

**Question for written answer E-006039/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Tiziano Motti (PPE)

Subject: Seizure of pets

In the current severe economic crisis, many people, often in dire financial circumstances, worry about debts being collected by debt collection agencies. It is often a short step towards possessions being seized and it is a situation that is psychologically very difficult to deal with for the debtor and their family.

Under Italian law, the bailiff must seize the items he thinks can most readily and easily be turned into cash up to the expected realisation value, which is equal to the value of the debt being collected, plus half. In any case, the bailiff must seize the following in order of preference: cash, valuables, credit instruments and any other goods that have an excellent chance of being turned into cash. The law also imposes a number of restrictions on certain items that cannot be seized, such as sacred items used in worship or items of great sentimental value like wedding rings, but there is no rule that specifically prohibits the seizure of pets, despite the great emotional attachment people can have to them, and even when they ease certain childhood anxieties (pet therapy).

In some legal systems, like that of Germany for example, pets not kept as assets or for profit cannot be seized (Article 811 of the German Code of Civil Procedure). In this continuing legislative vacuum, on the one hand there have been news reports of pets seized because of their pedigree, so with real financial value; on the other, conscious of the intrinsic value of pets and with the intention of giving more rights and safeguards to the relationship between owners and their pets, there is a tendency in Italian and EU case-law and legislation towards guaranteeing pets principles and rights.

The ill-treatment and killing of animals and illegal trafficking of pets being made specific offences, stricter penalties for people who abandon pets or deciding which spouse is given custody of pets in the event of separation or divorce are all indicative of the increasing consideration given to pets by legislators.

Can the Commission say whether there is already an EU directive establishing that pets cannot be seized and, if not, whether it intends to propose one that does?