

“THE FUTURE OF THE NATURE DIRECTIVES: WHERE ARE WE GOING?”

European Parliament, 7 March 2017, Brussels

Brussels, 8 March 2017 – On Tuesday 7th March, **FACE**, the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU, organised the conference “The future of the Nature Directives: Where are we going?”, hosted by MEP Karl-Heinz Florenz and MEP Renata Briano at the European Parliament in Brussels.

Recently, the European Commission (EC) published the Fitness Check evaluation of the EU Nature Directives and concluded that they remain highly relevant and fit for purpose. However, in order to fully achieve the objectives of the Nature Directives, the EC has pointed to the need for better implementation in close partnership with local authorities and stakeholders in the Member States to deliver practical results on the ground for nature, people and the economy in the EU.

MEP Karl-Heinz Florenz, President of the Intergroup “Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside”, commented that *“the Action Plan of the Commission for a better implementation of the EU Nature Directives is highly appreciated. What is important in my opinion is that local stakeholders, such as land owners, farmers and hunters, should be better involved in the implementation on the ground. Sometimes also more pragmatic and flexible solutions are needed. In this way, we will be able to increase acceptance at a regional level and stop the loss of biodiversity”*.

MEP Renata Briano, promoter of the event and Vice-President of the Intergroup underlined: *“The European Commission should listen to hunters and those people living in the countryside: the loss of biodiversity is one of the main environmental challenges for the EU. It is positive that the Nature Directives remain fit for purpose; we will continue the work for a better implementation, without ignoring the problems reported from the rural areas and by EU Institutions such as the European Court of Auditors. As Members of the European Parliament, we must participate in the debate and let the citizens’ voice be heard”*.

The conference focused on the outcome of the Fitness Check of the EU Nature Directives and had a specific emphasis on how to improve implementation in the future.

Nicola Notaro, Head of Unit of “Nature protection” of DG Environment (European Commission) described the four main components of the EU Action Plan for the Nature Directives and stated: *“Commission, Member States, regional and local authorities and stakeholders should fully engage in delivering the actions for improving implementation of the Nature Directives”*. With regard to hunting and smarter implementation, Dr. Notaro referred to a need to review the Key Concepts document under Article 7(4) of the Birds Directive. **Colm Friel**, Principal Manager Chamber I of the European Court of Auditors, explained the main conclusions and recommendations from the report made by this Institution.

Erica von Essen, Research Scientist from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, warned: *“Growing partitioning of European wildlife will need to be counteracted by new strategies towards a ‘commoning’ of wildlife: seeing nature as a shared heritage”*.

Volker Böhning, Vice-President of the German Hunters' Federation, and **Gian Luca Dall'Olio**, President of the Italian Hunting Federation, provided different perspectives from a national point of view, stressing the importance of the hunters' role in nature conservation and management. They both called for greater recognition of hunters with regard to the provision of scientific data, the need for innovative approaches to species conservation and management towards the better implementation the EU Nature Directives.

Jacques Trouvilliez, Executive Secretary of the African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), presented the European Goose Management Platform (EGMP). He concluded: *"Adaptive harvest management is a powerful tool to secure the favourable conservation status of huntable species but the involvement of all stakeholders is essential for the success of the process. I am confident the EGMP should demonstrate all the benefits of the adaptive management approach"*.

Ludwig Willnegger, FACE Secretary General, stated that: *"This conference provided yet another opportunity to call on the European Commission and EU Member States to support innovative measures under the Birds Directive, including adaptive harvest management at the flyway scale, to promote better use of derogations as a means to manage the huge problems caused by overabundant goose populations that have an extremely negative impact on agriculture or on the air safety, for example"*. He also outlined the obvious need to apply the correct application of Article 19 of the Habitats Directive to update the annexes in accordance with technical and scientific progress.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

FACE is the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU. 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 36 European countries including the EU-28. FACE is supported by 7 associate members and is based in Brussels.

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

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS, QUOTES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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