

## **FINAL REPORT**

# **THE NEW EU RULES ON THE WELFARE AND TRACEABILITY OF DOGS AND CATS - DELIVERING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION**

Wednesday 3 June 2026 - European Parliament



## THE NEW EU RULES ON THE WELFARE AND TRACEABILITY OF DOGS AND CATS - DELIVERING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Organised by the MEP Group on 'Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development' and hosted by **MEP Manuela Ripa (EPP)**, the event took place in the context of the new rules on the welfare and traceability of dogs and cats - a regulation that was formally adopted by the European Parliament earlier in spring. Moderated by **Mr. Ilias Grampas**, on behalf of the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) as the MEP Group Secretariat, the event addressed how the Regulation marks a historic step forward for both animal welfare and the integrity of the EU internal market.

In her opening remarks, **MEP Ripa** highlighted that many Member States already have welfare and traceability requirements that are as strict as, or stricter than, those introduced by the Regulation. However, the market is increasingly intertwined across borders. Common European standards, therefore, create greater legal certainty, improve traceability, and support fair competition while making it difficult for operators to exploit differences between the national systems.

Subsequently, **Mr. Andrea Gavinelli**, Head of Unit G3 for Animal Welfare at DG SANTE (European Commission), provided a comprehensive overview of the Regulation. He highlighted that, while the current state of play indicates that the Regulation has been formally adopted, its application is designed around a staggered and progressive timeline. This deferral introduces a series of crucial transitional milestones set at two, three, five, and ten years after its entry into force, giving both the market and regulatory bodies ample time to adapt. The core rationale driving this legislative push stems from the stark fractures within the lack of harmonisation in the Single Market. For years, varying national rules have created an uneven playing field for responsible operators, while inconsistent standards have directly compromised animal welfare and caused significant, widespread suffering. Furthermore, severe gaps in traceability capabilities have long facilitated fraud and a thriving illegal pet trade. By enacting this unified framework, the EU aims to harmonise the internal market, elevate animal welfare, protect its citizens, and drastically curtail the black market. Last but not least, Mr. Gavinelli noted that this Regulation is built to complement existing animal health rules.

Structurally, the Regulation is organised into seven distinct chapters and three technical annexes. The opening chapters lay out the fundamental subject matter, definitions, and core obligations for operators of breeding and boarding establishments. Chapter III addresses the highly anticipated rules on identification and registration (I&R), alongside strict new requirements for online pet advertising and placing animals on the market. Chapters IV and V outline the significant responsibilities placed on competent national authorities and set out the rules for dogs and cats entering the Union from third countries.

Finally, Chapters VI and VII set out procedural provisions, explicitly granting Member States the autonomy to maintain stricter national rules if they choose. These chapters are supported by annexes containing granular technical requirements for establishments, precise I&R details, and specific data points for tracking animal welfare indicators.

To implement the Regulation, the European Commission has laid out an ambitious digital and technical roadmap. The scientific foundation will begin rolling out in the summer of 2026 with a major study on genetics and digital solutions, alongside mandates for the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to evaluate conformational traits in 2026 and genotypes over the next five years. This research will feed into a steady wave of tertiary legislation. By 2028, the Commission will develop rules for advisory welfare visits, followed by digital frameworks and training standards in 2028 and 2029. Specialised breeding standards will be introduced in stages between 2030 and 2036, while import rules will be finalised by 2031. On the digital front, a centralised index database and verification system is slated for 2031, followed by a dedicated Pet Travellers' Database in 2036. To ensure long-term accountability, periodic monitoring reports will commence in 2033 on a three-year cycle, culminating in a comprehensive evaluation report due in 2040.

The ultimate success of the Regulation, however, lies in the hands of individual Member States, who must navigate an extensive enforcement roadmap on the ground. By 2028, national governments must thoroughly assess and adapt their internal legislation, notify the Commission of any stricter rules they plan to keep, and officially launch official controls and penalty systems. That same year, all relevant animal establishments must be registered, leading up to a 2034 deadline by which authorities must formally approve and publish a list of all breeders keeping more than five animals. To elevate professional care, Member States must establish, approve, and certify caretaker training courses by 2031. Digitalisation must also move rapidly; national pet databases must be built or modernized by 2030 and achieve full cross-border interoperability by 2031. Finally, beginning in 2032 and recurring every three years, Member States will be required to systematically collect and report localised animal welfare data, ensuring that this sweeping European vision translates into real-world protection for millions of pets.

