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EUROPEAN HUNTERS HOLD CONFERENCE ON

ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN EUROPE

**High-level speakers from EU institutions, environmental, hunting and other biodiversity stakeholders from 25 countries discussed and presented actions to conserve and restore biodiversity at the 2013 FACE Hunting for Solutions Conference in Brussels on 13 September. Collaboration, commitment and active involvement of all stakeholders from international through to local level are key to achieving the goals of the EU Biodiversity 2020 Strategy. Asking for change is important but the positive actions of millions of citizens should also be recognised and enhanced.**

**15 September 2013, Brussels** – FACE Members from 25 countries and invited guests attended the FACE Biodiversity 2020: Hunting for Solutions Conference and discussed their commitment to biodiversity with decision makers from European institutions and representatives from international organisations, NGOs and science.

The FACE Hunting for Solutions Conference addressed the need for best possible action on the ground in order to achieve biodiversity targets as laid down in Biodiversity Strategies and Biodiversity Action Plans (BSAPs) from international to local level and showcased examples from the hunting community and other conservationists. Particular attention was given on how to inspire and empower people to collaborate and coordinate actions for long term cost-effective biodiversity conservation. With their personal commitment and willingness to invest private resources, local stakeholders, not least Europe's seven million hunters, are instrumental in generating biodiversity knowledge through monitoring of species and their habitats, and in executing biodiversity restoration and conservation activities.

In her keynote address Pia Bucella, Director of Directorate Natural Capital at the European Commission’s DG Environment emphasised the need to work hand-in-hand to achieve the goals of the EU Biodiversity 2020 Strategy for which the active involvement of all stakeholders is essential but in particular the involvement of those “directly intervening, interested and working with nature” – the involvement of the hunting community. Bucella held the same to be true for the implementation of the [EU Green Infrastructure policy](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/) and of EU nature legislation, notably the Birds and Habitats Directives and the protected areas the latter establishes, the Natura 2000 network. Although this implementation is primarily the task of Governments and public administration, Bucella insisted that its objectives cannot be achieved unless stakeholders such as hunters contribute and commit themselves.

Bucella put a special focus on tackling Invasive Alien Species (the Commission has just recently published a [proposal for a regulation](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/index_en.htm)) - an endeavor to which hunters can make and have made valuable contributions. Pia Bucella acknowledged FACE’s positive engagement with the Commission and active participation in several Working Groups of the Commission DG Environment as essential element for success in working towards ensuring that the Biodiversity Strategy is implemented. “We pursue a common goal: maintaining our biodiversity and protecting our nature. Although we are not always in agreement on all issues”, she explained, “the hunting community plays a vital role”.

The first two sessions of the day showcased opportunities for meaningful partnerships between hunters and other conservationists and landusers and highlighted some of the diverse conservation actions being undertaken by hunters every day, from international through to local levels.

Session 1 focused on international engagement**.** Thierry de l’Escaille of the *European Landowners’ Organization (ELO),* Tamás Marghescu, of the *International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)* and Adrian Lombard of the *International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF)* outlined the necessity of international engagement when it comes to wildlife conservation and illustrated how efficiently organised international engagement establishes sustainable use of resources for the benefit of species and ecosystems across borders – be it through international cooperation, EU-wide labels, awareness rising or knowledge transfer.

Session 2 displayed local commitment undertaken by hunters all over Europe through biodiversity projects including the Agriculture-Hunting-Wildlife Partnership [Agrifaune](http://www.chasseurdefrance.com) in France, [WILD](http://www.jagdverband.de/wild) - The German Wildlife Information System, the [Gameguard Body of Hunting Organisations](http://www.ksellas.gr) in Greece, UK’s [GreenShoots](http://www.basc.org.uk/en/conservation/green-shoots) and the French hunters’ [Wildlife Habitats Foundation](http://www.fondationdeschasseurs.com/cms) (WHF). All these projects draw from voluntary engagement and commitment of hunters on the ground to halt biodiversity loss and underline hunter’s dedication to conservation and restoration.

The final session saw a diverse panel of experts discuss ideas with the audience on how to inspire and empower people to collaborate and coordinate actions for long term cost-effective biodiversity conservation. The discussion was chaired by Eric Peters, Bureau of European Policy Advisers for the European Commission President and the panel was compiled of Alberto Arroyo Schnell, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Robert Kenward, IUCN Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi), Ivone Pereira Martins, European Environment Agency (EEA) and Friedhelm Schmider, European Crop Protection Association (ECPA). The main conclusions of the discussion were that it is not too late to halt the loss of biodiversity but actions are needed soon and have to be well coordinated and communicated from the EU and national levels to the local level as well as between different stakeholders on the ground. As Mr Schnell concluded "The Nature Directives are a very positive way forward for the protection of biodiversity in the EU, and all stakeholders -including hunters, farmers and other NGOs can and should play their role to ensure their adequate implementation". Robert Kenward highlighted that the thinking within the concept of Payment for Ecosystem Services tends to be top down, using public money. With regards to the tremendous private spending by hunters Kenward asked “could we not be using more of the public money to leverage private spending on ecosystem services?” Eric Peters underlined that biodiversity is not an isolated issue but affects all parts of society and it is impossible to put an adequate financial value on our nature. Thus, assistance and support for the local projects are very important since they have the commitment, experience and knowledge to take effective action in halting the loss of biodiversity.

Nils Wahl, Advocate General at the Court of Justice of the European Union, closed the day with his summary. Wahl emphasised the on-going deterioration of our Biodiversity and the need to take action on local level to counter the small local factors contributing to the big picture of biodiversity deterioration. Wahl called upon all groups to engage with each other and the groups on local level. Hunters carrying out conservation actions such as species monitoring and habitat management every day should be acknowledged as important and equal partners in the nature conservation sector. Furthermore, Wahl highlighted that hunters need to reflect the work they are doing and can do for biodiversity and be aware of the immense policy work carried out on different levels, engage with this policy work, coordinate their conservation actions and communicate their role in halting the loss of biodiversity to policy makers. Only if all stakeholders take on their responsibility and cooperate do we stand a chance to conserve and restore biodiversity.

