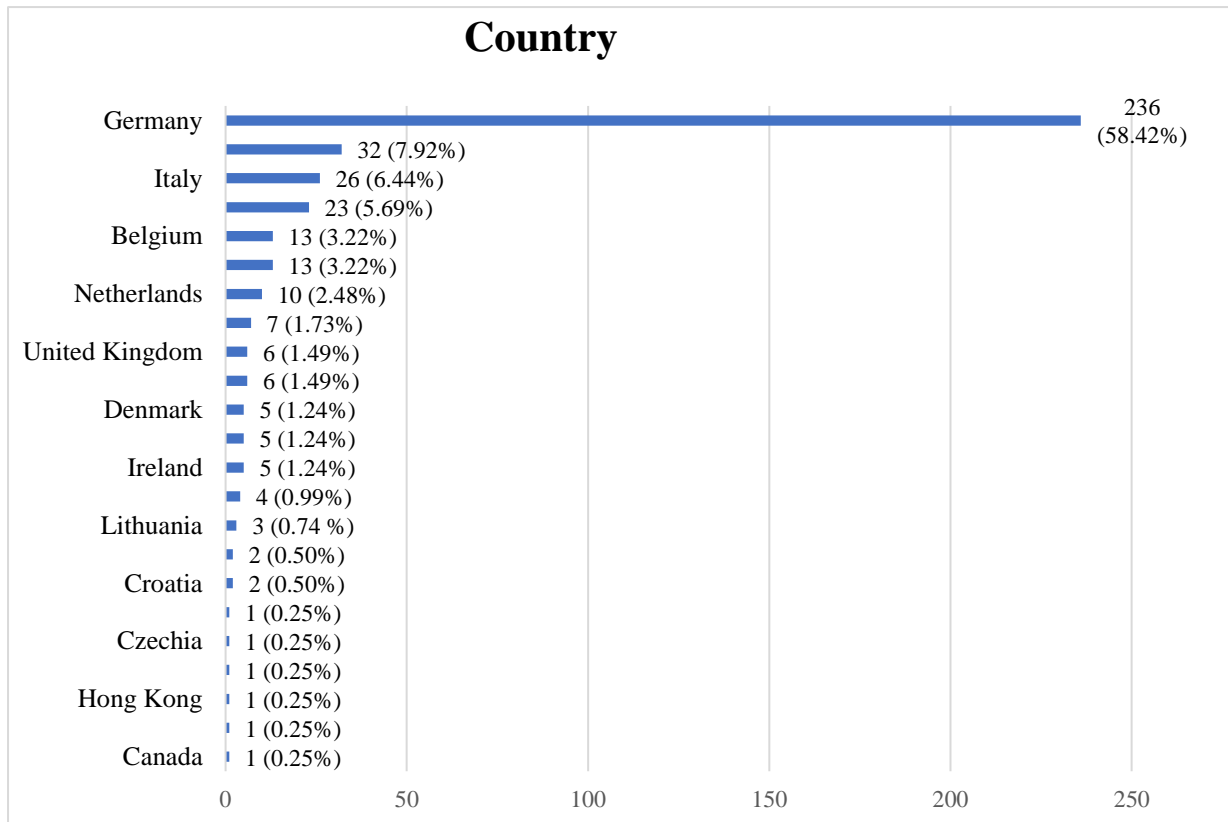
96% of the respondents (387 instances) are based in the European Union (EU 27), with most of them located in Germany (58%, 236 instances), Poland (8%, 32 instances), Italy (6%, 26 instances), and Spain (6%, 23 instances). 4% of the respondents (17 instances) were from outside the EU, with most of them based in Norway (1 %, 6 instances) and the United Kingdom (1 %, 6 instances).

In the graphs below, the distribution of contributions is reported by category of respondent and by country.



¹ This concerns three EU citizens and two stakeholders.

² Three instances registered under the category of “other” in the feedback portal were considered EU citizens in the analysis.



3. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

The Commission proposal was welcomed by the overwhelming majority of the respondents, including companies and businesses.³ The feedback analysed provide strong evidence of the very high level of concern among EU citizens and stakeholders about the welfare of dogs and cats bred and kept in establishments and supplied on the Union market.

Most of the points raised by the respondents concern the following aspects of the proposal:

- Identification and registration of dogs and cats
- Extreme breeding
- Exemptions from the obligations for operators

Several contributors ask to extend the identification and registration requirements to all dogs and cats in the EU. The feedback also underscores the need to include a clear definition of extreme breeding. Finally, several respondents advocate for the obligations for operators to be applied to all breeders of dogs and cats, regardless of the size of the establishment. The results of the feedback analysis follow the order of the chapters that make up the Commission proposal.

³ Only 2 respondents out of 533 (0.37%), 1 stakeholder and 1 EU citizen, expressed a negative opinion on the proposal.

