FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

Stray Dogs in Romania

- Policies, legal framework and solutions

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- There has been no consistently documented interest to regulate the status of stray dogs in Romania. Law #258/ 2013 was adopted hastily, without genuine and unbiased prior debates. The initial proposal was amended at the last minute so as to allow euthanizing the unwanted dogs living in the streets of Romania.

- Many authorities that manage stray dogs are under suspicion of corruption. Such suspicions are worsened by a lack of transparency. Citizens suspect that the arrangements between local authorities and various subcontracting companies are a way to transfer public funds to private entities owned by persons close to decision-makers.

- Capturing and euthanizing dogs is not a viable solution. Even if the population is temporarily reduced, the breeding dynamics allow for a repopulation in record time. In other EU-countries comprehensive programs are designed and implemented that put in place education of animal owners, mandatory identification and registration, control of pet animal reproduction, and prevention of abandonment.

- Mandatory neutering of all dogs is constantly identified by civil society organizations as a solution for controlling the canine population. Support is needed for owners to neuter their dogs. Street dogs should be captured, neutered and returned to the places they came from.

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List of abbreviations

GEO – Government Emergency Order

ASA – Animal Supervision Administration

NSVFSA – National Sanitary, Veterinary and Food Safety Authority

OIE – World Organization for Animal Health

CoV – College of Veterinarians

RDHO – Registry of Dogs that have an owner

ASPA – Animal Supervision and Protection Authority

APNF – Animal Protection National Federation

Methodology of the research study

To prepare this research study we analyzed data we derived from online media articles, official statistics made available by state authorities, and studies by international bodies or organizations specialized in this domain. Some of the study's conclusions and arguments also rely on data obtained from interviews conducted in September-December 2014 with 15 persons directly involved with animal protection associations or entities that play a part in the management of the dog population. For research purposes, on behalf of the Butterfly Effect Association the authors used Law #544/2001 to file official information requests with a number of relevant entities: the College of Veterinarians, NSVFSA and the Animal Police Division. ASPA never responded to our official information requests or to our request to interview members of their management.

Introduction

In Romania, dogs without an owner are also called vagabond dogs or street dogs, and represent, together with community street dogs (which are somewhat taken care of but live in the public domain), a subject for high media coverage, in particular due to cases of attacks against humans. Attacks by dogs with or without an owner are recorded all around the world. Romania has seen 11 deaths caused by attacks from street dogs since 1990[1]. However, other countries face such tragic events as well. 17 people have died since 2005 in The United Kingdom as a result of attacks by dogs that do have an owner[2].

Some of the animal attacks most publicized in the Romanian media are those by dogs without an owner. The entire issue is covered extensively by the domestic media, with over 12 thousand articles containing the words "dogs without an owner" and almost 25 thousand articles containing the words "street dog." The situation of street dogs has generated heated debates between animal lovers and those who will see the streets clear of the quadrupeds at any price. The debates are most often restricted to the lawfulness and morality of the act of ending the life of unclaimed or unadopted dogs, a method which is preferred by authorities and receives generous budgets but has proven ineffective in the medium and long run. While solutions have been sought all these years, the situation has remained almost unchanged – large numbers of dogs in the streets and ineffective authorities.

Both the dog lovers and the advocates of eradicating dogs from the streets have a degree of success in influencing the legal framework and the authorities' activities. Dog attacks resulting in human deaths will, however, cause decision makers to listen more closely to advocates of killing the dogs. The often undocumented and emotional arguments from both sides divert attention and prevent awareness of a very serious issue that has been addressed by authorities only superficially and occasionally. In this confusing environment, decision makers, whose interest in the matter is already very low, fail to consider action strategies that are very well grounded in science and have genuine chances to significantly reduce the stray dog population.

1. Street dog, article accessed on 13 December 2014, at http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maidanez

2. Veterinarian, Ana Maria Ciobanu, Decât o Revistă, issue #14, Winter 2014

1. Causes and consequences of the stray dog situation

Dogs are one of the most common domestic animals in Romania. They are divided into two wide categories: dogs that depend on humans and dogs that do not depend on humans. Dogs that have an owner are divided into pets[3], yard dogs[4] or guard dogs in traditional households, and working dogs. The latter category includes dogs trained for guard and protection, hunting dogs, dogs with various functional roles in state entities (army, police, customs, civil defense), and therapy dogs.

Dogs somewhat independent from humans[5] (but not from resources derived from human activities) are those born in the street, which find their own water and food, particularly from garbage and waste. They do not survive very long and have extremely vulnerable puppies. Ownerless dogs that are partially adopted by the community or individuals (for example, restaurant dogs, site dogs, etc.) are a subdivision of this category. These are fed more or less regularly, most of the time receive no medical care, and no one takes responsible ownership of them (vaccination, neutering, providing shelter, etc.). There are also dogs that are completely independent from humans, namely feral dogs; these are first-, second- or third-generation dogs that have become wild and live on forest edges or in the fields, far from human settlements. They feed themselves by hunting and do not eat garbage or waste.

Both the authorities and animal lovers identify the same reason for the large number of stray dogs: a lack of effective programs to neuter dogs, with or without an owner, compounded by a constant practice of abandoning unwanted puppies or adult animals. Many cultural factors contribute to this situation. Male dogs are the primary choice for guarding yards, and an owner may go through several dogs until

3. In most cases pets have responsible owners, who provide them with proper food and medical care, and are often breed dogs, trained and taken very careful care of.

4. Yard dogs, in both rural and urban areas, just like lost dogs, behave like stray dogs because of the negligence of their owners who make it possible for them to get out of the yard.

5. Interactive map: Cities with the largest number of stray dogs of Romania and cities with the least number of streets dogs, accessed on 10 December 2014, at: http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-maidanez_in_bucuresti-15564485-harta-interactiva-orasele-cel-mai-mare-numar-caini-fara-stapan-din-romania-topul-oraselor-fara-maidanezi.htm, 12 September 2013.

he finds one that is satisfactory (it has to be strong, it cannot attack the other domestic animals such as fowl, it has to keep polecats or foxes or other such animals away from the yard, and bark when an unknown person approaches). Dogs that do not meet those requirements, or unwanted puppies (females, most of the times) are abandoned. People living in cities abandon dogs in rural areas, hoping these will become yard dogs in someone's household, while those living in rural areas abandon them in urban areas[6] hoping that these will find food in landfills or around restaurants or butcheries. This type of abandonment is a constant source of dogs that will breed. In Cluj-Napoca, where almost 100% of street dogs are neutered, 200-250 new dogs are still abandoned every month, in particular from unwanted mating of dogs that have an owner[7].

There is a public perception that the situation of stray dogs was generated in Bucharest by wide-scale demolition of houses during the communist era. Indeed, demolitions did temporarily increase the number of street dogs, but dogs will survive in an environment within the limit of available food sources. As such sources diminish, the total number of dogs will naturally decrease to match the food supply.

