



European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity



Presented by the
*Federation of Associations for
Hunting and Conservation of the EU*

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INTRODUCTION

In November 2004, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation 1689 regarding Hunting and Europe's environmental balance, recommending inter alia that the Council of Europe "*draw up a European charter on hunting, as a guide setting out common principles and good practices for hunting, particularly for the organisation of hunting tourism on the continent*". Three years later, the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (BERN Convention) adopted such Charter, prepared by a Working Group of relevant experts (in particular Dr. Scott BRAINERD from Norway) and representatives from Contracting Parties and from NGOs - the World Conservation Union/Species Survival Commission - *European Sustainable Use Specialist Group* (IUCN/SSC-ESUSG), the *Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the European Union* (FACE), and the *International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation* (CIC).

This *Charter* addresses hunting as a consumptive and recreational form of utilisation and/or management of species of birds and terrestrial mammals in Europe, in accordance with the provisions of the BERN Convention. It provides a non-binding set of guidelines for hunters, hunting tour operators, regulators and managers that address common principles and good practices for sustainable hunting (including hunting tourism) in Europe. Its goal is to ensure that hunting and hunting tourism in Europe are practiced in a sustainable manner, while avoiding negative impacts on biodiversity and making a positive contribution to the conservation of species and habitats and the needs of society.

The Charter

- Provides a set of non-binding principles and guidelines for sustainable hunting (with firearms, bows, traps, hounds or birds of prey) to facilitate biodiversity conservation and rural development;
- Encourages hunter involvement in monitoring, management, and research efforts directed towards stewardship and the conservation of wildlife and their habitats;
- Promotes cooperation between hunters and other stakeholders in the conservation and management of biodiversity.
- Seeks to ensure that hunting tourism is sustainable;
- Promotes forms of hunting tourism that provide local communities with socio-economic incentives to conserve and manage wildlife and their habitats, as well as general biodiversity;
- Makes recommendations for hunting tour operators and hunters who engage their services.
- Promotes measures that increase hunter proficiency and safety
- Encourages hunter education, awareness and information measures;
- Promotes best hunting practices.

Principle 1

Favour multi-level governance that maximises benefit for conservation and society

Rationale:

Human decisions that change land-use and affect species are influenced by regulatory and financial incentives at several levels, as well as by cultural and social factors. Policies affecting these factors need to be established at the most appropriate geographical level and to remain flexible, in order to accommodate different biological, economic and social conditions as well as adaptive management. Increasing uniformity of culture and markets creates special regulatory challenges in guiding local use of land and wild living resources to retain diverse ecological conditions.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Take into consideration the international, national, regional and local – as appropriate - conservation status of fauna and flora;
- b) Encourage the creation of policies and structures that reduce conflicts and create synergies between hunting and other conservation interests, reward best practices (e.g. with subsidies or privileges), and regulate against malpractice;
- c) Ensure that the policies and structures accommodate local cultural demands (i.e. multiple use) and ecological conditions as well as higher-level policy;
- d) Audit for regulatory or other incentives that are detrimental for conservation of biodiversity, and remove, neutralise or compensate for them.

Hunters and hunting tour operators:

- a) Assist authorities at all levels to develop and promote incentives for conserving biodiversity through sustainable use;
- b) Strive at all levels to attain maximum conservation benefit through hunting.

Principle 2

Ensure that regulations are understandable and respected

Rationale:

Regulations are important and necessary, but can have costs for conservation as well as for stakeholders. Costs are least when minimal administration is combined with maximum motivation to comply. Thus, compliance should be easy to achieve and non-compliance should be reliably detectable. Inappropriate (including incomprehensive or non-applicable) regulations may induce negative effects (e.g. illegal killing) if non-compliance is simple and rewarding, or if the rationale behind these is not understood.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Formulate simple, flexible, and logical regulations which address biological principles, (inter)national policy, the socio-economic context, as well as reasonable stakeholder concerns and expectations;
- b) Impose only those restrictions on methods and means which can be justified from the standpoint of conservation and that will be easily understood by stakeholders;
- c) Have transparent regulatory processes that allow for the active participation of hunters and other stakeholders;
- d) Favour forensic law enforcement technologies that motivate minimal-effort compliance;
- e) Create regulations that can be adapted to local governance and enforcement needs.

