

## Network I&R

Working together for nationwide mandatory Identification and Registration of dogs and cats

All dogs and cats in Germany should be properly tagged and registered in a companion animal registry. This is the vision of Network I&R. The means by which this goal can be achieved is nationwide, uniform and mandatory Identification and Registration of dogs and cats.

However, the prospect of each animal being clearly linked to its owner is still a long way off in Germany. In almost all other European countries, mandatory Identification and Registration of dogs and cats has long been in force. For good reason, because the benefits are obvious. Major problems such as the illegal puppy trade, the steady increase in street cats, and overcrowded and bankrupt animal shelters can be ameliorated by such a regulation.

For this reason, Network I&R was created in 2016 under the leadership of the Saarland State Commissioner for Animal Welfare, Dr Hans-Friedrich Willimzik.



It is an interdisciplinary network of experts from all interest groups involved in the field of Identification and Registration in Germany.

In working groups, all the State Commissioners for Animal Welfare, representatives from the fields of veterinary practice and transponder technology as well as representatives from registries and animal welfare organisations have developed the solution of a network of registries in order to make the vision a reality. The registry network takes into account all the challenges presented by this issue and represents a cost-effective and flexible solution.

# NETWORK I & R

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## Mandatory Identification and Registration (I&R) of dogs and cats

For Germany and the European Union

NETWORK  
I & R

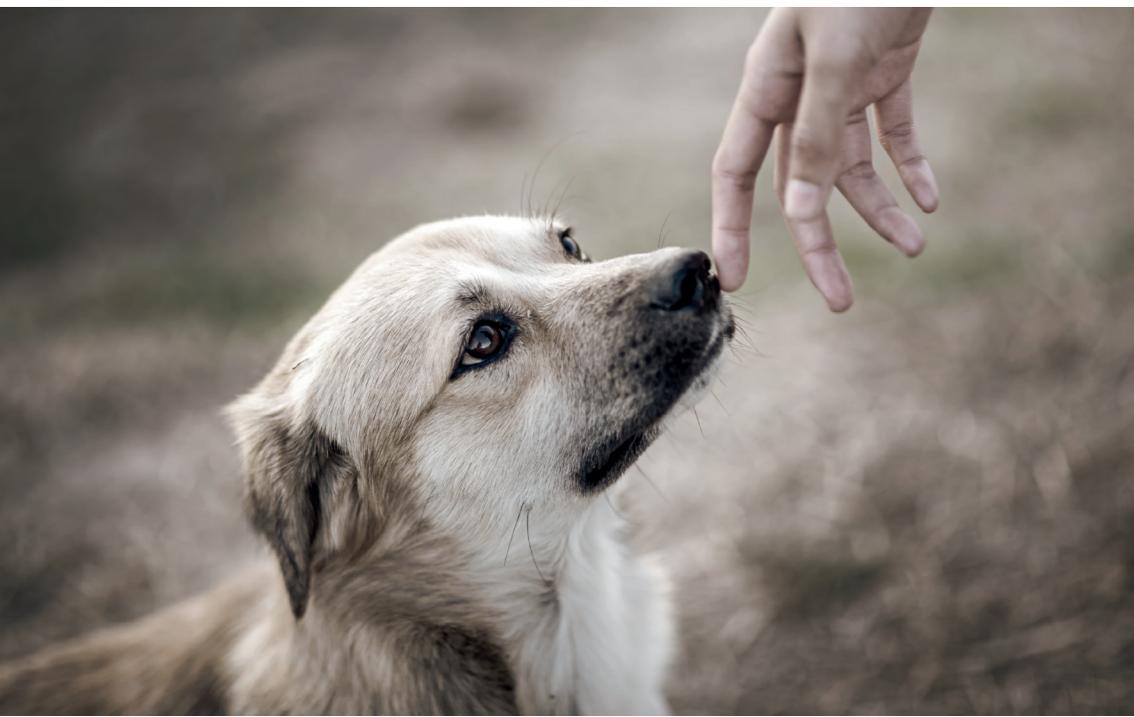
## The situation in Germany and the EU

### When it comes to I&R, Germany is lagging behind in Europe

The issue of whether dogs and cats must be identified and registered in a companion animal registry is not currently addressed by uniform regulation across Germany. Responsibility lies with the federal states. As a result, there are many different rules in place. While Identification and Registration (I&R) for dogs is a legal requirement in a few federal states, the situation for cats is much more confusing.