Animal protection and animal rights associations most often complain of cruelty against dogs by both citizens and employees from state authorities. Dogs in rural households will have their tail cut and sometimes their ears too in the belief that this will make them meaner[8]; the same treatment is applied to dogs of specific races for reasons that are either apparently practical (puppies' tails will be docked so they do not hurt it when they grow up) or aesthetic (even though tail docking or ear cropping have been criminalized since 2008 as cruelty to animals, veterinarians still exist who perform them). When they are not abandoned, unwanted puppies are drowned, tied up in the woods without water or food, or killed violently. Cruelty cases are widely publicized by online media[9] and include arson, shooting, stabbing, poisoning etc.

In 2011 – 2013, 879 serious cases of cruelty against animals were identified by the police and charged. 387 cases were prosecuted and in the past 4 years 290 penalties by fine were applied for violations of the Law of Animal Protection. Animal lovers also accuse authorities[10] of not performing euthanasia according to the principle of minimum suffering for the animal – specifically a general anesthesia followed by lethal injection; they claim that dog catchers kill animals by starvation, drowning, violent blows, or withholding of proper treatment. Such suspicions are fueled by lack of institutional transparency coupled with numerous media scandals[11].

The canine population's growth rate can be quite high as long as the environment where they live provides sufficient resources[12]. Statistically, 75 per cent of the canine population will always be at the age of reproductive maturity, and a female can have litters of 8 to 12 puppies twice a year. The specialist literature estimates that a female has an average of 20 puppies per year, starting as young as 6 months[13] in case of small size dogs, and up to 18 months, in case of very large dogs. During the mating period a female produces pheromones that trigger an atypical behavior in males, causing them to become more aggressive and try to escape from the yard or from their chain in order to find the female. Many owners erroneously believe that an animal will be healthier after mating, that if neutered it will be less effective in guarding the yard and consequently prefer to leave males temporarily free and they oppose neutering. Euthanasia of all dogs in a particular area or their relocation to shelters is only effective on a very short term (maximum 6 months, between the two mating seasons), and can never permanently resolve the issue of street dogs. Once a territory is cleared of the existing dogs it becomes available to newcomer dogs and continues to offer resources (food, water, shelter); it is thus likely

6. Report NUCA Animal Welfare, www.nuca.org.ro.

7. According to the interview conducted in September 2014 with Alina Banu, founding member of NUCA Animal Welfare Association of Cluj-Napoca.

8. Tail Docking, article accessed on 10 December 2014, at http://www.e-pets.ro/articole/codotomia.

9. Romania, Champion at Acts of Cruelty against Animals, article accessed on 10 December 2014, at http://www.animalzoo.ro/romania-campioana-actelor-de-cruzime-indreptate-impotriva-animalelor/.

10. According to the interviews conducted by the report authors between September and October 2014.

11. New Conflict between Animal Lovers and ASPA. Truck with 100 Dead Street dogs Stuck in front of the Bragadiru Shelter, article accessed on 12 December 2014 at http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/conflict-nou-intre-iubitorii-de-animale-si-aspa-un-camion-cu-100-de-mongreli-morti-blocat-in-fata-adapostului-din-bragadiru.html.

12. Street dogs of Bucharest. Solutions, Possibilities, Applicability and Effectiveness, article accessed on 12 December 2014 at http://infomongreli.wordpress.com/2010/06/01/cainii-maidanezi-din-bucuresti-solutii-posibilitati-aplicabilitate-si-eficienta/.

13. When Do Dogs Reach Sexual Maturity?, article accessed on 10 December 2014 at http://www.imperechere-caini.ro/Cand-ajung-cainii-la-maturitatea-sexuala-articol1.

to lead even to an excessive breeding of newcomer dogs who find an abundance of resources.

2. Aspects of Romanian law concerning stray dogs

2.1. The legal framework for euthanizing stray dogs between 2001 and 2013

According to media reports prior to the year 2000, the multitude of street dogs was already an old issue dating back to the early 90s. National authorities had abundant and detailed information on the issue of street dogs and how they were a threat to the population. Despite this, authorities preferred to take no action when faced with the multiple incidents that occurred. A famous case that generated the first concerns related to regulating this area – which resulted in the issuance of a Government Emergency Order – was that of Georgeta Stoicescu[14]. She was attacked, bitten and thrown to the ground by 7 street dogs, in front of her home in Pajura district, Bucharest. After this incident the woman's health deteriorated and she never left the house for fear of a new attack, which caused the victim's family to file action with the European Court of Human Rights.

In 2001, the Năstase Government issued Emergency Order #155 on the Management of Stray Dogs, making their euthanasia possible 7 days after their capture whenever they were not claimed or adopted. Under GEO #155:

- Sheltering conditions and treatment methods were stipulated.

- Aggressive or incurably ill dogs could be euthanized immediately after being captured.

- Dogs could be adopted (after neutering, anti-rabies vaccination, delousing and collar identification) or claimed within 7 days.

- Upon request, dogs could be captured, sheltered, vaccinated, neutered and euthanized in the presence of representatives from organizations.

- Euthanasia was given a definition and was to be performed by a veterinarian only, exclusively by lethal injection with barbiturates following anesthesia. The euthanasia obligation rested upon local councils.

- Cruel methods or violence that could cause dogs to suffer were banned. This GEO's stipulations only applied in part, since penalties for non-compliance were not implemented. Despite this, GEO #155 was to define the Romanian legal framework in the next decade; the main practice the authorities would use was mass euthanasia of dogs without an owner.

GEO #155 was approved by Parliament under Law #227/2002. The few amendments made included extending the term until euthanasia to 14 days[15]. Under the law approving Emergency Order #155/2001 local councils via their specialist services had an obligation to capture stray dogs and take them to the shelters kept by such services, where the dogs were to be kept in compliance with the minimum conditions specified by law.

In May 2004 Parliament adopted Framework Law #205 on Animal Protection. Seeking to ultimately provide good and proper living conditions to animals irrespective of whether they had an owner, this law regulated the status of all animals (including wildlife), thus establishing a series of rights and obligations resting upon both their owners and the state authorities. Here are some of the obligations resting upon animal owners under Law #205/2004:

- It made compliance with the "sanitary and veterinary rules related to sheltering, feeding, care, reproduction, exploitation, protection and well-being of animals" mandatory.

- It banned abandoning animals and put an obligation in place for animal owners to "properly take care of and treat an ill or wounded animal."

- It defined and criminalized ill treatment and cruelty towards animals, and established penalties by fine and, in particular cases, penalties by imprisonment of

14. MFA: ECHR accepted the Government's Argument that the Responsibility for Street dogs also Rests upon the Civil Society, article accessed on 10 January 2015 pehttp://www.agerpres.ro/justitie/2011/07/26/mae-cedo-a-acceptat-argumentul-guvernului-potrivit-caruia-responsabilitatea-cainilor-comunitari-revine-si-societatii-civile-20-05-14.

15. After five years, the term was again reduced to 7 days, under Law #391/2006. The new law amending GEO #155/2001 approving the Program for the Management of Stray Dogs targeted a single amendment, namely the reduction of this term from 14 to 7 days.

no less than 3 months and no more than one year. It established that control of the canine population was to be exercised on the basis of a special law.

