

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

**Meeting of 15.02.2006**  
**Management of large carnivores in the EU**

**MEPs**

DESS, Albert (EPP-ED, De)	LEHTINEN, Lasse (PES, Fin)
DIAZ de MERA, Agustín (EPP-ED, Es)	MATHIEU, Véronique (EPP-ED, Fr)
EBNER, Michl (EPP-ED, It)	MAYER, Hans-Peter (EPP-ED, De)
EK, Lena (ALDE, Sw)	PIEPER, Markus (EPP-ED, De)
GOUDIN, Hélène (IND/DEM, Sw)	SCHIERHUBER, Agnes (EPP-ED, At)
HELMER, Roger (NA, UK)	SEEBER, Richard (EPP-ED, At)
LAX, Henrik (ALDE, Fin)	STURDY, Robert (EPP-ED, UK)

*Represented*

KAUPPI, Pia-Noora (EPP-ED, Fin)  
VÄYRYNEN, Paavo (ALDE, Fin)

*Apologised*

FRIEDRICH, Ingo (EPP-ED, De)	LULLING, Astrid (EPP-ED, Lux)
GALA, Milan (EPP-ED, Sk)	WATSON, Graham (ALDE, UK)
de GRANDES, Luis (EPP-ED, Es)	

**Experts / Observers**

BAUER, F. (CoE)	TROCHIMIAK, Agnieszka (ABRCGG)
LASEN DIAZ, L. (CoE)	de TURCKHEIM, Gilbert (FACE)
LEBERSORGER, Peter (FACE At)	von WÜLFING, Goddert (DJV)

**Assistants**

AHLBERG, Rurik (H. LAX)	RACKL, Heidi (A. DESS)
ALARANTA, Joonas (P. VÄYRYNEN)	SCHLERITZKO, Ludwig (A.
HUHTANIEMI, Hannes (P-N. KAUPPI / ELO)	SCHIERHUBER)
OULÈS, Florence (V. MATHIEU)	UNTERKOFLENER, Myriam (M. EBNER)

**Secretariat**

ESPÁRRAGO, Manuel (FACE)  
LECOCQ, Yves (FACE)  
von STEYNITZ, Max (FACE)

## **1. Introduction and opening remarks**

M. EBNER, President-Coordinator of the Intergroup, opens the meeting and welcomes all MEPs present or represented, as well as the invited speakers, experts and guests. He welcomes in particular the MEP L. EK, who will chair this session on “Management of Large Carnivores” and who for this reason introduces the speakers in more detail.

## **2. Resolution on invasive alien species (IAS)**

Following this, M. EBNER asks the Members to adopt the Resolution, which was *proposed* at the last meeting on “invasive alien species“ (IAS). He refers to some minor changes that were added to the Resolution; afterwards the resolution was sent as *final* draft to all Members. In case Members would like to introduce some specific or urgent changes, M.EBNER asks the Members to do so now. Hereupon, M. PIEPER proposes to add a closer reference to fundamental und supra-regional scientific research on IAS. R. HELMER requests to also make the electronic version of the resolution available. Moreover, H.-P. MAYER asks to change the term “species” into “*animal* species” in order to avoid possible confusion in times of abuse of interpretations. The remarks are accepted and the President thanks the Members for their active cooperation.

## **3. Management of large carnivores in the EU (examples of Finland und Latvia)**

The chair of the meeting is handed over to L. EK, Co-President of the Intergroup, who introduces the subject and the different speakers.

C. KROGELL, *Head of Unit* for Hunting in the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture, begins his presentation with an overview of the current situation of the wolf population and its management in Finland. He is convinced that a well-functioning administration, based on realistic and best possible data for management plans, constitutes the key for success. At the same time, it is important to understand rural problems and views, as well as considering the position of the rural population. The wolf population is currently at the same level as 100 years ago – approximately 200 wolves and 20 breeding couples. Consequently, the wolf population living within Finnish borders has doubled since 1996. This is determined by different forms of monitoring, which provide a very precise picture of the current situation. Areas with a high density of wolves can be found, in particular, near the Russian border. A large amount of wolves migrate across this border.

