



Natura 2000 seminar: hunting in protected areas

MEPs, FACE and ELO gather for a seminar with Commission and field experts to discuss the challenges and opportunities of Natura 2000 and its implications for hunters and landowners.

Brussels, 15 June 2011 – a **lunchtime seminar** in the European Parliament brought together **MEPs** with representatives of European **hunters** through FACE, **landowners** through ELO and the **Commission** to discuss the challenges and opportunities of Natura 2000. The Parliamentary Intergroup for Sustainable Hunting's President, MEP Véronique Mathieu hosted the seminar, FACE Members representing national hunting associations arrived from Denmark, Slovenia, Italy, the UK, Germany and Belgium to join the discussions with a number of MEPs including notable Intergroup Co-President, Britain's Robert Sturdy, German MEP Markus Pieper, Intergroup Secretary General, Vice-President Ioan Enciu, MEP Astrid Lulling and Italy's Lara Comi amongst others.

Natura 2000 is the **centrepiece of EU nature & biodiversity policy**. Natura 2000 designated sites now cover almost **20% of EU land surface**, and the challenges of making it a success, particularly in light of the EU's brand new **2020 Biodiversity Strategy** are now more important than ever. This June seminar is an important step towards better biodiversity, bringing together in an intensive session the Commission, the hunters, the politicians and the landowners to work out how to best use Natura 2000 in the bid to save Europe's nature.

MEP and Parliamentary Intergroup President Véronique Mathieu sees the vital importance of bringing together the different perspectives: "This effective participation will allow us to envisage solutions and concrete measures to implement, but the complexities of the negotiations are sometimes revealed on the ground, with differing interpretations of the ethos of Natura 2000 depending on the groups involved. Indeed, **conflicts in approach** still exist at the national and local levels between green NGOs, hunters, landowners and other stakeholders."

The designation of Natura 2000 sites will come to a close next year, and so it is time to address the conflict arising from those who don't acknowledge the positive contribution to biodiversity conservation through sustainable use of land and wildlife – and those who believe in inclusive management to maintain and enhance these special nature areas through their **sustainable use, such as hunting** as management plans begin to be drawn up. The **European Commission's** Head of Unit for Natura 2000, **Stefan Leiner** noted that "the designation of sites is not the end of the process, it's the start of the process" and that "**hunting is an important management tool for Natura 2000**". Leiner gave a thorough overview of Natura 2000, and the opportunities for both the initiative itself and for hunters, concluding that it presented "**a clear win-win situation** [...]. there is really an opportunity for shared success".

Hunting activities are carried out in many Natura 2000 sites and hunters are involved in the management of some of these sites. **FACE's Conservation Manager, Gabor von Bethlenfalvy** "Member States have to ensure a favourable conservation status for Natura 2000 habitats and species. This requires financing, monitoring, conservation and restoration. Hunters contribute to all of these aspects and therefore Natura 2000 needs their support." It remains important that hunters do not face unnecessary restrictions and are positively incentivised to manage and use designated land sustainably. von Bethlenfalvy gave an insightful outline of hunting in relation to Natura 2000, affirming "they [hunters] have the incentive" by giving concrete examples of hunters offsetting costs, monitoring species & habitats and conserving and restoring biodiversity, (see below, [Hunters and Natura 2000](#) for a few examples) but noting that at the local level, a top-down approach is still perceived.



The challenges of catalysing opportunities for engagement at the local level was a great theme throughout the discussions, with **ELO's Pierre Crahay** focusing on this, as well as the growing divide between urban and rural communities: "People no longer have a clue of what is happening in the countryside – the education aspect is very important". **ELO Secretary General, Thierry de l'Escaille** commented: "some protected habitats are the results of decades even centuries of human activities. It is crucial that all rural actors be invited to the table to share their unrivalled knowledge on wildlife management, so that their expertise can be transmitted to future generations [...] biodiversity conservation will benefit from cooperation with hunters, land managers and other local actors, seeking the best common solutions."

