



PRESS RELEASE

FACE: EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR HUNTING & CONSERVATION

Hunting and EU Nature Directives are not in contradiction

Members of the European Parliament Intergroup on Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside agreed that more flexibility and a better consideration of cultural and regional requirements are needed for a better implementation and acceptance of the Birds and Habitats Directives while contributing to achieving the environmental goals of the EU.

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 20 October 2015 – Today the **Intergroup Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside** chaired by MEP Karl-Heinz FLORENZ held a conference on the “Fitness Check of EU Nature Legislation - For a better implementation?” hearing several points of views on the current *Fitness Check* carried out by the European Commission seeking to find whether EU nature legislation (Birds and Habitats Directives) still fulfil their objective.

Amongst the speakers were MEP Annie SCHREIJER-PIERIK, Philippe PLISSON, member of the French Parliament, Nicola NOTARO Head of the Nature Unit of DG Environment and Wouter LANGHOUT from BirdLife International.

MEP Karl-Heinz **FLORENZ**, President of the Intergroup stated that *"The preservation of biodiversity concerns and affects all of us. Many Europeans consider this a very important issue and expect us to succeed. Personally, I believe the implementation of EU nature legislation on national and regional level should become better, more pragmatic and more flexible. We have to involve local stakeholders much more. Only by doing that we will be able to increase acceptance at regional level and stop the loss of biodiversity. It is for instance problematic that the construction of a simple garage can take many years and may require environmental impact assessments. I am therefore advocating for more flexibility at regional level and I believe the EU nature laws allow for such flexibility."*

MEP Annie **SCHREIJER-PIERIK** stated that *"The fitness check of the EU Nature Legislation is of utmost importance to the EU in general and to citizens of the Netherlands as a Member State in particular. Current implementation in policy fields such as hunting, agriculture and water management directly contradicts our EU goals in other policy fields. Sometimes it even causes contradiction between goals of EU natural conservation policy itself! Therefore time has come to enable a more flexible implementation of EU nature legislation at the level of Member States and local authorities."*

Philippe PLISSON, a member of the French Parliament and rapporteur on the greylag goose report in France commented that *"We live in a world of conflicts claiming human lives. In this context, I find it regrettable that so much energy has been devoted for so many years to issues such as the application of the Birds Directive that a little common sense, reason, and mutual consideration could have easily settled."*

The exceptional turnout for the public consultation on the fitness of the EU nature legislation proved the interest of EU citizens towards our nature. The online public consultation received over half a million submissions. 23,928 (4%) of those belong to hunters. What needs to be remarked is that on the second part of the questionnaire 16,815 (21%) declared to be hunters, 19% 'nature', 17% 'forestry', 15% 'agriculture' and 5% 'science', 'other' 2%.

In its submission to the European Commission FACE has declared that the Nature Directives are appropriate instruments to deliver on Biodiversity targets, but necessitate greater consideration of cultural and regional requirements.

The State of Nature Report mentions "agriculture" and "human induced modifications of natural conditions" as the major pressure and threats to our terrestrial ecosystems clearly showing where improvements can be achieved. The survival of our wildlife depend primarily on the quality of our habitats. Hunters are in a privileged position to manage habitats for the benefit of the whole society and hunters have a key role in contributing to the EU Biodiversity Strategy

The Natura 2000 Network, offering vital protection for Europe's most endangered species and habitats, is one of the most evident achievements of EU nature policy. It benefits from the fact that it is based on the principle of conservation and sustainable use, ensuring lasting coexistence with human activities and biodiversity conservation, as such it is not in contradiction with hunting.

The Birds Directive fully recognises the legitimacy of hunting of wild birds as a form of sustainable use. Despite this recognition, hunting is too often framed as being negative to environmental objectives, even though evidence suggests that any impacts are of low importance in comparison to issues such as habitat loss. Conversely, if permitted, hunting can provide significant net benefits.

The Secretary General of FACE (the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU), Filippo **SEGATO**, remarked that the State of Nature Report published by the European Commission raised the alarm bell on habitats. "Only one in six habitats are doing well. The remaining 77% of our habitats are in unfavourable conservation status. More needs to be done to focus conservation strategies on habitat conservation and restoration. It is therefore puzzling that conservation actions are predominantly directed at species, with a focus on iconic species, while resources should be devoted to increasing the productivity of our habitats with a cascade effect on all species."

Hunting is an activity that provides significant social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits across the European Union. It is limited to certain species, listed in the Directive, which also provides a series of ecological principles and legal requirements relating to this activity, to be implemented through Member States' legislation.

FACE argues that if the Nature Directives continue to be understood as a means to restrict the principle of sustainable use of natural resources, the incentives to conserve nature could disappear, negatively impacting rural economies, people's acceptance of these rules and eventually the achievement of the environmental goals of the EU.

Background

The Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside Intergroup was created in 1985 and is one of the oldest and most active in the Parliament. Since 1985, The Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE) provides the Secretariat for the Intergroup. The Intergroup works on issues for which the European Parliament is competent in the fields of biodiversity, hunting, angling, wildlife management, forestry, agriculture and nature conservation, taking into account the public and wild animal health and welfare. The Intergroup also addresses cross-cutting issues which have an impact on socio-economic activities in rural areas.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

FACE is the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation. Established in 1977, FACE **represents the interests of Europe's 7 million** hunters as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organisation. FACE is made up of national hunters' associations from 35 European countries including the EU-28. FACE is supported by 7 associate members and is based in Brussels.

FACE is the largest democratically representative body for hunters in the world, with elections for its statutory bodies taking place every three years. Each country represented within FACE receives one vote.

FACE upholds the principle of sustainable use, has been a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1987, and more recently of Wetlands International. FACE works with its partners on a range of hunting-related issues, from international conservation agreements to local implementations with the aim of sustaining hunting across Europe.

More on www.face.eu.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS, QUOTES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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