4. OBLIGATIONS FOR OPERATORS OF ESTABLISHMENTS (Art. 4-16)

Off 404 contributions, 49 (12%) concern the exemptions from the obligations for operators of establishments (art. 4). The feedback is distributed as follows: 30 from NGOs, 9 from EU citizens, 3 from public authorities, 2 from business and business associations, 2 from other institutions, 1 from a research institution, 1 from an environmental organisation, and 1 from a trade union. These feedback account for 50% of the contributions received from stakeholder groups and 2.8% of those received from EU citizens.

32 contributors take the view that the obligations for operators set out in the proposed regulation should apply to all breeders of dogs and cats, regardless of the size of the breeding establishment and the number of litters produced per calendar year.⁴ 2 stakeholders are of the opinion that small breeding establishments should only be exempted from the obligations related to the animal welfare competences of animal caretakers, housing, and approval from the competent authority.

As regards the threshold for distinguishing between professional and non-professional breeding establishments and being subject to the provisions of the proposal, 4 stakeholders believe that it is too high. By contrast, 4 stakeholders, mostly hunting associations, consider it to be too low.⁵ 49 contributors call to ban the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops.⁶ 25 EU citizens request to ban the online sales of dogs and cats.

75 contributions out of 404 (19%) concern the general welfare requirements for dogs and cats (art. 6). 23 contributors stress the need to include a clear definition of extreme breeding and to list the extreme features that have detrimental effects on the welfare of dogs and cats in the proposal.⁷ 59 contributors urge for a ban on the breeding, sale, advertisement and use for exhibitions and competitions of dogs and cats with extreme features.⁸ By contrast, 2 EU citizens requested that extreme breeding not be banned. According to 12 contributors, artificial insemination should be performed only exceptionally or banned.⁹

10 contributions out of 404 (3%) concern the animal welfare visits (art. 10). 5 stakeholders maintain that it should be mandatory for all breeding establishments to have a veterinarian responsible for the supervision and control of dogs and cats. 4 stakeholders consider the requirement for establishments to receive advisory visits by a veterinarian at least once a year to be insufficient.

11 out of 404 contributions (3%), all from stakeholders, are related to feeding and watering (art 11). According to 5 stakeholders, the weaning period for puppies and kittens alike should be extended to eight weeks of age.

Concerning the health requirements (art. 13), 5 stakeholders argue that the breeding of bitches and queens that have undergone a caesarean section should be prohibited. 3 EU citizens call

⁴ 23 stakeholders (28.75%) and 9 EU citizens (2.80%). Hereafter, the percentages in brackets refer to the number of contributions from stakeholders out of the total number of contributions from stakeholders, and the number of contributions from EU citizens out of the total number of contributions from EU citizens.

⁵ 3 out of 4 contributors are hunting associations.

⁶ 20 stakeholders (25%) and 29 EU citizens (9%).

⁷ 17 stakeholders (21.25%) and 6 EU citizens (1.88%).

⁸ 18 stakeholders (22.5%) and 41 EU citizens (12.85%).

⁹ 9 stakeholders (11.25%) and 3 EU citizens (0.94%).

for setting a maximum of two pregnancies in two years for bitches and queens. 2 stakeholders maintain that non-veterinarians should also be allowed to perform euthanasia of dogs and cats.

For what concerns the behavioural needs (art. 14), 28 contributors believe that tethering should be prohibited regardless of the amount of time.¹⁰

64 out of 404 contributions (16%) refer to painful practices (art. 15). 13 contributors advocate for a ban on the sale and use of electric collars for dogs and cats.¹¹ By contrast, 5 contributors do not support the prohibition of exposing dogs and cats to an electric current, arguing that electric collars are effective for aversive training. 4 contributors believe that the requirements on painful practices should apply to all dogs and cats in the EU, while 6 contributors believe that any form of mutilation should be forbidden.¹² By contrast, 3 stakeholders express the view that tail docking should be allowed for hunting dogs.

With regard to neutering, 13 contributors point out that the surgical castration of dogs and cats should be carried out with consideration and that non-surgical alternatives for neutering are available.¹³ 15 EU citizens call for the neutering of all stray dogs and cats, while 13 contributors call specifically only for the neutering of all stray cats.¹⁴

7 contributions (2%) are related to the approval of breeding establishments (art. 16). 6 contributors consider the transitional period of five years for breeding establishments to be subject to the approval of a competent authority to be too long,¹⁵ with 2 stakeholders recommending it to be shortened to three years.

5. IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION OF DOGS AND CATS (Art. 17)

100 out of 404 contributions (25%) concern the identification and registration of dogs and cats (art. 17). The feedback is distributed as follows: 55 from EU citizens, 31 from NGOs, 6 from other institutions, 3 from public authorities, 3 from business and business associations, 1 from a research institution, and 1 from a trade union.