FACE and the **7 million hunters** they represent, have been involved with the European Commission on the **promotion** of Natura 2000 and facilitating exchanges between various stakeholders to ensure that these areas are managed in an inclusive and sustainable manner to the benefit of the environment and the conservation of wild populations and their habitats. Indeed, the **FACE Biodiversity Manifesto** – a long term commitment by European hunters to undertake **31** measurable **actions** for biodiversity includes **4 key actions** wholly related to Natura 2000 and protected areas (see below, **Hunters and Natura 2000**). The Manifesto seeks to translate the European and global environmental priorities to local impact delivered by hunters as the critical, action-orientated stage of Natura 2000 approaches. In the words of the Commission's Stefan Leiner: "7 million hunters are every day in the nature. They see things. They monitor. They can make things happen on the ground".

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Photos: http://www.flickr.com/photos/face_eu/sets/72157626968385828/



What is Natura 2000?

Natura 2000 is an EU-wide network of nature protection areas established under the 1992 Habitats Directive. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. It is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated by Member States under the Habitats Directive, and also incorporates Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which they designate under the 1979 Birds Directive. Natura 2000 is not a system of strict nature reserves where all human activities are excluded. Whereas the network will certainly include nature reserves most of the land is likely to continue to be privately owned and the emphasis will be on ensuring that future management is sustainable, both ecologically and economically. The establishment of this network of protected areas also fulfils a Community obligation under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm.



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 36 states of the Council of Europe, including the EU27, as well as 4 Associate Members. www.face.eu



The **European Parliament's Intergroup "Sustainable hunting, biodiversity, countryside activities and forestry"** – the Sustainable Hunting Intergroup is a unique political platform. The President is MEP Véronique Mathieu. An official body of the European Parliament, it is an expert group that brings together MEPs from different political groups to discuss a common topic. The Sustainable Hunting Intergroup was created in 1985 and is one of the oldest and biggest (most number of MEPs) in the Parliament. Since then, it has consistently attracted interest and impact with its debates and events.



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, social needs and cultural traditions. www.elo.org

Hunters and Natura 2000

FACE and Natura 2000: http://www.facenatura2000.net/introduction2008_en.htm.

The **Biodiversity Manifesto**, a long term commitment by European hunters: www.face.eu/biodiversity. It is made up of 8 themes which break down into 31 measurable actions.

One of the themes is **Protected areas** <http://www.face.eu/biodiversity/protected.html>.

The **4 Manifesto actions** committed to in relation to this theme are:

1. FACE will continue to promote the application of IUCN guidelines for protected areas.
2. FACE and its Members will engage in dialogue facilitation and conflict resolution between stakeholders within protected areas.
3. FACE and its Members will continue to promote hunters' engagement in the management of protected areas in collaboration with the relevant competent authorities and other stakeholders (especially in regards to Natura 2000).
4. FACE and its Members will collate best practice examples to its hunting community and the public.

Benefits of hunters in Natura 2000

- Hunters are a large, organised group of individuals interested in maintaining and managing diversified habitats and species.
- Hunters are keen to invest in nature and manage often remote areas.
- Hunters are able to enhance environmental monitoring of not only game species, but the whole environment.
- Hunters play an important role in the development of nature tourism.
- Hunters can control invasive species or possibly predators if needed.

Benefits of Natura 2000 for hunters

- Protection and restoration of diversified habitats optimises the environment for game species.



Press release: Natura 2000 seminar: hunting in protected areas – for immediate release

- Tool for hunters to communicate and cooperate at local, regional, national and EU level.
- Science-based approach – helps to solve emotional conflicts.
- Opportunities to enhance public support for hunting by demonstrating the concrete evidence of hunters' significant positive contributions to biodiversity.

In Germany, hunters...

- ...plant 820 ha of hedgerows in a year. That's equal to the Great Wall of China!
- ...clear rubbish from forests and fields to the value of 180 full time jobs a year.
- ...put up 270.000 nesting boxes in a year, allowing for 800.000 chicks (3 per box) to have a chance.

In the UK, hunters...

- ...influence the management of over two thirds of the UK.
- ...spend £250m on conservation (€277 million).
- ...two million hectares are actively managed for conservation by hunters.
- ...give 2.7 million voluntary days to conservation, that's equal to 12.000 full-time jobs.

For further information, please contact:

Marilise Saghbini, Communication Manager, marilise.saghbini@face.eu - +32 4 98 56 70 21