

**Question for written answer E-007168/2012
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Andrea Zanoni (ALDE)

Subject: Heavy illegal trafficking of puppies from Eastern Europe to Italy, with particular reference to Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia

In Italy the importation of puppy dogs and kittens from Eastern Europe has long been documented by several Italian animal rights organisations¹.

Despite the tightening of sanctions, the trafficking continues, at the expense of many puppies which, due to their young age, die because of inappropriate transport conditions or from viral diseases, which are lethal at that age.

In recent months alone the Italian police forces have intervened on several occasions, seizing hundreds of puppies that had been smuggled into Italy².

For example, in February 2012 as many as 479 puppies were seized in Palmanova (UD), in addition to 72 in Piacenza d'Adige (PD). All were from Hungary and of the breeds Saint Bernard, Great Dane, Labrador, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Chihuahua, Pincher, Yorkshire Terrier, Spitz, Akita Inu, Husky, Shar Pei, amongst others.

The crimes most frequently committed were the forgery of documents (fake signatures of alleged veterinarians from other countries were found on EU passports), in addition to counterfeit vaccine certificates and obvious discrepancies between the animals' declared age and the real age of the puppies seized.

This business is an extremely lucrative one, the value of which is estimated in Italy to be around EUR 300 million a year. This illegal trade is therefore also having a negative impact on taxes, given that it is undeclared.

Given that the above illegal trafficking is mainly from countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, can the Commission answer the following questions:

1. Is it aware of this phenomenon in Italy?
2. What steps will it take to ensure that Member States enforce compliance with Regulation (EC) No 998/2003, paying more attention to the mandatory rabies vaccination?
3. Would it not be useful to set up a European database in order to register breeding farms – with a particular focus on the Member States mentioned above – with the specific role of verifying not only animal welfare but also animal traceability from a fiscal point of view, in accordance with the 'EU Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015' adopted by Parliament on 4 July 2012?

¹ Cfr. Italian animal welfare associations LAV, ENPA and OIPA

² (Unofficial translation) 'The trafficking in and suffering of puppies born in Eastern Europe and sold in Italy. What will change now that illegal trafficking has become an offence', LAV dossier, 2011 – www.lav.it.