

SPECIAL REPORT No 3/2023

Stray pets: are their welfare rules respected and their uncontrolled dispersal in the countryside effectively addressed?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hellenic Court of Audit investigated the implementation of stray pet management policies, in order to verify, on the one hand, the progress regarding the achievement of the objectives set by Law 4830/2021, i.e. the promotion of the welfare of stray pets and the drastic reduction of their population. And on the other hand, the appropriate use of the amount of 83,000,000 Euros, which has been allocated by the State for these objectives over the last four years.

The audit, carried out in the competent units of the Ministries of Interior, Rural Development and Food and Digital Governance, as well as in a sample of municipalities that was considered representative, revealed the following:

- I.** The difficulties which, as it was subsequently established, had to be addressed regarding the transfer, to the Ministry of Interior, of all state competences related to the protection of pets, as well as the slow adaptation of local government authorities to Law 4830/2021, continue to hinder the full implementation of this law.
- II.** Since neither the local government authorities nor the competent state services have reliable data on the actual population of stray pets and its fluctuations, per municipality, the state supervision over municipalities, regarding the management of strays by the latter, and the appropriate distribution of public funding are significantly difficult.
- III.** Due to the lack of adequate means and facilities, local government authorities do not fully comply with their obligations regarding the collection, veterinary care and temporary accommodation of stray pets. In many cases, the living conditions of strays in municipal shelters are far from what animal welfare requires. Cooperation of local government authorities with animal welfare associations, which could contribute to better care of strays, without additional burden on municipal budgets, remains limited.
- IV.** Although funding from the Special Programme for the Support of Municipalities FILODIMOS II could have contributed to the development of municipal infrastructure for the care of stray pets, due to the absence of a central monitoring system, the relevant funded projects are delayed in completion and, so far, the results from the utilization of public resources are poor.