The following intervention, by **Mr. Svein A. Fosså**, President of the European Pet Organization (EPO), welcomed the adoption of the Regulation and underlined that dogs and cats are by far the most commonly kept companion animals in Europe, and are also the species most frequently associated with irresponsible breeding, abandonment and illegal trade. In many ways, they are victims of their own popularity, making responsible pet ownership a key element of improving animal welfare. Mr. Fosså also welcomed that the Regulation remained focused on dogs and cats, and did not become a broader debate about other companion animal species or positive lists, stressing that any future discussions on other species should be considered separately and on their own merits. Finally, he emphasised that successful implementation will require the active involvement of the pet sector, and confirmed that EPO stands ready to contribute practical experience and technical expertise, to help ensure that the new rules are effective, proportionate and enforceable.

**MEP Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA)** asserted that measures must be assessed on the basis of their real-world impact on animal welfare. The Regulation represents a concrete effort by European institutions to translate this principle into practice. As MEP Metz noted, this Regulation has the potential to deliver meaningful improvements in well-being and responsible ownership across Europe.

The following interventions were delivered by **Mr. Serge Laugier**, founding member of Élevage du Palais des Papes and Vice-President of PRODAF – the first professional union for pets in France – and **Ms. Nancy de Briyne**, Executive Director of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe. They emphasised that achieving true animal welfare requires uniform, equitable breeding standards across all EU Member States. They highlighted the urgent need to elevate responsible breeding practices by raising awareness on both the supply and demand sides of the market. Crucially, the speakers called for a shift in cultural norms to reinforce the collective responsibility of all societal actors in rejecting irresponsible or cruel breeding practices. Ultimately, they stressed that the successful implementation of the Regulation hinges on the active, coordinated involvement of national authorities working hand-in-hand with local official veterinary services and private veterinary practitioners.

The interventions by **Ms. Marloes H. van der Goot** and **Ms. Marsha Reijgwart**, Policy Advisors on the welfare of companion animals for the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, warmly welcomed the new Regulation, expressing strong confidence that it will significantly improve the welfare of cats and dogs across Europe. They expressed particular enthusiasm for the landmark ban on breeding and showing animals with excessive conformational traits - a major step forward in addressing severe breed-related health issues. While celebrating these advancements, they realistically recognised the significant logistical challenges ahead. To ensure a successful rollout, they emphasised the critical importance of actively engaging national stakeholders and called upon EU Member States to continuously exchange best practices to navigate the complexities of implementation together.

**Mr. Erik Lambrecht**, Chairman of the Better Life for Pets and People (BLPP), emphasised that investing in the human-animal bond is a direct investment in healthcare, well-being, and society. To achieve this, BLPP aims to be a reference point for Europe as it is the only platform in Belgium that unifies the entire pet sector across all species - integrating nutritionists, pharmaceutical companies, retailers, veterinarians, breeders, and academics into a single cohesive voice. Through these collaborations, BLPP serves as a meaningful partner by driving strong policy initiatives, raising awareness for responsible pet ownership, and anchoring the scientifically proven physical and emotional benefits of companion animals into public policy.

**Ms. Georgia Diamantopoulou**, Head of EU Policy at Four Paws also welcomed the Regulation, expressing strong support for the newly-established identification and registration systems. She noted that these measures are essential for fostering a culture of responsibility and enhancing transparency throughout the entire value chain. Furthermore, she commended the requirement for mandatory veterinary approval, emphasizing its critical role in mitigating the sanitary and biosecurity risks typically associated with opaque, unregulated breeding operations. Ms. Diamantopoulou also highlighted that the harmonization of standards across all Member States was a necessary intervention given the widespread popularity of cats and dogs throughout the EU. Ultimately, she concluded that this unified regulatory framework makes protecting animal welfare significantly more achievable, as every stakeholder across Europe is now held to the exact same high standards.

Summing up the discussions, hosting **MEP Ripa** underlined that it has been a great common effort to have this law adopted, and now it is a common effort to implement it fast and effectively. Lastly, while celebrating the increased welfare of cats and dogs, Ms. Ripa also underlined the need to 'fight on' for the sake of other species.