In order to counteract the animal welfare problem of stray cats, several hundred cities and municipalities have issued so-called cat protection ordinances, which stipulate that free-roaming cats must be neutered and which, as a rule, also include obligatory

I&R. Since this only applies to municipalities, there is currently a patchwork of different regulations in Germany. This means Germany is one of the few Member States of the European Union that has not yet introduced mandatory I&R for dogs and cats. The systems are very different across the EU. For example, Austria operates a federally structured system which, although it includes private databases, feeds into a central register. France takes a different approach: there is a single legal registry in which all dogs, cats and ferrets must be registered. In both countries, the regulations used existing resources during the introduction phase and could thus be implemented without great expense or huge administrative effort.



## Positive effects of a nationwide obligation to identify and register

### Several problem areas show the need for mandatory I&R

Where there is nationwide and uniform mandatory Identification and Registration (I&R) of dogs and cats, owners of companion animals are obliged to have their animals tagged with a transponder. This is injected under the skin, where it soon fuses with the surrounding tissue and remains in place for the lifetime of the animal. The next step is that the number of the microchip in this transponder must be registered by the owner in a companion animal registry, together with the owner's own data and that of the animal. Such a mandatory regime would have significant benefits in a number of problem areas:

#### Animal health

Thanks to I&R, an animal with a contagious disease can be reliably traced as the source of an outbreak. I&R also leads to improvements in basic veterinary care and therefore in animal health, since a veterinarian must be consulted when an animal is tagged.

#### Animal welfare

I&R will increase the number of lost animals that are reunited with their owners. Furthermore, the time that animals will spend in a shelter – which is stressful for them – will be reduced. In addition, owners who abandon their pets can be traced, which will have a deterrent effect.

#### Legal certainty and enforcement

Thanks to I&R, owners can reliably be held responsible for damage caused by their animals. In addition, owners who have mistreated or abandoned their animals can be held accountable.

#### Consumer protection

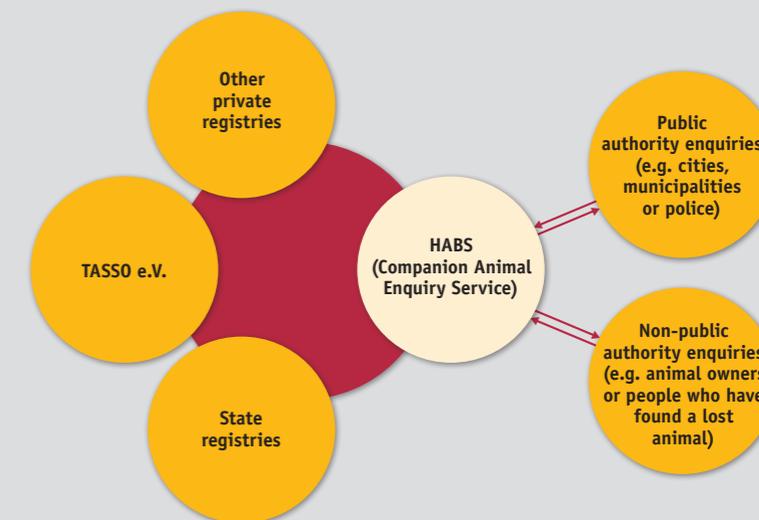
Compulsory I&R helps prospective buyers to determine the origin of an animal and is therefore a means of combating the illegal puppy trade.

#### Public health

Mandatory I&R results in better control of dogs and their owners. Dog bite incidents can be successfully investigated and if necessary punished and will therefore become less frequent. Cases of zoonoses (diseases that can be transmitted to humans from animals) are reduced by the systematic veterinary care associated with I&R.

#### Economics

Municipalities can save millions of euros through I&R, because the animal shelters need less financial support if missing animals are promptly reunited with their owners. The federal states will be spared the cost of setting up and operating their own expensive registers if the solution proposed by Network I&R is implemented.



## The practical solution: a registry network

### User-oriented access points for the authorities and authorised persons

Network I&R's solution provides for a so-called registry network of existing companion animal registries with its own central access point. This solution avoids the expense of setting up and operating a new register from scratch. In addition, the data of more than ten million already registered companion animals will not be lost. The autonomy of the individual registers is preserved, since this solution merely creates an additional central access point for data retrieval.

Irrespective of the particular registry in which an animal's data is stored, public authorities and agencies may submit a request for information to the research service (HABS), provided that the legal conditions are met. Non-public institutions and private individuals such as veterinarians, animal shelters

and owners of companion animals can also contact this service to check the registration status of an animal, for example in the case of a found animal. In the event of a positive query result, HABS will provide information that the animal is registered and in which registry, and, if requested, forward the data retrieved to the relevant registry, which will initiate the process of reuniting the animal with its owner.

If the animal is not registered, it is possible to store the found animal data, in case the owner contacts one of the connected registries at a later date. All input and retrieval powers will be clearly and specifically regulated in advance at HABS and will of course comply with the necessary data protection regulations.