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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council of 24 February 2025: Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats – The need to address the specific situation of hunting dogs - Information from Slovakia

The proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Regulation’) is an important step towards improving the lives of these animals across the European Union. It is positive that the European Union is addressing this issue and is trying to establish uniform rules for all Member States.

By harmonising the rules for the breeding and sale of dogs and cats across the European Union, this Regulation could facilitate cooperation between Member States in detecting and combating the illegal trade with animals, which is currently very lucrative and generates high profits for illegal traders. The effective implementation and enforcement of this Regulation could also significantly contribute to reducing this problem and improving the welfare of animals across the European Union.

The mandatory identification and registration of dogs and cats proposed by the Regulation can significantly contribute to reducing the number of stray animals and thus reducing the risk of disease transmission to humans and other animals.

The Regulation also has a potential to significantly affect the breeding of hunting dog breeds, which are mostly regulated by national legislation, given that hunting dogs are trained and used for specific purposes, which require a different approach to their breeding and care. The use of hunting dog breeds for hunting is a frequently discussed topic. On the one hand, there is a strong tradition of hunting with the use of hunting dogs almost all over the world, on the other hand, there are animal rights' activists who criticize this activity. It is however important to distinguish between the use of dog breeds and specific activities being carried out by them. There have been cases worldwide where dog breeds that are not intended or suitable for hunting purposes are being abused. In some cases, hunting dogs are often kept in poor conditions and after the end of the hunting season, when they are no longer fast enough or serve their specific purpose, they are being abandoned or killed.

After its adoption, the Regulation should also inspire individual governments to adopt their own legislation which would specifically address the issue of hunting dog breeds and their protection.

It is important to note that this legislation is only a first step towards improving the living conditions of dogs and cats. It will need to be supplemented with further measures ensuring its effective enforcement in practice.

A comprehensive approach is necessary, including public education, support for shelters and quarantine facilities, and cooperation with local authorities.

We believe that the adoption of the Regulation will entail a significant shift in animal protection in the European Union and will contribute to better living conditions for dogs and cats.