In 2007, during the Tăriceanu Cabinet's term of office, CP Senator Marius Marinescu claimed that the stipulations of Law #205/2004 had not been implemented and initiated a draft law to amend and supplement the former. The stipulations of this draft law also included the "prohibition to euthanize dogs, cats and other animals, except for animals suffering from incurable diseases confirmed by a veterinarian." Known as the "Marinescu Law," it was enacted in 2008. Having taken note of Law #9/2008 the Bucharest Animal Supervision Administration (ASA) concluded that "before Law #9/2008 came into force euthanasia was allowed for all animals that were not adopted. However, currently (e.n. 28 August 2008), the role of ASA is theoretically limited to capturing the dogs, neutering and offering them for adoption"[16]. In an article published on realitatea.net on 18 February 2008[17] journalists noted at that time that "stray dog shelters are full because euthanasia is prohibited by the law on animal protection. Returning the dogs to the street is also prohibited. Under the circumstances, the activity of stray dog extermination facilities is practically blocked."

However, there were also voices at that time[18] – one of them the Prefect of Bucharest, Mihai Atănăsoaiei[19], who claimed that implementation of the law was discretionary and that Law #9/2005 was intended to generate confusion in the legal environment related to the management of stray dogs. According to these voices, even if the framework law had introduced a euthanasia prohibition the special law regulating the management of the canine population without an owner on the territory of Romania continued to remain GEO #155/2001, approved by the Parliament under Law #227/2002[20].

In this context of conflicting rules and diverse interpretations of the existing legal framework, implementing Law #286/2009 on the Criminal Code required a new amendment to Law #205/2004 that reads: "Euthanasia of dogs, cats and other animals performed in violation of the procedure established by law shall be prohibited." We conclude that, based on the amended version of the law, euthanizing animals in compliance with the procedure established by law was permitted.

On 22 November 2011, the Chamber of Deputies adopted a new draft law[21] amending GEO #155/2001, under which euthanasia was left to the discretion of local administrations, and several methods to consult the population were proposed – opinion poll, referendum or neighborhood meetings. A group of 70 deputies of the Parliamentarian Group of the Social Democratic Party and of 54 deputies of the Parliamentary Group of the National Liberal Party requested a Constitutional Court judgment on the above-mentioned amending law. On 11 January 2012, the Constitutional Court ruled that the law was unconstitutional,[22] stating that only street dogs examined by a veterinarian and declared unrecoverable could be euthanized[23].

The simultaneous applicability of the special law (GEO #155/ 2001) and the framework law on animal protection (Law #205/ 2004, as amended) has generated nationwide disagreements on how to implement the laws on the management of stray dogs.

16. Dog Catchers of Bucharest, Helpless before over 30,000 Stray Dogs, article accessed on 10 December, at http://www.ziare.com/streinu-cercel/bucuresti/hingherii-din-capitala-neputinciosi-in-fata-a-peste-30-000-de-caini-fara-stapan-584365.

17. Stray Dog Extermination Facilities Filled following Adoption of the Law, article accessed on 10 December, at http://www.ziare.com/bucuresti/strazi/centrele-de-ecarisaj-s-au-umplut-dupa-adoptarea-legii-animalelor-380566.

18. Stray Dog Euthanasia: a Legal Dilemma? by Lucian Miulescu, article accessed on 10 December, at http://www.contributors.ro/editorial/eutanasierea-cainilor-fara-stapan-o-dilema-legislativa/.

19. A Law of 2002 Allows for Euthanasia of Street dogs, Antoaneta Etves, article accessed on 10 December, at http://www.evz.ro/o-lege-din-2002-permite-eutanasierea-maidanezilor-961663.html.

20. This fact is explained precisely by the specific stipulations of the Legal Council: "The special rule shall take precedence over the general one, whenever it covers a case falling within the scope of its stipulations, even if the general rule is newer, because the latter cannot affect the special rule without a specific stipulation to this effect by the lawmaker."

21. Draft law in English, translation accessed on 10 December 2014, at http://lawyersforanimalprotection.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/translation-law-1552001.docx.

22. The Constitutional Court of Romania, press release accessed on 10 December 2014, at http://media.hotnews.ro/media_server1/document-2012-01-11-11167336-0-11January .pdf.

23. Extract from the rationale of the judgment by the Constitutional Court of Romania: "The Court does not ascertain the unconstitutionality of any of the solutions established by the challenged law in respect of the management of the stray dog phenomenon, but only sanctions the lack of predictability of the law, generated by the inexistence of an order in which its stipulations should be applied – an order that, essentially, should establish the solution of euthanasia only as a last resort – and of clear and precise procedures that must be binding for public authorities in applying the established solutions."

Most municipalities remained inactive, while those that did take steps to control stray dogs most often resorted to using euthanasia. This single-focus approach, unaccompanied by programs for neutering, population education or abandonment prevention, resulted in a temporary decrease in the number of street dogs, and at the same time demonstrated how ineffective it was.

2.2 Novelties brought by Law #258/2013[24]

This law was adopted mainly because of the death of Ionuț Anghel, a four-year old bitten by dogs on a private property close to Tei Park in Bucharest on 2 September 2013. Within one week of this tragic event, on 10 September the Chamber of Deputies adopted a law on stray dogs by 266 votes in favor, 23 votes against and 20 abstentions, despite the fact that the bill's initiator had not agreed to include euthanasia as a procedure. Among other things the law established a term of 14 days[25] to keep dogs in shelters, after which they can be euthanized if not claimed or adopted, and that local authorities can postpone euthanasia.

The new law maintains the stipulations of GEO #155/2001 on euthanasia, a fact that generated polemics and divided the Romanian society into those who wanted dogs removed from the streets at any cost and those who wanted the quadrupeds protected at any cost. Practically, even though that Government Order proved to be ineffective in solving the issue of stray dogs, the Parliament of Romania reissued its stipulations referring to euthanasia.

The law also brings the following stipulations:

- Local councils are under an obligation to create specialist services and to provide funding to create public shelters for stray dogs (a stipulation introduced initially by GEO #155/2001). Local councils are under an obligation to hire at least one veterinary technician to work with such specialist services.

- Local communities need to be informed of the existence of public shelters and be allowed daily visits between 10:00 and 18:00 hours.

- Animals can be declared incurably ill after a medical examination conducted by a veterinarian, during which NGO representatives may attend.

- Only an authorized veterinarian may euthanize dogs. Until the euthanasia procedure, dogs can be claimed and adopted.

- The record of dogs that have an owner is kept by the College of Veterinarians. Registration of dogs that have an owner is mandatory and is paid for by the owner.

- The National Sanitary, Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (NSVFSA) manages aggregate data at a national level based on reports from specialist services and private shelters.

On 16 September 2013, a group of 30 Parliament members from several political parties filed an appeal with the Constitutional Court against the draft law that stipulated euthanasia of captured dogs within 14 days. Shortly after, the Constitutional Court ruled the law on the euthanasia of stray dogs was constitutional[26], stating that "euthanasia is no longer a decision exclusively available to local authorities, the law establishes the conditions that can lead to euthanasia, which is a last-resort, extreme measure." The law was enacted by President Traian Băsescu, who had already stated previously that he would enact it "with no reservations" in the form adopted by the Parliament.

