

(English version)

Question for written answer E-003143/25
to the Commission
Anna Maria Cisint (Pfe)
(30 July 2025)

Subject: Request to amend the rules governing ritual slaughter in line with recent CJEU and ECHR judgments

In a 17 December 2020 ruling, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) established the general principle of the primacy of animal welfare in relation to laws requiring all animals — including those killed as part of religious rites — to be stunned before they are slaughtered.

In line with this ruling, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)'s judgment of 13 February 2024 determined that banning the slaughtering animals without prior stunning does not infringe religious freedom or any anti-discriminatory principles, as these provisions are primarily designed to protect animal welfare.

The EU law which makes stunning compulsory, Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009, leaves Member States wide discretion to allow for derogations for religious rites.

Given the above, can the Commission say whether recent European case-law gives it the power to prohibit Member States from granting derogations from the prior stunning of animals on religious grounds and therefore ensure animal welfare at slaughter throughout the Union?

Submitted: 30.7.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(17 October 2025)

Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that in formulating and implementing EU policies, the EU shall pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage.

Article 4(4) of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 ⁽¹⁾ on the protection of animals at the time of killing foresees a derogation from the general principle that animals shall only be killed after stunning, for animals subject to particular methods of slaughter prescribed by religious rites provided that the slaughter takes place in a slaughterhouse.

The derogation under Article 4(4) is based on the need to respect the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, as provided in Article 13 of the TFEU.

The Commission considers that the EU legislation provides an adequate framework in which Member States can reconcile animal welfare and freedom of religion, a fundamental right protected under Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in accordance with the provisions of the above Regulation ⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

⁽²⁾ Judgment of 17 December 2020, *Centraal Israëlitisch Consistorie van België e.a.*, C-336/19, EU:C:2020:1031.