

EN
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Answer given by Mr Borg
on behalf of the Commission
(11.6.2014)

1. Slaughter without stunning is permitted under EU law¹ in case of ritual slaughter as a derogation from the general rule but it is for the Member States to decide under which conditions such a derogation may be granted. According to Commission' sources, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden have banned slaughter without stunning. The compliance of such bans with freedom of religion can only be assessed on a case by case basis since the context and modalities of such bans vary. There is no strict correlation between slaughter without stunning and ritual slaughter.
2. The Commission combats racist and xenophobic hate speech through Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA, which obliges the Member States to penalise the intentional public incitement to violence or hatred against groups or individuals defined by reference to their race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin. When it comes to concrete cases of alleged hate speech in the Member States, it is for the national courts to act. The Commission cannot replace the assessment of judges at national level.
3. Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU² requires paying full regard to the welfare requirements of animals in the context of certain EU policies, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage. This provision applies to the EU and the Member States. This provision does not confer to animals specific rights per se.

¹ Article 4(4) of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing (OJ L 303, 18.11.2009, p. 1)

² OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 47–390