As the European Commission has launched an infringement procedure against Finland at the EC Court of Justice due to an alleged non-compliance with the “Habitat” Directive (92/43/EEC), the national management cannot be continued in its former way. The rural population is very concerned, as the high number of wolves constitutes a threat to farm animals. Already in 1996 the *Council for Environment und Natural Resources* developed a special management programme for bears, wolves and lynx. This informal guideline outlines management plans and methods of sustainable use of large carnivores designed until 2010, which have already been fulfilled.

The *National Wolf Management Plan* provides different monitoring methods, including a voluntary observation network (1600 persons). Approximately 2000 to 2500 wolf observations take place each year and are supported by a group analysis, based on the observation of breeding couples. Staff of the Finnish *Institute for Wildlife and Fisheries Research* conducts telemetric studies and tracking in the snow; to accomplish this 82 wolves were equipped with GPS or radio transmitters between 1998 and 2005.

As background, the preparation of this *National Wolf Management Plan* was needed to reformulate the aims of the management of wolf populations and take into account the different interests of nature and animal protectionists and rural inhabitants.

The *Large Carnivore Initiative in Europe* (LCIE) was founded in the end of the 1990s. In the framework of this initiative, experts formulated management plans with various objectives for large carnivores and requested comments from concerned parties of the Council of Europe's Bern Convention, the European Commission and the *Scientific Working Group* of the Habitat Committee. This resulted in the Council of Europe's Recommendation No. 74 of 2000. The main result of the drafts of the management plans, in which the relevant ministries, universities, NGOs and other experts participated, include the continuation of the dialogue between the different interest groups and an increase of regional and national cooperation. Additionally, only reliable and scientifically based information should be communicated, as well as a definition for a favourable conservation status of wolf populations in Finland with the aim of preparing and obtaining a broad acceptance of the wolf management plans.

With regard to litigation at the EC Court of Justice, according to the Commission's point of view, the following problem occurs: Article 16 constitutes an exception to the strict protection of species provided for in Article 12. For this reason, the article must be interpreted in a more narrow sense. The first paragraph of the article contains two conditions for this derogation to be applied. Firstly, the derogation is not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. Secondly, the derogation is only possible, provided that there is no satisfactory alternative.

The Commission considers that, as the Wolf in Finland does not have a favourable conservation status, alternative approaches are available and licenses for wolf hunting are generally issued without establishing properly if it concerns a single animal that has caused significant damages, wolf hunting in Finland goes beyond the conditions set out in article 16 paragraph 1 of the "Habitats" Directive.

Finland is arguing that this interpretation goes far beyond the wording and understanding of the provisions of the Directive. If the EC Court of Justice considers this argument, it will lead towards an interpretation of the Directive, which goes more in the direction of *conservation*.

For further Information see <http://www.mmm.fi/julkaisut/julkaisusarja/>

Afterwards, L. DOMBROVSKA, *Senior Officer*, in the Department of Forest Management and Hunting of the Latvian Ministry for Agriculture, reported on Latvian experiences. She explains that wolf and lynx hunting was never subject to limitation in Latvia. Those species have never been considered as endangered, as they were seen as dangerous and to be eliminated. However, today large carnivores are accepted as an essential part of the ecosystem. In the "Habitats" Directive, the Latvian Wolf population is a species mentioned in Annex V. Through the implementation of this provision Wolf and Lynx are considered to be hutable in a restricted way. Hunting has now ceased, apart from certain exceptions. Within the last two years, a hunting bag limit of 150 animals per year was established, but due to the results in the monitoring of large carnivores, this number has been lowered to 130. Monitoring and management of species is done by the governmental Forestry Service, which is also responsible for conducting the relevant counts that form the basis of the permitted hunting bag. Before the start of the hunting season, current figures for the wolf population are estimated at 500 individuals.

For the hunting season 2005/6, the limit on the shooting of lynx was raised to 70 as the lynx population is highly increasing – before the season there were approximately 650 to 800 animals. The census method used for both species is counting their traces. This last took place in February 2005 over just one day. The number of animals confirmed was impressive.