Shortly after, NSVFSA drafted the implementation rules for Law #258/2013, under Government Decision #1059/2013. Foundation Vier Pfoten challenged this content in court. On 20 June 2014 the Bucharest Court of Appeals ordered the rules suspended until a judgment could be returned on the merits. The court then found that the implementation rules expanded the category of entities that had a right to provide stray dog management public services to legal entities other than those established initially by

24. Law #258/2013 in English, translation accessed on 10 December 2014, at http://lawyersforanimalprotection.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2013-New-law-155-2001_EN-10sept2013.pdf.

25. Article 7 of the new law stipulates in its second paragraph: "Dogs that are not claimed or adopted shall be euthanized, based on a decision issued by a person authorized by the mayor for this purpose, within the term set by such decision. Such term shall be established by considering the accommodation capacities and available budget. This term may be changed based on solid justification."

26. Decision of the Constitutional Court, translation into English accessed on 13 December, at http://lawyersforanimalprotection.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/RO-CC-Dec-383-judgment-validating-law.pdf.

GEO #155/2001. The Emergency Order limited which legal entities could provide such services, only allowing those whose activity was animal protection. Also challenged at the time was the fact that "two methods for the assignment of services have been added, namely 'delegation' and 'entrustment' which obviously do not meet the requirements for the award of such public-funds contracts and can leave room for abuse and bias.[27]" While a final judgment by the court is still pending, significant parts of the current law continue to remain unapplied due to the suspension of implementation rules. The rules on the identification and registration of dogs that have an owner[28] nevertheless do produce effects: January 2015 is the deadline for the mandatory micro-chipping of quadrupeds that have an owner.

2.3. Overview of the European legal framework and examples of solutions identified by other countries

Romania is a party to the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals[29]. Two articles are particularly relevant for this report – Article 11 regarding euthanasia and Article 12 referring to reduction in the number of ownerless animals. Practically, the Convention establishes that neutering must be a precondition when making a decision to use euthanasia as a method to control ownerless animals. Article 12 also recommends the taking of "appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures necessary to reduce their numbers in a way which does not cause avoidable pain, suffering or distress." Capturing, sheltering and euthanasia need to be performed by observing the principles of the Convention. According to Article 13, exceptions to such principles may be made only "if unavoidable in the framework of national disease control programmes."

The Animal Health World Organization (OIE) has prepared a series of specific recommendations in relation to ownerless animals. In respect of reduction in the number of stray dogs it mentions that euthanasia is not an effective method and should be applied, if ever, only in correlation with other measures intended to limit and control the canine population. Moreover, a study of the organization recommends dog neutering, vaccination, ear tagging and return in the territory, combined with reproduction control of the canine population that have an owner, as a method for the medium and long-term resolution of the issue of stray dogs.

The study titled "Stray Animal Control Practices (Europe)[30]" offers an overall picture on the laws of Europe in 2007. It concludes that 87% of the countries surveyed have a law on animal protection, 70% of the countries prohibit abandonment, 70% of the countries have mandatory identification rules, which nevertheless have little effect since 48% of them complained of reduced implementation of those rules and, as a result, such rules have low relevance to a reduction in the number of stray dogs. Ten of the countries that captured street dogs used to euthanize the animals upon expiry of the sheltering term, which varied between 3 and 60 days. Two of the countries euthanized them upon capture, while in another three countries the euthanizing of healthy dogs was not permitted at all. The conclusion of the report underlined the fact that controlling the number of ownerless dogs was only successful in those countries where dogs were rigorously identified and registered.

Two case studies were found sufficiently significant to be presented. The Law on Animal Protection of Sweden was adopted in 1988 and includes stipulations regarding the welfare of animals, prohibiting their neglect and abandonment and cruelty against them. Animal shelters are not regulated by that national law; these are managed exclusively by non-governmental organizations and self-regulate. There are no stray dogs in the streets of Sweden, only lost dogs. This is due to the commitment undertaken by the Swedish and to the impressive high degree of social responsibility towards ownership rights over dogs.

27. With What Arguments Vier Pfoten Lawyers Blocked a Government Decision, Rareș Teodor, article accessed on 13 December 2014, at http://www.bizlawyer.ro/stiri/piata-avocaturii/cu-ce-argumente-au-blocat-avocatii-vier-pfoten-o-hotarare-de-guvern-boerescu--ciocodeica-sca-a-aratat-ca-eutanasierea-quadrupeds-nu-are-suport-legal.

28. Order #1/2014 approving the Rules for Identification and Registration of Dogs that have an owner, http://www.dreptonline.ro/legislatie/ordin_1_2014_norme_identificare_inregistrarea_cainilor_cu_stapan.php.

29. Romania signed the Convention on 23 June 2003. The Parliament ratified it on 6 August 2004, without reserves, and it was to produce effects starting from 1 March 2005.

30. Stray Animal Control Practices (Europe), an Investigation of Stray Dog and Cat Population Control Practices across Europe, LouisaTasker, MSc, BSc (Hons.), The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – International (RSPCA), March 2007

Slovenia is one of the old Eastern bloc countries that had adopted by 2005 a series of progressive laws that allowed for an effective management of street dogs. A mandatory system for the registration of dogs was introduced. Moreover, micro-chipping is mandatory by law for all dogs born after 1 January 2003. Microchips are implanted free of charge by veterinarians. Details about animals and their owners are recorded in a central database, managed by the Ministry of Agriculture. Even though there is no national neutering program, most municipalities carry out bi-annual subsidized neutering actions.

The difference between Romania and the other European countries in terms of successfully managing stray dogs does not so much reside in the laws they adopted but in the holistic approach applied. In countries such as Sweden or Slovenia comprehensive programs are designed and implemented that put in place education of animal owners, mandatory identification and registration, control of pet animal reproduction, and prevention of abandonment. However, the mere existence of such stipulations in the law, without an effective and constant implementation through national programs, will not lead to a change in the status quo. Moreover, all these measures can be performed only by collaboration between municipalities, the civil society, veterinary offices and sanitary & veterinary authorities, all under the responsible coordination of a single body, whose main mission would consist precisely of the protection of animals with or without an owner.

At a European level, in 2011 the EU Parliament adopted a resolution on the management of the canine population and on responsible ownership rights. Moreover, the second EU strategy on animal protection (2012-2015) proposes a framework law on the welfare of animals, which would also include pet animals. However, as also mentioned in the communications[31] of the European Commission, the responsibility to apply the international rules rests upon Member States, in our case Romania. In such context, the European Commission sent a letter[32] to Romania in October 2014, in which it reiterated the obligations it had undertaken in relation to stray dogs and reaffirmed that euthanasia was seen as a last-resort solution in the management of the canine population.

Examining the legal stipulations of the past years in Romania and seeing the examples of countries such as Slovenia, we can therefore state that there has been no consistently documented interest to regulate the status of stray dogs. This has led to the creation of a legal framework based on decisions made sometimes under contextual pressure, which focused on treating the effects not the causes. In time this inconsistency of effort translated into flawed, incomplete, and emotional rules, which were justifiably challenged by the civil society and the European public opinion.

3. Status of implementation of the laws on animal protection and methods for the control of the stray dog population

According to ASPA 6,756 dogs[3334] were captured in Bucharest in September 2013 – January 2014, after the law was adopted. Immediately after the vote in Parliament, the stray dog capture rate was about 70-80 per day in October 2013. Another statement by ASPA specifies that over 7 February – 21 March 2014 two thousand stray dogs were euthanized[35]. Approximately 2,000 dogs were kept in the three shelters – Mihăileşti, Theodor Pallady and Bragadiru.

