

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003067/25
to the Commission**

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(23 July 2025)

Subject: Widespread use of religious slaughter practices

Article 4(4) of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 provides a derogation from the requirement that animals be stunned before being killed if they are being slaughtered for religious rites in approved slaughterhouses.

According to Recital 18 of the regulation, this derogation is based on the need to respect the freedom of religion, as enshrined in Article 10 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

However, it appears that this tolerated practice has become so commonplace that it is now the norm: religious slaughter is becoming normalised, not only for meat on the European market, but also for large volumes of the meat exported to third countries.

Is this derogation to be used solely to meet the needs of religious communities in the European Union, or does it also permit slaughter without prior stunning for Halal or Kosher meat that is to be exported to third countries?

Supporter ⁽¹⁾

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Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(24 September 2025)

Under Article 4(1) of Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing ⁽¹⁾, animals must be stunned before being killed.

Article 4(4) of that regulation authorises the killing of animals subject to particular methods of slaughter prescribed by religious rites without prior stunning only by way of derogation, solely in order to ensure observance of freedom of religion ⁽²⁾ and provided that the slaughter takes place in a slaughterhouse. Under general principles of EU law, derogations are to be interpreted strictly.

Regulation (EC) 1099/2009, reflects the requirements of Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, according to which ‘the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage’, and the EU legislator’s commitment to ensure observance of freedom of religion, including the right to manifest religion or beliefs, in accordance with Article 10(1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights ⁽³⁾.

Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 applies to the killing in the EU of any animals bred or kept for the production of food, amongst other products.

Under Article 23 of the regulation, it is for Member States to ensure compliance by operators with the regulation, which includes guaranteeing observance of the requirements for the application of the derogation, and to impose penalties when those requirements are not observed.

¹ This question is supported by a Member other than the authors: Anja Arndt (ESN)

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1099/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ Judgment of 17 December 2020, Centraal Israëlitisch Consistorie van België and Others, C-336/19, EU:C:2020:1031, paragraph 43.

⁽³⁾ Judgment of 17 December 2020, Centraal Israëlitisch Consistorie van België and Others, C-336/19, EU:C:2020:1031, paragraphs 46-47.