

Intergroup  
SUSTAINABLE HUNTING, BIODIVERSITY & COUNTRYSIDE ACTIVITIES  
Intergroupe  
CHASSE DURABLE, BIODIVERSITÉ & ACTIVITÉS RURALES  
Intergruppe  
NACHHALTIGE JAGD, BIODIVERSITÄT & LÄNDLICHE AKTIVITÄTEN  
Intergruppo  
CACCIA SOSTENIBILE, BIODIVERSITÀ & ATTIVITÀ RURALI  
Intergupo  
CAZA SOSTENIBLE, BIODIVERSIDAD & ACTIVIDADES RURALES

**Meeting 12.03.2008**  
**Hunting in Mediterranean countries**

**MEPs**

BRAGHETTO, Iles (EPP-ED, It)	GOUDIN, Hélène (IND/DEM, Sw)
DÍAZ de MERA, Agustín (EPP-ED, Es)	HELMER, Roger (NI, UK)
de GRANDES, Luis (EPP-ED)	MATHIEU, Veronique (EPP-ED, Fr)
EBNER, Michl (EPP-ED, It)	STURDY, Robert (EPP-ED, UK)

*Apologised*

LULLING, Astrid (EPP-ED, Lux)

**Experts / Observers**

BANA, Giovanni (FACE-It)	PAPADODIMAS, Nikolaos (FACE-Gr)
ESCLOPÉ, Alain (FNC)	TUCHSCHERER, Sarah (Journalist)
MARRACCI, Massimo (AECT)	de TURCKHEIM, Gilbert (FACE President)

**Assistants**

BROWES, Georgina (R. HELMER)	JURISIC, Boba (M. EBNER)
CHASTELOUX, Vincent (V. MATHIEU)	ZAHLEN, Georges

**Secretariat**

MARGHELIS, Alexandre (ELO)  
von STEYNITZ, Max (FACE)

## 1. Introduction and opening remarks

M. EBNER, *President Co-ordinator* of the Intergroup, opens the meeting and welcomes all present and represented MEPs, as well as invited speakers, experts and guests. He apologises for the organisational time problems caused by an extraordinary plenary session. After his opening remarks *Co-President* L. de GRANDES takes over the chair. He welcomes the speakers and gives them the floor.

## 2. Hunting in Mediterranean countries

In his presentation, N. PAPADODIMAS, President of the *Hellenic Hunters' Confederation* and Vice-President of FACE, underlined the growing attention attributed to environmental problems in the EU. Even so, it is of great importance that politics is not capitulating to a kind of "eco" terrorism, whose activities lead to many problems, particularly in the countryside, rather than improving the environmental situation, as for instance halting the loss of biodiversity. In the Mediterranean countries, where hunting comes from a long-standing tradition and provides many socio-economic benefits, the positive contributions of the hunters' community to the conservation of biodiversity and habitats are very noticeable. It is not only in Greece that the main interest of hunters lays in the conservation of nature and diversity of species. Today, fewer differences and more intermingling of hunting traditions should lead to an increase in unity and a common will among the European hunters for sustainable hunting and wise nature management. Therefore, growing protest against bird hunting in Mediterranean countries is quite baseless. As bird-hunting is one of the most practised types of hunting in the southern European countries, the 1979 EU "Birds" Directive with its sometimes unclear regulatory provisions, resulted in unjustified restrictions. He advocated therefore the prompt recognition of the "Guidance document on hunting" under the "Birds" Directive in order to achieve clarification of decisive questions on sustainable hunting of birds.

M. MARRACCI, Secretary-General of the *European Association for Traditional Hunting* (AECT) who supported the views of the previous speaker, explained that southern Europe does not only offer valuable historical and cultural sites - like Rome and Athens - but also an important rural culture, which includes hunting. As hunting in Southern Europe has always been one of the additional questions to cultural development, a "migratory birds" working group was set up in 1993 under participation of the Mediterranean countries (IT, FR, PT, ES, GR, MT). Its creation led to the establishment of a real "Mediterranean" association (the AECT), which promotes hunting and rural culture in Southern Europe, and cooperates closely with FACE. In an urbanised society, traditional elements are absent to a great extent. In Italy, for example, a country with approximately 58 million citizens, 2/3 of people already reside in cities, making the task of conveying the realities of rural livelihoods, including hunting, to urban-dwellers more and more difficult. Nevertheless, hunting is still an important source of income for many rural communities, like for agricultural enterprises when they rear game birds and for habitat conservation through set-aside management. Furthermore habitats - like wetlands - are created or restored in an increasing number. Increasing wildlife populations, particularly in mountain regions, contributes to a growth in the game meat business - this in due consideration of sustainable and selective hunting. He reminds the audience that a significant part of wildlife research, in particular that on migratory birds, has been initiated by hunters, which is why it currently enjoys favourable public attention. It is further up to the hunters to commit themselves to the preservation of their cultural heritage and to appropriate public information on hunting.

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In the discussion that followed, L. de GRANDES referred to the fact that development (agriculture, industry, infrastructure, urbanisation, etc.) increasingly reduces wildlife habitats, and that small game in particular, such as the Spanish red-legged partridges, would suffer from this loss. In his opinion, agricultural land use could be adapted through relatively simple measures, like a restriction on agricultural activities (e.g. harvest) at night time. For him, the main threat for hunting is a misinterpretation of conservation policies. The exclusion of human beings from ecosystems would be a major mistake and lead to degeneration of nature and to disruption of the natural cycle. Rural people and hunters are not longer willing to accept “pseudo” conservation measures. This was recently demonstrated during a major protest march, which he attended, against the new Spanish Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Act in Madrid, where all countryside associations expressed their strong disagreement.

A. DÍAZ de MERA confirms, in an overall impression, the former statement as he wonders how hunting of wild and captivity breed species is presented.

L. de GRANDES supports hunting indigenous and migratory species, and he explains that hunting plays an important role in the Spanish tourist industry. Thereby hunting is not an end in itself but contributes to wildlife management.

FACE President G. de TURCKHEIM informs participants about the forthcoming establishment of a FACE *Technical Group* “Agriculture” to develop measures, *inter alia* together with representatives from the European agricultural sectors like COPA-COGECA and the EP Agriculture Committee, which will have a positive impact on flora and fauna but will also take into account the interests of other land users. In this respect, it shall reflect which kind of initiatives could be terminated or which are expected to be promoted.

Regarding hunting of migratory birds in Mediterranean countries, he indicates that there has been a long history of hunting these species. These countries endeavour to use the species in a reasonable way, supported by national regulations and provisions. In addition, the approval of the *Guidance Document on Hunting* is of high priority.

A. ESCLOPÉ from the French Hunting Association (and former MEP) reminds the audience, that regulations should be developed in a more flexible and multilateral way to take into account the disparity of the different regions. While regionalisation is functioning quite well on the national level, it should also be possible on the European level. Under the heading of diversification, he further stresses the significance of scientific institutions in regard to hunting. The outcome of their work has an important role when showing the status of hunting in relation to the conservation of bird species.

### **3. Any other business**

No other issues are raised

### **4. Next meeting**

L. de GRANDES thanks all guests and participants, and ends the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008** in Strasbourg.

Max von STEYNITZ  
*IG Secretariat*