Hunters make up a significant part of volunteers on the ground and the Hunting for Solutions Conferenceoffered a great platform to display these engagements and to learn from each other about successful conservation projects. Overall the conference was underpinned by FACE’s and its members commitment to take action for nature through the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto and its ethos of collaboration for conservation.

FACE GENERAL ASSEMBLY - 14 SEPTEMBER

The representatives of the European hunting world from **23 countries** gathered in Brussels for the annual FACE General Assembly on Saturday 14 September. The intensive meeting covered a broad range of topics impacting on hunting in Europe, with FACE Members discussing its activities in FACE’s 12 thematic work areas, each crucial to hunters - ranging from Member Services, to Animal Welfare & Health, Firearms & Ammunition and of course Nature & Wildlife Conservation. The wide variety of issues discussed is representative of the importance and breadth of the EU’s influence and the hard work of a small but dedicated team.

FACE as probably the largest representative body for hunters in the world and a major civil society organisation in the EU engages technically and politically with a wide range of stakeholders, in the collective interest of its Members and the seven million Europeans they represent. The success of both the Biodiversity Conference and the General Assembly show that despite many challenges we achieve many positive outcomes, which benefit hunters, European citizens and our common natural heritage.

**Resignation of FACE Secretary General**

FACE Secretary Angus Middleton will leave FACE by the end of October 2013 in order to take up the position of Director of the Namibian Nature Foundation. FACE is currently in the [process of recruiting a new Secretary General](http://www.face.eu/about-us/who-is-face/jobs-internships). The proceedings during the transition time were laid out to the Members at the General Assembly meeting and Angus took the opportunity to thank the Members for their support and commitment during his 5 years working with FACE. He reflected that there is much for hunters to be proud of and that European hunters should celebrate their solidarity within such an incredible richness of diversity. Over all he urged FACE Members to focus their common passion towards ensuring that hunting in Europe remains good, good for people, good for wildlife and good for nature.

**\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\***

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

LINKS:

**Photos Biodiversity 2020 Hunting for Solutions Conference:**

[www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.566573713379157.1073741830.174836995886166&type=1](http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.566573713379157.1073741830.174836995886166&type=1)

**Photos FACE General Assembly, Saturday 14 September:**

[www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.567216863314842.1073741831.174836995886166&type=1](http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.567216863314842.1073741831.174836995886166&type=1)

**Speaker and project summaries:**

[www.face.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/face\_biodiversity\_conference\_speaker\_and\_project\_summaries\_en\_0.pdf](http://www.face.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/face_biodiversity_conference_speaker_and_project_summaries_en_0.pdf)

**Presentations:**

[www.face.eu/about-us/resources/news/european-hunters-hold-conference-on-action-for-biodiversity-conservation-in](http://www.face.eu/about-us/resources/news/european-hunters-hold-conference-on-action-for-biodiversity-conservation-in)

**FACE Annual Report 2013:**

[www.face.eu/about-us/resources/news/annual-report-2013](http://www.face.eu/about-us/resources/news/annual-report-2013)

**For more information, photos, questions or quotes** please contact Yasmin [yasmin.hammerschmidt@face.eu](mailto:yasmin.hammerschmidt@face.eu) or +32 (0) 2 732 6900.

**Conference highlights and speakers**

**Welcome & Introduction**

Véronique Mathieu Houillon, *MEP*

**Keynote Address**

Pia Bucella, *Directorate Natural Capital, DG Environment, European Commission*

**Panel on international engagement in the fight for Biodiversity**

Thierry de l’Escaille, *European Landowners Organization (ELO)*

Tamás Marghescu, *International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)*

Adrian Lombard, *International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey*

**Project presentations on local commitment for biodiversity by hunters**

Chair: Daniel Hoffmann, *Game Conservancy Germany e.V.*

Constance Bouquet, *Fédération Nationale des Chasseurs (FNC)*

Johanna Arnold, *German Hunters' Association (DJV)*

Nikolaos Papadodimas, *Hellenic Hunters Confederation*

Ian Danby, *British Association for Shooting & Conservation (BASC)*

Alain Bidault & Paul Bourrieau, *Wildlife Habitats Foundation (WHF)*

**Panel discussion on future action**

Chair: Eric Peters, *Bureau of European Policy Advisers for the European Commission President*

Alberto Arroyo Schnell, *World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)*

Robert Kenward, *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi)*

Ivone Pereira Martins, *European Environment Agency (EEA)*

Friedhelm Schmider, *European Crop Protection Association (ECPA)*

**Outlook Summary & Close** Nils Wahl, *Court of Justice of the European Union*

 **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](http://www.face.eu)

**The FACE Biodiversity Manifesto**

FACE and its Members developed The Biodiversity Manifesto. It reflects the rigorous and active commitment made by FACE, its Members and the 7 million European hunters they represent to ensure that hunting is sustainable and contributes positively to biodiversity conservation.

The FACE Biodiversity Manifesto aligns itself with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020, directly addressing 4 of its 6 targets feeding into the 2020 headline target. The 34 action points address a host of EU biodiversity priority areas and promote cooperation with other sectors and stakeholders such as farmers, land and forest owners, conservation NGOs and public authorities. The Biodiversity Manifesto contributes to demonstrating the role and contribution of hunting for biodiversity to policy makers and the public, as well as coordinating and enhancing efforts carried out by European hunters in line with international conservation priorities.