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Applied Legal Investigation: Dogs on the Barcelona Metro

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Soon dogs will be able to travel on the Barcelona Metro, possibly by summer 2014. The public announcement was made on 28th October by the Governor of the Presidency and Territory of the Barcelona Council, honourable Mr Jordi Martí i Galbis, for the celebration of the ANIMALADDA Meeting,[1] following an agreement between the Council and Barcelona's Metropolitan Transport organisation (la Empresa de Transportes Metropolitanos de Barcelona, TMB), which required the endorsement of the Catalanian Government. The news has been widely echoed by the press,[2] given that, as it has been highlighted, it represents an advance in the involvement of companion animals in the urban area and one significant step further in responsible tenancy policy, which, in Barcelona, is being developed by the Office of Animal Protection of the local Government that, under the charge of Mrs. Anna Otronoves, is undoubtedly the only office of its type in the state municipality. Those of us that have been working on this topic for some years and actively working to bring it about sooner are not surprised by the news, but at the same time, have been waiting eagerly for it to be published.

One of the aspects worth highlighting is that behind this success there are many people that have carried out their role effectively, solitarily and in the spirit of cooperation, from those behind the political action, to the Animal Protection Associations, to those who signed the manifesto in favour of accepting dogs on urban transport in Barcelona. What now falls to me, as the Director of the ADS Investigation Group at the UAB, is highlighting our contribution (which is perhaps the least visible) towards the achievement of this success.

In 2011 the ADS Investigation Group met together and won a competitive Project [3] organised by the Barcelona City Council, entitled "Strategies for the prevention of abandonment: the transport of companion animals in the urban area". The fundamental aim of the Project was to carry out an exhaustive and comparative study on the regulations of transporting companion animals in the urban area, and publish the results in two different formats; the first in an informative way, with the aim of it being used as a basis for correction or improvement of the regulations at the time, of little adequacy for the citizen's cohabitation of humans and animals; and the second, of a more scientific form, as a publication that would completely gather together the results of the work carried out. Waiting for news to be announced, these publications will shortly come to light.

During this time, the aim of our investigation has been to transmit a simple and effective message: "Urban transport that is friendly and open to animals", or "Pet-friendly transport". It is a message that, in a consolidated way, is already being practiced in other cities that have declared themselves, as Barcelona has also, pet-friendly cities. The members of our team have carried out different elements of the work: the orderly collection of materials for the creation of a database on the transport of companion animals on public transport (Nuria Murlà Ribò, Elisabet Miras, Irene García Colell,

Cristina Bécades, Juan Ignacio Serra, Maria Gordillo), the publication of articles on comparative legislation (Carlos Contreras), the study of the system of planned penalties (José Antonio Jiménez Buendía) and the participation of all in international forums (Zurich, Brussels), to publicise among and compare with other experts the progress of the study being undertaken.

As an anecdote, I must recount that Munich, the capital of Bavaria, declared itself an animal-friendly city in November 2009,^[4] and in a general way introduced a census for animals, the payment of a fee for the tenancy of a companion animal, free access to public transport and the duty to undertake (the dog and its owner) a citizens training course. The announcement of such a regulation change was made by the then Oberbürgermeister, Christian Ude (SPD) who, with a hint of irony, was delighted by the change that these actions would bring about for the city, stating: "Die Zamperl haben in München ja schon immer eine große Rolle gespielt" (the four-legged have always played a very important role in Munich).

The normalisation of companion animals in the urban area decisively contributes towards removing the terrible social stain of abandonment, which, in Spain, has been combatted with widely visible results in recent years. Street dogs have disappeared from our urban landscape, however there remain many countries where this issue is still waiting to be addressed.^[5] This is not a minor topic. The EU has announced the promulgation of a legislative framework on companion animals since 2015. The Spanish Agricultural Minister has himself recently declared that his Ministry aspires to shortly regulate the situation of companion animals.

Investigation does not always result in immediate results, but the legal sciences do try to achieve changes in legal texts, which can contribute, as has been attempted in this case, towards an improvement in citizen cohabitation. The acceptance of companion animals in the urban environment, providing them access to public transport, along with the policy of censorship, microchip identification, and a compulsory medical card, constitute fundamental pillars of a modern society that recognises companion animals as part of the city. A city that seeks to encourage responsible tenancy and harmonise the interests of a population where they, "the four-legged", deserve dignified treatment. It cannot be ignored that a large number of us citizens share our lives with dogs and cats and that this requires, above all in times of crisis through which we live, facilitating that companion animals can also travel in public transport. The example of Barcelona, like that of Munich and many other cities of the world, is a step forward that, I am sure, will be followed by many other municipalities of our country. Our desire as a University to continue supporting the improvement of animal welfare in the urban environment is further stimulated by the fact that our investigation has contributed towards this advancement.

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[1] Vid. [ANIMALADDA](#) promoted by [ADDA](#), the Association for the Defence of Animal Rights, a pioneer of this

type of animal activism in Spain since 1976

[2] Vid. [20 Minutos](#), [La Vanguardia](#), [Europa Press](#), [Antena3](#), [El Periódico](#)

[3] Ref.:12S04161

[4] Abendzeitung, 9.11.2009

[5] Romania, Mexico, Brazil, among others, are countries that must develop canine population control policies and encourage responsible tenancy