



PRESS RELEASE

FACE: EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR HUNTING & CONSERVATION

CROATIA: EU ACCESSION FIRST CROATIAN EU CITIZENS TO VISIT THE HEART OF THE EU? HUNTERS WHY? BECAUSE THEY CARE FOR THEIR NATURE & WILDLIFE

As one of the first Croatian civil society groups to visit the heart of the EU, Croatian hunters celebrate and discuss Croatia's excellent game management in the first few days of the 28th Member State's Accession.

3 July 2013, Strasbourg - Representatives of the Croatian Hunting Federation and the Croatian Government gathered with MEPs under the auspices of the European Parliament's Sustainable Hunting Intergroup to discuss the integration of Croatia's wildlife, nature and hunters within the EU.

A sizeable delegation of the Croatian Hunting Federation whose members include 60,000 new EU citizens was amongst the first civil society groups from Croatia to actively connect with the EU at the European Parliament following the country's Accession on 1 July. The **29 Croatian hunters and conservationists** travelled 15 hours to Strasbourg by bus for this unique meeting, to engage with their new points of contact in the EU, asking questions about the Union's processes and Nature Directives as well as the work of the Sustainable Hunting Intergroup itself.

7 Croatian MEPs joined the meeting; where they expressed their support for the hunters' work in wildlife conservation.

The representatives of the Croatian hunters and the Croatian Government - **Duro Dečak**, President of the Croatian Hunting Federation and **Nikica Šprem**, Assistant to the Croatian Minister for Forestry, Hunting and the Wood Industry - gave excellent outlines of the country's wildlife and its game management practices. Mr. Šprem provided insights into **Croatia's**



successful large carnivore management, highlighting their growing Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) populations encompassing some 1000 individuals as well as their stable population of Wolf (*Canis lupus*).

FACE's Secretary General Angus Middleton and Senior Policy Advisor Yves Lecocq provided an overview of the impacts the Accession can have on Croatian hunting, specifically in terms of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Both speakers detailed FACE's expertise in European conservation policy and implementation, as well as its sustained dialogue with the European Commission and other EU Institutions, citing as a recent example FACE's involvement in the Commission's Large Carnivores Expert Group*. The growing populations of large carnivores in Croatia will require appropriate management options so as to keep human-wildlife conflicts in check and enable sustainable co-existence.

András Demeter, Advisor in the European Commission's DG Environment, an expert in nature and biodiversity issues and one of the officials for the EU Action on Large Carnivores gave the following message: *"We welcome Croatia in the EU as a hotspot for biodiversity in Europe, and we look forward to its contribution to the Natura 2000 network which is commensurate with this richness. We call on all stakeholders including the hunting community to participate in preserving this outstanding natural heritage."* As the Commission has repeatedly stated, hunting is an important management tool for Natura 2000.

President of the Sustainable Hunting Intergroup MEP Véronique Mathieu Houillon chaired the session and closed the discussion by highlighting the effectiveness of the Croatian conservation system, and assessing that the EU can learn much from Croatia about successful game species management, especially large carnivores. Preserving the existing successful management of large carnivores in Croatia encompasses one of the key challenges ahead in Croatia's new EU context.

FACE President Gilbert de Turckheim outlined the great benefits of this latest Accession: *"Croatia brings to Europe a landscape rich in natural and cultural diversity. Game is generally abundant, thanks to good management and long-standing hunting traditions which are culturally rich and ecologically sound."*

As the bridge builder between EU citizens who stand for sustainable hunting and conservation and the European legislative bodies, FACE will continue to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and understanding between the EU and Croatian hunters, ensuring that hunting remains good for Croatian hunters, nature and society in this new era.

*****ENDS*****



NOTES TO EDITORS

LINKS:

www.face.eu

<http://www.hls.com.hr/>

* <http://www.face.eu/about-us/resources/news/large-carnivores-action-update>

SPEAKERS:

Véronique Mathieu Houillon, *MEP*

Đuro Dečak, *President*, Croatian Hunting Federation

Nikica Šprem, *PhD, Assistant to the Minister*, Croatian Ministry for Forestry, Hunting and the Wood Industry

Gilbert de Turckheim, *President*, FACE - Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU

CROATIAN MEPS AT THE MEETING:

Zdravka Bušić

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/fr/119438/ZDRAVKA_BUSIC_home.html

Ivana Maletić

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/fr/119436/IVANA_MALETIC_home.html

Sandra Petrović Jakovina

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/119441/SANDRA_PETROVIC+JAKOVINA_home.html

Andrej Plenković

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/112755/ANDREJ_PLENKOVIC_home.html

Davor Ivo Stier

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/119435/DAVOR+IVO_STIER_home.html

Dubravka Šuica

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/119434/DUBRAVKA_SUICA_home.html

Nikola Vuljanić

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/112760/NIKOLA_VULJANIC_home.html

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ORGANISERS



The **European Parliament's Intergroup "Sustainable hunting, biodiversity, countryside activities and forestry"** – the Sustainable Hunting Intergroup is a unique political platform. The President is MEP Véronique Mathieu Houillon. An official body of the European Parliament, it is an expert group that brings together MEPs from different political groups to discuss a common topic. The Sustainable Hunting Intergroup was created in 1985 and is one of the oldest and biggest (most number of MEPs) in the Parliament. Since then, it has consistently attracted interest and impact with its debates and events.



FACE (Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU) represents and promotes the interests of over 7 million European hunters in accordance with sustainable use of wildlife. It is an international non-profit making NGO whose Members are the national hunters' associations within 36 states of the Council of Europe, including the EU28, as well as 3 Associate Members. www.face.eu

HUNTING AND WILDLIFE IN CROATIA



Hrvatski Lovački Savez (HLS), the Croatian Hunting Federation:

- Represents the Croatian Hunting Associations and their 60.000 hunters.
- The HLS promotes nature protection, conservation, good hunting practice and Croatian hunting in the country as well as abroad. HLS has been a Member of FACE for 14 years, gaining sustained support through FACE's knowledge and guidance.
- Founded in 1925, HLS has been committed to Croatian hunters and their involvement in nature and wildlife for almost 90 years; and the national hunting publication *Lovački vjesnik* has been published without interruption since 1892.
- The HLS is also in charge of the Hunting Museum in Zagreb, established in 1955 and holding an impressive library of hunting books spanning a period of more than a century.
- www.hls.com.hr
- Croatia is home to an impressive diversity of wildlife and adds a valuable contribution to Europe's biodiversity.
- Amongst the species which make wildlife in Croatia so special are Balkan chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra balcanica*), Wildcat (*Felis silvestris*), Pine marten (*Martes martes*), Beaver (*Castor fiber*), Golden jackal (*Canis aureus*), Polecat (*Mustela putorius*), Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), Wolf (*Canis lupus*) and Lynx (*Lynx lynx*).