Hunters and hunting tour operators:

- a) Assist in development and acceptance of effective regulations;
- b) Follow and encourage respect for all rules and regulations pertaining to hunting, conservation measures (including protected areas), and private property;
- c) Embrace self-regulation where possible;
- d) Assist in preventing and reporting poaching.

Principle 3

Ensure that harvest is ecologically sustainable

Rationale:

It is important to ensure that any harvest of wild populations is sustainable. The conservation status of species needs to be maintained at levels which are robust enough to sustain harvest. In some cases, limited and sustainable hunting of small populations may also serve to enhance conservation efforts on their behalf. Sustainable use requires regulation based upon the active use of reliable science and local knowledge.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Implement adaptive management strategies for sustainable harvest and maintaining populations at optimal levels relative to ecological and socio-economic carrying capacity and objectives;
- b) Ensure that management plans and/or measures have clear objectives that take into account the behaviour and ecology (including predation and seasonal effects) and the long-term conservation status of wild species. These plans and/or measures should also consider the possible effects of harvest strategies and other measures on ecosystems, species populations and society. Management plans and/or measures need provisions to ensure proper implementation, monitoring and updating.

- c) Seek to avoid and mitigate negative impacts on species and/or habitats where possible, and optimise management of ecosystem components to the benefit of biodiversity and society;
- d) Ensure that harvest by resident hunters and hunting tourists is addressed in management plans;
- e) Cooperate with hunters to develop and apply methods for simple and effective monitoring and management of populations, habitats and ecosystem services;
- f) Cooperate with neighbouring and flyway administrative authorities to properly manage and conserve transboundary populations where appropriate;
- g) Develop and implement standardised systems for collecting harvest data for use in adaptive management of populations at all appropriate scales;
- h) Recognise that natural and human-induced change is inevitable.

Hunters and hunting tour operators:

- a) Assist in population monitoring and research;
- b) Work to integrate their activities into the adaptive management of populations and habitats of target game species;
- c) Understand and recognise the biological role and impact of indigenous predators on game species and take this into account when participating in their conservation and management;
- d) Ensure that populations of target game species are kept at optimal levels relative to their habitats, species communities and any biodiversity restoration targets;
- e) Ensure that harvests are demographically sustainable and non-detrimental to ecosystem services.

Principle 4

Maintain wild populations of indigenous species
with adaptive gene pools

Rationale:

Native species and their habitats, as well as human livelihoods derived from them, can be adversely impacted by either the introduction of invasive alien species, or human selection for traits which may jeopardise the long-term viability of their populations.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Deter the release of new alien species that could become invasive and/or negatively effect native fauna or flora;
- b) Engage hunters in programmes to remove invasive alien species;
- c) Facilitate the reestablishment of originally indigenous species of fauna and flora in accordance with IUCN guidelines and have clear management plans that define their recovery;
- d) Incorporate genetic considerations into management plans;
- e) Seek transboundary cooperation to ensure genetic adaptability of populations;
- f) Monitor the genetic characteristics of species populations of special concern.

Hunters and hunting tour operators:

- a) Accept the return through natural recolonisation of wild species that were once indigenous to an area, taking into account the socio-economic context;
- b) Favour re-stocking from appropriate sources but only introduce or reintroduce species in accordance with IUCN guidelines;
- c) Avoid exclusive selection for specific phenotypic or behavioural traits of individuals which are not representative of the wild species population and can consequently be detrimental;
- d) Aid scientists and managers in monitoring genetic characteristics of populations.

Principle 5

Maintain environments that support healthy and robust populations of harvestable species

Rationale:

Wildlife species are vulnerable to pollutants and other human impacts on their populations and habitats. It is therefore in the interest of all who enjoy or benefit from wildlife to work together to reduce or mitigate the effects of environmental degradation. There is a need for the continued monitoring of the condition of harvested animals and their habitats.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Develop mutually agreed systems that motivate hunters to help conserve habitats and landscapes with their associated fauna;
- b) Develop and implement standardised systems for monitoring the health and condition of game animals, populations, habitats and ecosystems;
- c) Account for possible negative impacts of hunting on other ecosystem services and minimise and mitigate these.

