**THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**’**S WATERS**

MEPS, THE ELO AND FACE GOT TOGETHER WITH THE COMMISSION AND FIELD EXPERTS TO DISCUSS HOW TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF WATER IN THE EU AND HOW TO INVOLVE LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IN WATER PROTECTION, IMPROVING QUALITY, ACCESS AND USE.

**Brussels, 11 April 2012 -** The interactive seminar « The Future of Europe’s Waters » in the European Parliament in Brussels brought together MEPs with representatives of European hunters through FACE, landowners through the ELO and the European Commission. Under the patronage of **Véronique MATHIEU**, MEP and President of the Parliamentary Intergroup for Sustainable hunting, biodiversity, countryside activities & forestry, the seminar was chaired by **Giancarlo SCOTTÀ**, MEP.

The roundtable included **Martin SCHEELE**, Head of Unit at Environment, Genetic Resources and European Innovation Partnership of Directorate General Agriculture and Rural Development European Commission; **Nicola NOTARO**, Deputy Head of Unit for the Protection of Water Resources at the Directorate General Environment, European Commission; **Jane MADGWICK**, CEO of Wetlands International and **Antoine POUPART**, Assistant Manager of Sustainable Agriculture and Development for Invivo Group on behalf of the French Farmers’ Association SAF.

In 2012 the European Commission has turned the spotlight on water issues. By the end of this year, the European Commission will release the **Blueprint to Safeguard Europe’s Waters[[1]](#footnote-1),** which will aim to respond to current and emerging challenges, including water pollution, water abstraction for agriculture and energy production, land use and the impacts of climate change. The Blueprint’s overall objective is to improve EU water policy to ensure good quality water, in adequate quantities, for all authorised users

Special attention will be given in the forthcoming Blueprint to land management. The document will look into the analysis of measures which could be widely implemented in the EU and details the policy instruments that can accelerate their implementation. A particular focus will be given to water-related **green infrastructure** measures including reforestation, floodplain restoration, soil management and sustainable urban drainage systems. Such measures will require an integrated approach with coherent incentives, which Wetlands International not only advocate but are actively demonstrating together with their partners. The Commission will examine if and how these measures could be implemented in the **Common Agricultural Policy** and will develop a methodological framework for the wider application of payments for **ecosystem services**.

The participants agreed that rural stakeholders can contribute to sustainable water management. However, if they are to contribute successfully, they must be consulted as part of the process of the Commission’s work to safeguard water to ensure that the policy instruments developed are applicable. The participation of the private sector is crucial in responding to the challenges of water sustainability and as water is an essential part of rural enterprise.

Mr Scotta explained that “*In a world where we will be 9 billion in 2015, water as a vital resource will become the main challenge for years to come. At a time where the EU is pushing for resources efficiency, we should seek solutions at the local level engaging private actors that are land managers, hunters and anglers.”*

Nicola NOTARO, Deputy Head of Unit for the Protection of Water Resources at the Directorate General Environment, European Commission commented: “*At a moment in which the EU Member States and European Parliament are discussing the EU Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2014-2021, it is essential to try and integrate water policy objectives into CAP and Cohesion and Structural Funds. This will facilitate the unlocking of water protection measures which all too often are not taken, in spite of their overall economic benefits.”*”

Martin SCHEELE, Head of Unit at Environment, Genetic Resources and European Innovation Partnership of Directorate General Agriculture and Rural Development European Commission said that: “*For the forthcoming CAP reform, we pursue an approach that is both more coherent and balanced. Not only the second pillar but also the first pillar should contribute to preserve water resources. And we are particularly attentive to the need for investment in knowledge transfer and innovation which must be improved, if we want to preserve water resources successfully.*”

The Seminar was particularly relevant as the public Consultation on Policy Options for the Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's waters had been launched recently by the Commission and will be open until 7 June 2012.

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

**NOTES FOR EDITORS**

**Organisers:**

**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 38 states of the Council of Europe, including the EU27, as well as 4 Associate Members. [www.face.eu](http://www.face.eu)

**ELO (European Landowners Organization)** is a unique federation of 67 national associations across the EU27 which represents the interests of landowners, rural managers and entrepreneurs at the European level. ELO defends and promotes a dynamic, prosperous and sustainable countryside based on high environmental standards, economic viability and social fabric. [www.elo.org](http://www.elo.org)

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS, QUOTES, PHOTOS, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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1. <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/blueprint/index_en.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)