78 contributors call for identification and registration requirements to be applied to all dogs and cats in the EU.¹⁶

As regards the requirement to identify and register dogs and cats in breeding establishments within 3 months of birth, 10 stakeholders consider this period to be too long. Within this group, 4 stakeholders suggest reducing it to two months.

Concerning the verification of the authenticity of the identification and registration of marketed dogs and cats, 4 stakeholders encourage the introduction of integrated software solutions in online platforms to allow purchasers to verify the cross-border registration status of traded dogs

¹⁰ 4 stakeholders (5%) and 24 EU citizens (7.52%).

¹¹ 5 stakeholders (6.25%) and 8 EU citizens (2.50%).

¹² 4 stakeholders (5%) and 2 EU citizens (0.62%).

¹³ 5 stakeholders (6.25%) and 9 EU citizens (2.82%).

¹⁴ 2 stakeholders (2.5%) and 11 EU citizens (3.55%).

¹⁵ 5 stakeholders (6.25%) and 1 EU citizens (0.31%).

¹⁶ 23 stakeholders (28.75%) and 55 EU citizens (17.24%).

and cats. 3 stakeholders are of the opinion that the identity of sellers should be verifiable in case dogs and cats are offered for sale on online platforms.

6. COMPETENT AUTHORITIES (Art. 18-20)

8 contributions out of 404 (2%) are related to the databases of dogs and cats (art. 19). 5 stakeholders ask to reduce the transition period for ensuring the interoperability of databases to three years. 2 stakeholders stress that the use of pre-existing national databases should be allowed.

7. FEEDBACK ON GENERAL ISSUES CONCERNING THE WELFARE OF DOGS AND CATS

33 EU citizens call for the abolition of all so-called killing stations of stray dogs in Eastern Europe, in particular in Romania. 34 EU citizens call for action to protect hunting dogs in Spain, especially Spanish greyhounds (*galgos*). Finally, 5 EU citizens request the abolition of dog and cat testing.

8. SUMMARY OF CAMPAIGN RESPONSES

Two campaigns were identified as part of 117 contributions (22 % of all the contributions received on the platform). The first campaign, which had 36 respondents and was probably launched by a kennel club,¹⁷ called for:

- Mandatory identification and registration for all dogs and cats in the EU, allowing the use of both national and private databases for registration.
- Implementing measures to tackle the illegal trade of puppies.
- No financial reward for catchers of stray animals in Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Slovakia.
- Castration projects, medical care and feeding stations for stray dogs and cats.
- Ensuring proper inspection of dogs and cats from killing stations before they can be transported to other EU states.
- Enforcement of mandatory inspections of 2% of animal shelters.
- Recognition of pure-bred dogs only if they have three generations of pure-bred ancestry certified by a state-certified breeding club.
- Requirement for online platforms and social media to verify pedigree and breeder membership in a state-certified breeding club before advertising pure-bred dogs and cats.
- Ban on the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops.
- Prohibition of discrimination against dogs listed as potentially dangerous and disabled dogs.

¹⁷ 30 respondents were based in Austria (83%), 6 in Germany (17%). They were all EU citizens.

- No prohibition on keeping and no killing of breeds resulting from extreme breeding practices.
- Prohibition for breeding establishments to produce more than 15 litters per year.
- Setting a maximum breeding age of 8 years for bitches.
- Increasing penalties for pet abandonment.

The second campaign, which had 81 respondents,¹⁸ called for:

- Mandatory identification and registration for all dogs and cats in the EU.
- Verification of owner data during registration.
- Extending obligations with respect to breeding, keeping, feeding, and health requirements to all breeding establishments regardless of their size.
- Verification of registration of dogs and cats advertised for sale online through online platforms.
- Ban on the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops.
- Ban on tethering of dogs and cats.
- Setting a maximum of two pregnancies in two years for bitches and queens.
- Definition and specification of extreme breeding and extreme breeding characteristics.
- Ban on the import, trade, keeping, advertisement, and exhibition of dogs and cats with extreme features.
- Ban on the import, advertisement, and use of accessories that violate animal welfare, such as electric or spiked collars.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The consultation on the new rules on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability gathered diverse, valuable input, emphasising the need for uniform rules to ensure that their welfare is respected.

Stakeholders from various sectors and EU citizens highlighted the importance of establishing uniform EU standards for the breeding, housing, and handling of dogs and cats in breeding establishments and pet shops as well as shelters.

The feedback also stressed the importance of reinforcing the traceability of dogs and cats through mandatory identification and registration in national databases to fight illegal trade and better control animal welfare conditions in the establishments.

Overall, the responses clearly demonstrate that the Commission proposal is met with favour by the majority of stakeholders and EU citizens.

¹⁸ 76 respondents were based in Germany (93.83%), 3 in Austria (3.70%), 1 in Italy (1.23%), and 1 from Switzerland (1.23%). Apart from the Swiss respondent, they were all EU citizens.