However, the figures related to the number of dogs captured and euthanized afterwards continued to grow significantly in the following time interval. In the absence of official reports, the only information comes from statements given by ASPA officials to the media. These include a statement of this institution's manager, Răzvan Băncescu, who said on 28 August 2014 that "approximately 34,000 dogs have been captured in the streets of Bucharest since September 2013, when the stray dog management program

31. Response of the European Commission to questions regarding the situation of stray dogs in Romania, 5 December 2013, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:343:0021:0021:EN:PDF.

32. Stray Dog Population Management in Romania, Carodog, article accessed on 13 December 2014, at http://www.carodog.eu/?p=5&s=4&a=&item=5040.

33. Euthanasia of Healthy Stray Dogs Started in Bucharest. A Number of 187 Animals Were Killed Starting from Wednesday, Catiușa Ivanov, article accessed on 12 December 2014, at http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-administratie_locala-16649403-bucuresti-inceput-eutanasierea-cainilor-sanatosi-fara-stapan-187-animale-fost-omorate-miercuri.htm.

34. Out of these, 4,920 dogs were adopted, 2,463 by individuals and 2,457 by organizations.

35. ASPA: 2.000 Dogs Euthanized in the Last Month in Bucharest, Roxana Alexe, article accessed on 12 December 2014, at http://www.gandul.info/stiri/aspa-2-000-de-caini-eutanasiati-in-ultima-luna-in-bucuresti-12304267.

was initiated; 16,000 of these were euthanized and another 16,000 are being adopted"[36]. Moreover, "suspension of the rules for the implementation of the Law on Stray Dogs did not affect euthanasia activities," approximately 8,000 dogs having been euthanized after the date of 23 June 2014. A simple calculation shows that after the new law was enacted an average 43 dogs were killed every day in Bucharest alone. Băncescu also stated that after such action no more than 20,000 stray dogs still remained in the streets of Bucharest. Those actions aroused harsh reactions from the public, actress Monica Davidescu saying[37] that "the law cannot change the situation of stray dogs because all funds are allocated to euthanasia. Other steps established by the law are not being implemented."

Despite the high rate of systematic euthanasia, "mass killing has not yielded results anywhere," warns Carmen Arsene, President of the Animal Protection National Federation (APNF). She also stated that "the reproduction rate is higher than the killing rate, the remaining street dogs will breed and will reconstitute the initial population, because they will use the same food and shelter resources"[38].

Following adoption of Law #258/2013, "some officials declared they were delighted with the new law, while others were afraid of the community reaction in case of choosing to kill street dogs." In this context of public blame, the neutering of quadrupeds has become an option worth considering. An extended article published in Adevărul newspaper[39] mentioned that the City of Braşov had decided that euthanizing street dogs was out of the question, while Tulcea town had killed tens of thousands of ownerless quadrupeds in the past years. Craiova town is still divided over the idea of euthanasia, and in Pitești the Mayor stated that a decision to kill street dogs would not be taken without consulting the town's citizens. In Târgu-Mureș, local authorities chose international adoptions in order to get rid of the surplus of street dogs. Oradea continues to resort to neutering and return of gentle dogs to the environment from where they came, a practice through which the number of street dogs has decreased from 4,000 to 400 in the past years.

Each municipality, depending on its relations with animal protection organizations and the public, chose to focus on a particular stipulation of the law. For the lazier ones euthanasia has become a 'legal' option, while those interested in a long-term resolution of the situation of stray dogs have adopted a more complex approach. Given that funds are appropriated by each local council, most of the money is typically spent on upkeep of public dog pounds and, to a very small, almost nonexistent extent on educating the population against abandonment, or on neutering animals that have an owner. Even though the law compels pet owners to microchip dogs by January 2015, under penalty of a RON 3,000 fine, data provided by the College of Veterinarians shows that only 300,126 dogs are recorded in the RECS database[40].

In reality, the number of dogs that have an owner is much higher, and according to statements[41] by Laurențiu Vasilescu, former Managing Director of the "SavetheDogs" Association, these are the main source of street dogs. As also noted by journalist Adrian Mogoș[42], the main cause is "the lack of a mass neutering program, both in urban and in particular in rural areas. Animal owners have never been educated with regard to dog neutering." A second cause is the authorities' lack of reaction to dog abandonment. As Mogoș says, "Applicable law in this domain has not been a priority for local or central authorities." Even so, abandoning dogs is an offense and is punishable by imprisonment of no less than six months and no more than three years, or by a criminal fine. The General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police reported 319 violations of the Law on Animal Protection[43]. The

36. ASPA: 34,000 Dogs Captured since September 2013, 16,000 of them Euthanized, Roxana Alexe, article accessed on 12 December 2014, at http://www.mediafax.ro/social/aspa-34-000-de-caini-capturati-din-September-2013-din-care-16-000-eutanasiati-13162123.

37. Interview with actress Monica Davidescu in September 2014.

38. What Have NGOs Done for Street dogs of Bucharest? See What Institutions Are Bragging About!, Diana Toea, article accessed on 12 December 2014, at adevarul.ro/news/bucuresti/legea-maidanezilor-ce-au-facut-ong-urile-maidanezii-capitala-vezi-lauda-institutiile-1_50bdf0927c42d5a663d084a8/index.html.

39. Law on Stray Dogs Authorizes "Genocide." Find out What Mayors Will Do in Each City!, article accessed on 12 December 2014, at http://adevarul.ro/news/societate/legea-mongrelilor-autorizeaza-genocidul-afla-vor-primarii-oras-oras-1_50ad746b7c42d5a66395776e/index.html.

40. Statistics obtained from a specific request sent to the College of Veterinarians in December 2014.

41. Report authors' interview with Laurențiu Vasilescu, former Managing Director of the "SavetheDogs" Association in September 2014.

42. Report authors' interview with journalist Adrian Mogoș in October 2014.

43. Veterinarian, Ana Maria Ciobanu, Decât o Revistă, issue #14, winter 2014, http://features.decatorevista.ro/veterinarul.

number of such penalties continues to remain very low compared to the existing testimonies: "Only in the past week, 45 dog and cat cubs were found in the streets of Ortovet, brought by people who could not pass by without helping them. There are also the 'compassionates' (...), those who, under the cover of night, throw boxes with newly-born cubs over the clinic's fence, thinking they will be taken care of here." In this respect, the local authorities' attention remains at a minimum; they prefer to make no attempt to remedy this status quo, especially in order to avoid attracting aversion from their voters. In the absence of a national program that would address these issues and would propose concrete action and, in particular, solutions, we believe that locally elected officials will prefer to choose the easy options, such as the appropriating funds and directing specialist services to manage dogs already existing in the street.