The *National Management Plans* that had been used also included conservation measures for both species. Since 1998, monitoring is performed and the Latvian Ministry supports two research projects concerning this matter for agriculture (count estimates, research on shot animals, records of damage caused by large carnivores). As in Soviet times, the supervision of hunters still lies with the national authorities, namely the national Forestry Service. For instance every intention to hunt has to be registered in advance, in order to observe and supervise actions by hunters. In order to facilitate consequent monitoring, each shot must be registered afterwards. Scientists are of the opinion that the wolf population has become accustomed to hunting, which has been carried on for centuries. Limited hunting, combined with management plans, sampling of shot animals, annual game census etc. constitutes a guarantee for the long-term survival of these species. Therefore, in case hunting would be prohibited, results of “biological experiments” would be hard to predict. Hunting, in a certain way, also protects the population against assault. In 2005 there were 22 cases in total of damages caused by large carnivores and in 2004 also a case of a lynx attacking a human being.

L. EK thanks the speakers for the presentations and would like to know more about specific concerns regarding the proceeding at the EC Court of Justice.

C. KROGELL answers that the obligations set out in article 16 of the “Habitats” Directive are being fulfilled in Finland by the existing awarding of shooting licences. He explains that a more harsh judgement would also have significant impacts on the conservation situation in other countries that are affected by the same problem.

L. LEHTINEN asks whether it has been a mistake to declare the Wolf as an endangered species in Finland. Without this declaration, the problem could be solved on national level. In allusion to the 45 000 wolves living on the Russian side of the border, he asks whether the wolf can be considered as an endangered species.

C. KROGELL informs that according to the “Red List” of IUCN, there are not sufficient wolves in Finland. The problem has, indeed, to be seen in a wider context and beyond the national borders. According to him, the Commission goes too far by placing the “Red List” on the same level as the favourable conservation status mentioned in the “Habitats” Directive.

R. STURDY asks about the usual feeding habits of Wolves and how arable and livestock farmers handle the threat.

According to the statement of L. DOMBROVSKA, many Latvian farmers are not aware of the situation and education on this issue must be enhanced. However, wolves mainly prey upon game in forests.

C. KROGELL first explains that compensation payments for attacked animals exist. Wolves attack mainly elk, reindeer, roe deer and even hunting dogs, which are necessary to hunt elks.

Answering the question of L. EK, as to whether wolves can be shot for self-defence, L. DOMBROVSKA indicates that in cases of damage single shot permits are being issued. Normally, the competent hunting association is responsible for the damages caused by wild animals and is also therefore, responsible for hunting. There are currently no cases of wolves attacking human beings registered.

In Finland, the shooting permit allocation is highly regulated and assigned by the Ministry for Agriculture, but also (in specific cases) by the police. A case of self-defence must be proven.

To conclude, both speakers again allude to the fact that before the accession of their countries both species were fully huntable. With accession they are entirely protected, which is quite difficult to communicate. This must be considered when developing management plans, but above all, the different game populations must be managed in a responsible, flexible and sustainable way, not in an extremist one.

M. EBNER confirms this problem of Euro-scepticism and underlines the importance of the principle of subsidiarity in this regard. Real situations must be taken into account when examining the different regional management requirements. Additionally, this is an area that will generate enormous costs for the EU in the future.

H. LAX also underlines the necessity of subsidiarity for national politicians, in order to give clear signals to the citizens. This subject is symbolic of the question as to why the EU is needed, when decisions can be taken independently on the national level.

#### **4. Any other business**

M. EBNER informs participants that the Italian translation of his book *Nachhaltige Jagd* ("Sustainable Hunting"), with participation of FACE President G. de TURCKHEIM, was presented on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in Italy.

#### **5. Next meeting**

L. EK and M. EBNER thank the speakers and all participants for their active attendance and close the meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for the **15<sup>th</sup> March 2006** and will be chaired by MEP R. STURDY. Due to the current situation it will deal with the issue of *Avian influenza*.

Max von STEYNITZ  
*Public Affairs Assistant*