Hunters and hunting tour operators:

- a) Actively contribute to the conservation and restoration of habitats at appropriate scales where feasible;
- b) Work to ensure that their activities do not adversely impact local environments and habitats;
- c) Use only native flora for habitat restoration.

Principle 6

Encourage use to provide
economic incentives for conservation

Rationale:

Stakeholders can be motivated to conserve wild species and their habitats by recognising their inherent economic value.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Understand that suppliers of harvest opportunities expect fair compensation for the services and opportunities they provide;
- b) Encourage harvest models that provide socio-economic benefits to local stakeholders and communities:
- c) Set official fees or taxes at reasonable levels so that these do not represent barriers to local participation;
- d) Provide local stakeholders and communities with incentives to uphold or improve the diversity of species and habitats.

Hunters:

- a) Are willing to make reasonable contributions for access and hunting opportunity, as well as the conservation and management of game and their habitats;
- b) Accept contributory and management structures that favour a fair and appropriate balance for access between resident and non-resident hunters.

Hunting tour operators:

- a) Acknowledge and accept that their activities should benefit local economies and stakeholders and thereby enhance conservation efforts;
- b) Accept that their access can be limited, and/or that they can be subjected to higher fees than local resident hunters.

Principle 7

Ensure that harvest is properly utilised and wastage avoided

Rationale:

Utilising a renewable resource to the fullest possible extent will maximise the economic incentives for local people as well as indicate respect for the environment and in some cases minimise bio-pollution.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Encourage the proper handling and processing of harvested wildlife;
- b) Ensure that game products comply with standards for health and hygiene before sale and/ or commercial consumption.

Hunters and hunting tour operators:

- a) Properly care for meat in order to prevent wastage and contamination;
- b) Fully utilise fur and hides where possible;
- c) Utilise harvested wildlife in other ways where possible and desirable;
- d) Observe rules of proper hygiene to ensure game meat quality and guard against detrimental health effects for consumers;
- e) Ensure that unutilised game products are made available to local inhabitants.

Principle 8

Empower local stakeholders
and hold them accountable

Rationale:

With good local knowledge and monitoring, management at local level is most rapidly adaptive. It also both empowers stakeholders and holds them immediately accountable for meeting requirements of resource beneficiaries and conservation. Local management must be in harmony with higher level goals.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Where appropriate, promote and facilitate decentralised management of species with healthy populations that are stable or increasing at local or regional levels;
- b) Facilitate the empowerment and accountability of local stakeholders, especially hunters, in this decentralised process;
- c) Promote models that ensure equitable sharing of benefits among user groups.

Hunters:

- a) Have knowledge regarding wildlife ecology and conservation practices;
- b) Recognise their role as resource stewards and actively participate in practical management and conservation measures;
- c) Interact with other interests and local authorities to find the best solutions.

Hunting tour operators:

- a) Recognise the cultures, traditions and needs of local people (including hunters);
- b) Work closely with local hunters, managers, and other stakeholders to ensure integration of activities and avoid conflicts.

Principle 9

Competence and responsibility are desirable among users of wild resources

Rationale:

For practices to be ecologically and socially sustainable, those using wild resources are advised to be responsible and proficient regarding methods, equipment and species they utilise.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Encourage and facilitate education and training programmes for hunters;
- b) Cooperate with organisations that coordinate hunters to engage with all participants, including recruitment from both sexes, all ages and backgrounds.

Hunters:

- a) Are proficient in the proper and safe handling and use of tools and implements that can legally be used for hunting;
- b) Have sufficient knowledge on the identification, habits and ecology of game species as well as of non-game species;
- c) Train regularly to maintain or improve proficiency;
- d) Know the laws and regulations governing hunting and the conservation of wildlife where they hunt;
- e) Teach new hunters the skills and knowledge they require to be competent and responsible.

Hunting tour operators:

- a) Provide their clients with the information and knowledge they need for a sustainable and responsible hunt.