Robert Lorenz, ASPA Manager during 2010-2012, estimated[44] that out of Romania's over 3,000 towns, cities and communes less than 100 took steps to deal with dogs. In the absence of funds and specialist services even while legal stipulations to this end are in place it is natural to see the situation of stray dogs of Romania remain the same. Most of the local councils that manage such public services and shelters are located in urban areas. As Lorenz mentioned, "the issue of dogs in a city like Bucharest cannot be solved as long as in the past 25 years no funds have been appropriated in the metropolitan area, in Ilfov, for the implementation of applicable law." The rural areas surrounding Bucharest continue to be an inexhaustible source of dogs because of a very high abandonment rate among the population. This rural-urban bi-directional flow of dogs applies in fact to the entire country. Since there are no specialist services in small towns and in communes, we conclude that the law is not consistently applied in Romania. Moreover, there are no punitive measures against Mayors and local councils that do not appropriate funds and do not create specialist departments. Therefore, the law will continue to produce effects only to the extent to which there is willingness among municipality officials.

A number of 5.2 million dogs that have an owner, meaning 82% of the dogs of Romania, are located in rural areas[45], where people lack financial resources to neuter their animals. The statistics presented by CoV show that out of the total number of dogs registered with RECS only 57,184 dogs were neutered[46] countrywide. Therefore, in the absence of a program to fund neutering and identification of dogs that have an owner, the current law will be unable to reduce the widespread phenomenon of stray dogs.

In fact, divergent implementation from one region to another is not the only problem with this law. Organizations in the domain report that "shelters are full but non-compliant"[47]. And most of the time the services contracted by municipalities operate on basic business principles: they try to save money and maximize their profit, and most of the time will perceive the organizations' involvement as interference with their own business. A demonstration of this is the case of Botoşani, where Ador Association had to take the Local Council to court in order to compel the service provider to observe the legal schedule for visiting the dog pound in that town[48].

Conditions in public shelters remain very different from case to case, despite the standardization the law requires. There continue to exist reports[49] that "malnutrition is very common and part of dogs are skeletal. Hunger is so bad that sometimes dogs will eat each other. Diseases are a common occurrence." Dogs are put together without any method: large ones with small ones, aggressive ones with gentle ones, unneutered females with males, all in the same place. This generates fights among dogs, and only the strongest, dominant ones survive. It is hard to tell to what extent these remain isolated cases, particularly under circumstances where NSVFSA, the entity in charge of monitoring these matters, is not releasing any reports on its inspection activities. Under the

44. Report authors' interview with Robert Lorenz, former ASPA Manager, in 2014.

45. The Conference/Roundtable on the topic "Standards for the Management of Stray Dogs of Romania in a European Context," organized by the Animal Protection National Federation, with assistance from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Romania Foundation and from DeutscherTierschutzbund Germany.

46. Data of RECS application, time period between 15 March and 12 December 2014, according to CoV letter transmitted to the Report authors.

47. Report authors' interview with Anca Negoescu, Vier Pfoten, in September 2014.

48. Report authors' interview with Elena Cardas, member of the ADOR Association, Botoșani, in October 2014.

49. Born Innocent – Report about Stray Dogs in Romania, article accessed on 12 December, at http://fifirock.com/2013/12/20/born-innocent-report-about-the-stray-dogs-of-romania/.

circumstances there are even voices that say "well-performed euthanasia is preferable to the atrocious conditions in dog pounds – no food, medical care and sometimes no water"[50].

4. Impact of the law regulating the status of stray dogs

The law in force appoints NSVFSA as the entity in charge of aggregating data on captured dogs. It practically manages a national database resulted from the reports transmitted by specialist services from local municipalities and by nongovernmental organizations that operate private shelters. Information on captured, adopted, neutered or euthanized dogs should be also recorded in this database. At the same time, the law puts another institution – the College of Veterinarians (CoV) – in charge of keeping an aggregate record of the number and data of dogs that have an owner. NSVFSA has not, however, posted any information on this national database on its website. The institution's activity report for 2013 does not include any reference to such data either. The only mention is to be found in its organizational chart, which includes the Animal Sanitary and Veterinary Police Compartment.

CoV provides online users with a registration system[51] (RDHO – Registry of Dogs that Have an Owner), but the information only flows one way, from users to the institution. Owners of registered dogs can read their own animals' information by typing in the microchip code.

There is no public authority to manage the situation of stray dogs at a national level. This makes a real estimate or a census of dogs in Romania practically impossible. There is very little data referring to animals that live in towns, metropolitan areas and rural areas, and whatever we have mainly comes from the media or from estimates by NGOs.

In Bucharest, the Animal Supervision and Protection Authority (ASPA) of the Bucharest Municipality handles the management of public shelters, provides veterinary assistance and deals with the capturing, accommodation and feeding of stray dogs, as well as with adoptions. The institution does not post on its own website any of its activity reports or public funds it manages. On 12 September 2013, as a result of the death of Ionuț Anghel, the fact that ASPA had a budget of over EUR 3 million in 2009-2012 was made public[52]. However, until that date, the institution had never released the amount of its expenses, per budget categories. In the same press conference, the costs of specific services such as dog capturing, daily feeding or euthanasia were also released.

In the same period, ASPA reported approximately 64,000 stray dogs living in Bucharest, and that 4,178 dogs were captured and afterwards sent to the Municipality's[53] shelters between 1 September and 30 November 2013. This data, compared to the estimates[54] by Vier Pfoten concerning the number of stray dogs in 2001 – 80,000 – demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the Romanian institutions' actions to reduce the number of dogs in the streets of Bucharest. In 2001-2007 ASPA reported the capturing and euthanasia of 144,339 dogs. A quasi-total lack of transparency is added to this situation, which increases ineffectiveness in the preparation of consistent statistics regarding the number of stray dogs. Without knowledge of the actual situation in the field, the solutions identified and proposed through national programs will remain isolated and probably not adapted to the current needs of Romania, and will worsen the waste of appropriated budgets.

The statistics of the number of dog bites is one such particular case. Every month the Institute for Infectious Diseases posts on its own website[55] the number of individuals bitten by dogs. According to physicians, almost 11,000 were bitten by dogs in Bucharest in 2011, about 60% of these having been victims of

50. Report authors' interview with Laurențiu Vasilescu, former Managing Director of SavetheDogs Association in September 2014.

51. Registry of Dogs that have an owner, https://recs.rompetid.ro/recs/#no-back-button.

52. Funds Intended for Street dogs Were Wasted, Antoaneta Etves, article accessed on13 December, at http://www.evz.ro/banii-pentru-maidanezi-risipiti-1056928.html.

53. How the Number of Bucharest People Bitten by Street Dogs Has Decreased. The Conclusion Is Surprising, Alexandra Ciliac, article accessed on 10 December, at http://www.evz.ro/numarul-bucurestenilor-muscati-de-maidanezi-a-scazut-1071733.html.

54. Causes and Solutions to the Situation of Stray Dogs, article accessed on 10 December, at http://www.vier-pfoten.ro/adopta-si-salveaza/cauze-i-soluii-ale-situaiei-cainilor-fr-stpan/.

