



2026/419

20.2.2026

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) 2026/419

of 10 February 2026

on the request for registration, pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of the European citizens' initiative entitled 'EU initiative to protect stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU/non-EU countries'

(notified under document C(2026) 958)

(Only the German text is authentic)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the European citizens' initiative⁽¹⁾, and in particular Article 6(4) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) A request for registration of a European citizens' initiative entitled 'EU initiative to protect stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU/non-EU countries' was submitted to the Commission on 13 January 2026.
- (2) That request follows the request for registration of a European citizens' initiative entitled 'EU initiative to protect stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU/non-EU countries' which was submitted to the Commission on 28 November 2025.
- (3) By letter of 5 January 2026 (C(2026) 10 final), pursuant to Article 6(4) of Regulation (EU) 2019/788, the Commission informed the group of organisers that as regards the request for registration submitted on 28 November 2025, the requirements for registration set out in Article 6(3), first subparagraph, points (a), (d) and (e), of that Regulation were fulfilled and that Article 6(3), first subparagraph, point (b), thereof was not applicable. However, the Commission also explained that the initiative did not fulfil the requirement set out in Article 6(3), first subparagraph, point (c), of Regulation (EU) 2019/788. In particular, the Union has no power to formulate and implement policies to protect stray animals for animal welfare reasons.
- (4) The Commission therefore informed the organisers pursuant to Article 6(4), first subparagraph, of Regulation (EU) 2019/788 that they could either amend the initiative to take into account the Commission's assessment, or maintain, or withdraw, the initial initiative in accordance with Article 6(4), second subparagraph, of Regulation (EU) 2019/788.
- (5) On 13 January 2026, the group of organisers submitted an amended initiative.
- (6) The aim of the amended initiative as expressed by the organisers is to call on the Commission, 'within the limits of its competences, to put forward proposals for legal acts of the Union to strengthen the protection of stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU and to ensure that EU action in third countries does not contribute to animal suffering'. In particular, the initiative 'aims to further restrict the use of dogs and cats for scientific purposes, including possible amendments to Directive 2010/63/EU' and calls for 'EU trade, association and financing instruments' to 'be designed in such a way that EU funds, trade benefits or cooperation will only be granted if minimum standards for the protection of dogs and cats are respected'. The organisers of the initiative also consider that 'sustainable, humane measures such as population management, castration and vaccination programmes, veterinary care, registration and animal welfare education' should be promoted. An annex to the amended initiative provides further details on its background, its subject matter and its objectives.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 130, 17.5.2019, p. 55, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/788/oj>.

- (7) The Commission notes that, as regards stray cats and stray dogs, the Union's power to improve animal welfare by law-making and enforcement is limited to the policy areas exhaustively listed in Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), that is, agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies. Therefore, the Commission could not submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties concerning the protection of stray cats and stray dogs for animal welfare reasons. These policy areas remain the exclusive responsibility of the Member States.
- (8) As regards animal shelters housing cats and dogs, the Commission considers that it could submit a proposal for a legal act on the basis of Articles 43(2) and 114 TFEU, insofar as in the Union market for cats and dogs, shelters conduct an economic activity because they supply significant numbers of cats and dogs and compete with breeders. In addition, to ensure that rules on the placing on the market of cats and dogs can ensure a high level of animal welfare protection, it is necessary to apply traceability requirements to all or most cats and dogs placed on the Union market, therefore including cats and dogs from shelters.
- (9) Concerning animal testing, the Commission could propose a legal act concerning the use of animals for scientific purposes, including stray and shelter animals, on the basis of Article 114 TFEU.
- (10) As regards trade and cooperation with third countries, the Commission could adopt proposals for legal acts based, as appropriate, on Articles 207, 209, 212 and 217 TFEU, making the benefits of such arrangements conditional upon compliance with minimum standards for the protection of stray cats and stray dogs, where such conditionality is linked to the exercise of Union competences in the policy areas referred to in Article 13 TFEU and contributes to the attainment of the objectives of those policies.
- (11) Finally, concerning Union funding to Member States or to third countries, the Commission could adopt proposals for legal acts on the basis of Article 177(1) TFEU and Articles 209, 212 and 217 TFEU respectively, making the benefit of EU funds conditional upon compliance with minimum standards for the protection of stray cats and stray dogs, where such conditionality is linked to the exercise of Union competences in the policy areas referred to in Article 13 TFEU and contributes to the attainment of the objectives of those policies, and there is a sufficiently close link between the purpose of the EU funds and that protection.
- (12) By contrast, the Commission could not submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties concerning the protection of stray cats and stray dogs for animal welfare reasons. Therefore, as regards that part of the initiative, the Commission concludes that it does not fulfil the legal requirement in Article 6(3), first subparagraph, point (c), of Regulation (EU) 2019/788.
- (13) For those reasons, in accordance with Article 6(4), third subparagraph, point (b), of Regulation (EU) 2019/788, the proposed citizens' initiative should be partially registered, as regards those parts of the initiative that do not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.
- (14) That conclusion does not affect the assessment of whether the concrete substantive conditions required for the Commission to act, including compliance with the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity and compatibility with fundamental rights, would be met in this case.
- (15) The group of organisers has provided appropriate evidence that it fulfils the requirements laid down in Article 5(1) and (2) of Regulation (EU) 2019/788 and has designated the contact persons in accordance with Article 5(3), first subparagraph, of that Regulation.
- (16) The initiative is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious, nor is it manifestly contrary to the values of the Union as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union or to the rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- (17) The initiative entitled 'EU initiative to protect stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU/non-EU countries' should therefore be partially registered based on the considerations set out in recitals (7) to (12).

- (18) The conclusion that the conditions for partial registration under Article 6(4), third subparagraph, point (b), of Regulation (EU) 2019/788 are fulfilled does not imply that the Commission in any way confirms the factual correctness of the content of the initiative as registered, which is the sole responsibility of the group of organisers of the initiative. The content of the initiative as registered only expresses the views of the group of organisers, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Commission,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

1. The European citizens' initiative entitled 'EU initiative to protect stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU/non-EU countries' shall be partially registered.
2. Statements of support for that initiative may be collected to the extent that it aims at proposals from the Commission for legal acts of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties:
 - (a) concerning animal shelters housing cats or dogs, insofar as shelters participate in the Union market for cats and dogs;
 - (b) concerning the use of animals for scientific purposes, including stray and shelter animals;
 - (c) adding clauses to international trade or association agreements according to which the benefits of such arrangements would be made conditional upon compliance with minimum standards for the protection of stray cats and stray dogs;
 - (d) making the benefit of EU funds conditional upon compliance with minimum standards for the protection of stray cats and stray dogs.

Article 2

This Decision is addressed to the group of organisers of the citizens' initiative entitled 'EU initiative to protect stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU/non-EU countries', represented by Gisela URBAN and Hans-Erich Rainer GAERTNER acting as contact persons.

Done at Strasbourg, 10 February 2026.

For the Commission
Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ
Member of the Commission