Principle 10

Minimise avoidable suffering by animals

Rationale:

For practices to be socially sustainable, avoidable suffering needs to be minimised.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Adopt rules, regulations and incentives that promote methods and equipment that minimise avoidable suffering for animals;
- b) Communicate to hunters the need to treat game animals with respect;
- c) Recognise and promote best practices.

Hunters and hunting tour operators:

- a) Show respect for game animals and strive to reduce or eliminate avoidable suffering where possible;
- b) Learn about animal physiology and the most efficient way to kill game while inflicting minimal suffering;
- c) Promote measures which ensure proficiency in the use of hunting techniques and implements;
- d) Strive to efficiently track down and dispatch wounded game;
- e) Do not use capture methods that cause high levels of stress or pain, and/or are unselective or involve mass-capture;
- f) Take care not to disturb species in ways that can have significant and detrimental impacts.

Principle 11

Encourage cooperation between all stakeholders in management of harvested species, associated species and their habitats

Rationale:

All stakeholders, including authorities, state agencies, landowners, hunters, other resource users and conservation interests, can contribute positively to the proper management of biodiversity through cooperation. Such cooperation promotes a synergistic role for sustainable use in broad conservation efforts whereas conflicts waste human resources.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Create institutional structures that are inclusive of all stakeholder interests;
- b) Encourage public understanding of conservation, economic, and/or cultural benefits which can be derived from responsible and sustainable harvest;
- c) Seek opportunities and provide incentives for cooperation between different interests;
- d) Use all possible measures to avoid and resolve conflicts.

Hunters and hunting tour operators:

- a) Seek opportunities to benefit human and wildlife populations (including non-game species) and their habitats;
- b) Actively seek alliances with other local stakeholders.

Principle 12

Encourage acceptance by society of sustainable, consumptive use as a conservation tool

Rationale:

Given the broadly common aspiration of hunters and other conservationists for there to be healthy wildlife populations, and given the great threats much biodiversity in Europe faces through land use change and other anthropogenic factors, it is essential that all stakeholders work together to educate the public regarding the importance of wildlife conservation. In order to ensure acceptance by society, it is important that all users of wildlife communicate to the public the benefits sustainable use has for biodiversity conservation. It is also essential that all stakeholders to work together to educate the public regarding important conservation issues.

Guidelines:

Conservation will be enhanced if

Regulators and managers:

- a) Provide a framework which ensures the long-term acceptance by society of the conservation benefits derived from harvesting wild species;
- b) Ensure that populations of game species are kept at levels that are compatible with the interests of other socio-economic sectors (e.g. agriculture, forestry, etc.);
- c) Preserve legitimate cultural, historical and aesthetic values related to wildlife and hunting.

Hunters and hunting tour operators:

- a) Are sensitive and respectful to local interests and cultures;
- b) Strive to be ambassadors for hunting through proper behaviour and practices;
- c) Respect private property and local restrictions, including conservation measures;
- d) Educate and inform other interests about the benefits of sustainable hunting and conservation;
- e) Understand the need for local involvement in all hunting activity, including hunting tourism operations.

Mission of FACE

The **Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU** (FACE) is an international non-profit making, non-governmental organisation (NGO) that acts in the interests of over 7,000,000 European hunters.

FACE was founded in 1977 and has its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

It represents its 36 *Full Members* that are national hunters' associations within the Member States of the *European Union* and other *Council of Europe* countries, as well as its 5 *Associate Members*.

FACE's **main objectives** are:

to PROMOTE hunting, in accordance with the principle of wise and sustainable use of natural resources, as a tool for rural development, for conservation of wildlife and biodiversity and for protection, improvement and restoration of wildlife habitats.

to DEFEND and REPRESENT the collective interests of its Members at the level of the European and international institutions for all issues related to hunting, such as wildlife management, conservation, firearms, animal health, game meat hygiene, ethics, etc.

www.face.eu



FACE

*Federation of Associations for
Hunting and Conservation of the EU*

Rue F. Pelletier 82

B - 1030 Brussels

Tel +32 2 732 69 00

Fax +32 2 732 70 72

info@face.eu

www.face.eu

The full text of this *Charter* can be found
on the *Council of Europe* website www.coe.int/biodiversity