55. Activity of the Anti-Rabies Center – Status of Presentations and of the Individuals' Prophylactic Attitude, Bucharest – 01.01.2014 – 31.08.2014, article accessed on 10 December, at http://www.mateibals.ro/html/docBals/antirabic/s1.pdf.

street dogs:[56] "On average, 984 individuals bitten by dogs come to the hospital every month. Care provided to bitten individuals costs between RON 130 and RON 400 per patient." In case of assault by street dogs, all costs are covered by the medical unit, which probably influences the number of bites declared as being caused by stray dogs. These figures changed between January and August 2014, when the Institute for Infectious Diseases announced a total of 5,898 people seeking treatment at the anti-rabies center, a lower number compared to the averages of the previous months. Also in 2014, for the first time in the past ten years, the number of individuals bitten by dogs that have an owner exceeded that of individuals bitten by stray dogs[57].

As to domestic adoptions, in the absence of ongoing awareness programs these only become of interest in times of extreme events dramatized by the media. The new law complicates the procedure of adoption from public shelters, as it establishes an obligation to meet several cumulative criteria, such as proof of material resources required for raising and feeding dogs and of housing space. As explained by Alina Banu[58], founding member of NUCA Animal Welfare Association of Cluj-Napoca, "There is a gap between demand and offer, and it is obvious that adoption is not a solution. More precisely, there are about 50 offers for one adoption request." As far as international adoptions are concerned, this practice is presented as a successful method in specific localities. For instance, in the North of the country, where "stray dogs of Suceava town will not be euthanized; instead, most of them will be adopted, approximately 300 per month, in Germany[59].

Studies regarding the canine population's dynamics estimate at a statistical level that a female dog that mates twice a year will give birth to 40 – 220 puppies during a lifetime of 5 to 10 years; or that a single female dog and its breeding descendants can produce a number of over 65,000 descendants within 6 years. Adoption campaigns cannot possibly cope with this pace and provide placement solutions for such a high number of dogs. Adoptions should work as a solution for those who want to take care of a dog, not as a solution for the management of the canine population.

5. How much stray dogs cost

Numerous corruption suspicions hover over the authorities that manage stray dogs. These start with the dog catchers, who claim between RON 50 and RON 100[60] as a protection fee, so as not to capture a dog that has an owner or was adopted by a community, and ending with allegations of conflicts of interests. The amounts authorities spend for each dog (over RON 200 / EUR 45 per one capture, RON 30 / EUR 7 for daily food, and RON 50 / EUR 11 for one euthanasia) are regarded by animal protection associations as far too high, and generate suspicions of corruption. Such suspicions are worsened by a lack of transparency and by the fact that there are no solid procedures to establish the real number of dogs that such amounts were spent on. Citizens suspect that the arrangements between local authorities and various subcontracting companies are a way to transfer public funds to private entities owned by persons close to decision-making factors. People believe that one of the reasons for the poor absorption of European funds lies precisely in the professional auditing of the way these funds are spent, so locally elected officials prefer to spend their own budgets, which are subject to more relaxed oversight mechanisms. Many animal lovers accuse authorities of bad faith and of applying ineffective methods for the control of the canine population precisely because such methods cause a continuous inflow of animals, which implicitly generates a constant circuit of funds that are easy to embezzle.

This background has also generated a reaction from Laurențiu Vasilescu, former Managing Director of "SaveTheDogs" Association, who believes that "The

56. Almost 11,000 Bucharesters Were Bitten by Dogs in 2011, article accessed on10 December, at http://www.realitatea.net/aproape-11-000-bucuresteni-au-fost-muscati-de-caini-in-2011_895973.html#ixzz3LUXpGq2y.

57. Number of Street dogs in Bucharest Cut to Half. ASPA: A Number of 20,000 Still Exist in the Streets of Bucharest, article accessed on10 December, at http://www.antena3.ro/romania/numarul-mongrelilor-din-bucuresti-s-a-redus-la-jumatate-aspa-mai-sunt-20-000-de-caini-pe-strazile-265106.html.

58. Interview conducted with Alina Banu, founding member of NUCA Animal Welfare Association of Cluj-Napoca, by the report authors, in August 2014.

59. City of Romania That Does Not Kill Its Street dogs but Gives Them for Adoption Abroad, article accessed on 12 December, at http://www.ziare.com/social/caini-vagabonzi/orasul-din-romania-care-nu-si-omoara-cainii-mongreli-ci-ii-da-spre-adoptie-in-strainatate-1278526.

60. Stray Dog Situation in Romania - Animal Cruelty, Carmen Arsene, August 2011, http://www.fnpa.ro/imagini/2011/09/Stray-dog-situation-in-Romania.-Animal-cruelty.pdf

law can be applicable in specific locations, where municipalities are rich and effective, but in the national context it has no pragmatic relevance. Money is spent wildly and the short-term result is that there will be no dogs. But only the effect is treated, not the cause, just like in case of an infection in one's body."

Currently, the cheapest veterinary neutering in Bucharest[61] is RON 50 (approximately EUR 11) for a stray male and RON 60 (EUR 13) for a stray female. However, the average prices are much higher, most vets charge around RON 200 (EUR 45); such amounts are mostly unaffordable, considering that the gross minimum salary in Romania is RON 900 (EUR 204) and the average gross salary in April 2014 was RON 1735 (EUR 394). Many animal protection organizations organize free-of-charge or subsidized campaigns to neuter dogs that have an owner. In reality, though, some veterinary offices charge extra fees[62] and are reimbursed double the specific amounts they charge the public. And there is still no aggregate data at national level on this solution's effectiveness and the number of individuals using it.

ASPA budget for 2013

The ASPA budget for 2013 was RON 18.6 million.

Neutering in private offices	RON 170,000
The shelter in Mihăilești	RON 854,000
Food, medication and medical supplies for animals	RON 70,000
Eight months' salaries for 47 employees	RON 468,000
Utilities (electricity, natural gas, water)	RON 162,000
Vehicle fuel	RON 22,000
Internet	almost RON 40,000

Source: http://www.evz.ro/banii-pentru-maidanezi-risipiti-1056928.html

6. Best practices and recommendations

Managing the canine population includes the following methods: capturing and euthanizing or killing; capturing and putting in shelters; capturing and neutering followed by release. Each of these methods was tested one way or another in different regions, and has proven its degree of effectiveness. Vier Pfoten Association estimates[63] that the 90,000-dog population living in Bucharest in 2001 dropped to only 40,000 dogs in 2011, because 144,399 dogs were killed and another approximately 50,000 dogs died of natural causes (old age, disease or accident). The association's conclusion is that "the rate of reproduction and survival increases with the killing rate. Practically the killing method cannot eliminate more than 50% of the dogs in a specific area once their numbers have exceeded a critical limit."

There are also successful examples in towns such as Oradea, where the SOS Dogs Association[64] has neutered over 12,000 dogs since 2003, and afterwards released them in their natural environment, thus reducing the population by 92% until 2011. Practically the association's shelter has an open regime for dogs, as these are not confined. In order to limit the number of dogs abandoned in the areas surrounding Oradea town the association also continued its neutering campaigns in the neighboring rural localities. The organization worked in close cooperation with the local authorities until 2012. After that the association continued to work without a contribution from local authorities.

We defined our main recommendations during the time period while we were doing research for this Report. Our recommendations can be a starting point for future solutions, especially as a May 2014 survey revealed that "62% of Romanians are against the killing of stray dogs. A large part of Romania's population would instead prefer an alternative resolution for this issue: 84% prefer the option of keeping dogs in shelters, and 72% believe that gentle animals can

61. Vet Practices Offer Neutering Services at Social Price, article accessed on 12 December, at http://www.cutu-cutu.ro/en/node/936.

62. Businesses with Street dogs: Services Free of Charge… Not! Material Obtained with Candid Camera, article accessed on 13 December, at http://stiri.tvr.ro/afaceri-cu-mongreli-servicii-gratuite-si-nu-prea-un-material-cu-camera-ascunsa_49231_video.html#view.

63. Situation of Stray Dogs and Solution of Vier Pfoten Romania, article accessed on 12 December, at http://totb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/SITUATIA-CAINILOR-FARA-STAPAN-SI-SOLUTIA-VIER-PFOTEN.pdf.

64. SOS Dogs Association, website accessed on 12 December 2014, http://www.sosdogs.ro/.

be returned in the street if they are neutered"[65].

- Creation of a national authority and initiation of a nationwide project. Creation of an authority in charge of managing the situation of stray dogs would facilitate the initiation of consistent programs, with joint solutions and the replication of best practices. This would create the grounds for national programs to educate citizens. Such an entity would demonstrate Romania's commitment to identify adequate and long-term solutions.

- Appropriation of funds at a national level and inclusion of the issue of stray dogs among the measures and actions funded with structural funds. A consistent resolution, at a national level, requires significant budgets that go beyond what local authorities can afford. To initiate national programs to check dogs' health, micro-chipping and/or neutering the national budget could be supplemented by European Union structural funds.

- Neutering and return to the street. Mandatory neutering of all dogs, with and without an owner is constantly identified by civil society organizations as a solution and is a necessary step towards controlling the canine population. For this purpose, support is needed for owners to neuter their dogs – through either subsidies or a reduction of fees. In case owners refuse to neuter their animal on health or religious grounds, we recommend that they undertake to pay an annual charge and legally bind themselves that their dog will not breed. Street dogs should be captured, neutered and returned to the places they came from, in order to protect the area from being invaded by other, fertile dogs that would otherwise quickly populate the area[66].

- Penalties for abandonment. Though abandonment has been illegal since 2004 there are extremely few cases when such a situation was legally established, investigated in due time and punished. Statistics are all the more confusing as the law lumps cruelty acts and abandonment together. The Animal Police Division needs to implement the legal stipulations within the shortest possible delay.

- NSVFSA must take over inspection and monitoring. The institution needs to discharge its responsibilities and authority under the law. NSVFSA should therefore release regular activity reports and the steps it has identified and taken to enforce the law in case of non-compliance. Moreover, together with the College of Veterinarians it should prepare a framework contract that would limit the costs for services required to manage dogs, so as to prevent veterinary offices from increasing their fees.

- Transparency of the state institutions' activity and public money they spend. Out of the four institutions identified (NSVFSA, CoV, Local Councils/ASPA, created for the treatment of infectious diseases) as playing a part in the management of stray dogs, only the "Prof. Dr. Matei Balș" National Institute for Infectious Diseases posts on its own website the number of individuals it treats for bites and the amounts spent. Otherwise, the local councils' sub-contracting these services will continue to be regarded as favoring particular groups, and for good reason.

- Public institutions must take responsibility. Many of the above entities fall under the scope of this recommendation, but we believe it is absolutely necessary to reiterate this fact, especially as we believe that one of the main causes for the current situation is the Romanian authorities' lack of action, indifference and passiveness. In undertaking this responsibility animal protection associations should be viewed as a partner for social dialog and change, not as an enemy of the state and its employees.

- Media reports. The educational side is missing from media articles and reports, an aspect that increases the public's confusion in relation to the situation of stray dogs. Without unbiased, non-dramatized debates and an factual presentation of this topic, the public will continue to only receive tidbits of information.

7. Conclusions

The constant abandoning of stray dogs by irresponsable owners and the uncontrolled breeding dynamic result in large numbers of stray dogs. Capturing, con-

65. Survey conducted by Mercury Research for Vier Pfoten, article accessed on 13 December 2014 http://www.vier-pfoten.ro/proiecte/animale-fara-stapan/romania-2/sondaj-romanii-sunt-impotriva-uciderii-cainilor-fr-stpan/.

66. According to the Red Panda Association, a dog can travel up to 7 kilometers in a single day looking for a space with sufficient resources, where it can settle and breed, and an area free from competition will be very easy to identify. If, however, that territory is held by neutered dogs these will consume the resources the unneutered dogs would need. Neutered dogs would naturally disappear from the streets in a few years, because their average life in the street is 3 to 7 years.

finement or euthanizing of any number of dogs, no matter how large, is not a viable solution. Even if the population is temporarily reduced, the canine species' breeding dynamics allows for a repopulation of an environment in record time. Considering that food resources available in Bucharest City allow the dog population to multiply up to approximately 80 – 90 thousand (according to estimates this was the maximum level reached in 2001), any elimination of a larger or smaller number of dogs will only have a temporary effect. The same logics applies anywhere else in the country.

The strategy for a more or less brutal catching and elimination of dogs has numerous flaws. It is not only very expensive and causing anguish to animal lovers; it is a typical example of intervention at the level of the effects and not the cause of a problem. The recommended long-term solution in this case is neutering all dogs of no breeding value (both with and without an owner); steps must also be taken to increase the owners' awareness that they cannot abandon their animals and to educate them to neuter their yard- or pet animals.

Law #258/ 2013 was adopted hastily, without genuine and unbiased prior debates. The initial proposal requiring the authorities to find complex solutions for the resolution of the issue of stray dogs was amended at the last minute so as to provide a rapid, radical solution – euthanizing the unwanted dogs living in the streets of Romania. Even its implementation is selective, as some local councils follow the legal steps only in form and afterwards resort to euthanasia. The cases where authorities choose comprehensive solutions are rare and happen when institutions and NGOs identify a way to work together.

The situation of stray dogs is an instance of the generalized ineffectiveness of Romanian local and central authorities, which impacts several areas of activity: from uncompleted and low-quality public works to flawed maintenance of the infrastructure of villages and cities/towns. Most of the time municipalities work in ways that lack transparency and prefer "targeted" financial allocations[67]. Locally elected officials tend to implement community programs that generate cash flows for various "friendly" companies that afterwards prove to be owned by their relatives or close friends. At the moment only the leaderships of 9[68] out of Romania' total 41 County Councils are not under law enforcement investigations. Every month the media reports the arrest of dozens of mayors and managers of local entities on charges of corruption, conflict of interests or embezzlement. The issue of stray dogs just happens to be one that is intensely flagged at international level by animal lovers who are displeased with the way authorities choose to act.

67."Court Bids" and other Public Procurement Fraud Methods, Claudia Zamfir, article accessed on 12 December 2014, at https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-18799878-oferta-curtoazie-alte-retete-fraudare-achizitiilor-publice-dorinta-frauda-devina-pic-mai-eleganta-despre-cum-cheltuieste-statul-banii.htm

68. Criminal councils of Romania. Map of counties marked in red because of local heads' troubles with the law, article accessed on 13 November 2014, at http://stirileprotv.ro/special/cj-a-ajuns-sa-nu-mai-insemne-consiliu-judetean-ci-judecat-harta-sefilor-de-judet-cu-probleme-penale.html.

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