



PRESS RELEASE

FACE: EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR HUNTING & CONSERVATION

FACE STATEMENT ON THE FITNESS CHECK

Why FACE supports the Birds and Habitats Directives

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 19 June 2015 – FACE remains fully committed to the support of both the Birds and Habitats Directives, which has been demonstrated by its engagement in stakeholders Agreements under European Commission initiatives^{1 2}. It calls upon the EU institutions and Member States to join this support and recognise the valuable role of hunting in meeting the objectives of the Nature Directives.

The Nature Directives contribution to biodiversity

The Nature Directives are necessary in achieving Target 1 of the Biodiversity Strategy, but also for Target 2 on restoration, and contribution to Target 6 in helping the EU meet its international commitments to conserving biodiversity.

The European Parliament has adopted the resolution on the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, finalising the process of adoption at the highest political level within the EU. This commitment now needs to be delivered. The Nature Directives are familiar instruments with Member States, having already transposed it into national legislation, and therefore in place to deliver on targets. Any new legislation will meet the delays that the Nature Directives have already gone through.

The Nature Directives are appropriate instruments to deliver on Biodiversity targets, but require greater political support and will to implement them in a favourable manner. It would also be helpful to prioritise on species in poorest status, rather than dedicating resources to charismatic species. It should be remembered that the Habitats Directive covers 1 200 species of wild animals and plants, a majority of which (60 %) are in unfavourable conservation status³. For the Birds Directive the situation is better with 52% of species in 'secure' population status, but this is logical as it covers all species, both common and rare. Still evidence shows that site protection measures under the Birds Directive have been successful in delivering results.

The Natura 2000 Network, offering vital protection for Europe's most endangered species and habitats, is one of the most evident achievements of EU nature policy. It benefits from the fact that it is based on the principle of conservation and sustainable use, ensuring lasting coexistence with human activities and biodiversity conservation, as such it is not in contradiction with hunting.

¹ Sustainable Hunting Initiative on Birds Directive

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/hunting/index_en.htm

² EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/coexistence_platform.htm

³ The State of Nature in the EU http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/pdf/state_of_nature_en.pdf

The Nature Directives contribution to hunting and its governance

The Birds Directive fully recognises the legitimacy of hunting of wild birds as a form of sustainable use. Hunting is an activity that provides significant social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits across the European Union. It is limited to certain species, listed in the Directive, which also provides a series of ecological principles and legal requirements relating to this activity, to be implemented through Member States' legislation. This provides the framework for the governance of hunting⁴.

Despite this recognition, hunting is too often framed as being negative to environmental objectives, even though evidence suggests that any impacts are of low importance in comparison to issues such as habitat loss. Conversely, if permitted, hunting can provide significant net benefits. If the Nature Directives continue to be applied in an excessively restrictive sense towards hunting then these benefits could be reduced, negatively impacting rural economies and the achievement of the environmental goals of the EU. This is not a default of the Nature Directives, but lies in their interpretation and implementation.

As a stakeholder taking part to the consultations in the frame of the Fitness Check of EU Nature Legislation FACE states that the Directives are very appropriate to sustain the strategic objectives for protecting nature in the EU.

FACE calls on the EU for more recognition of hunters in their role in delivering environmental objectives. This was highlighted at the conference marking 35 years of the Birds Directive and 10 years of the BirdLife-FACE Agreement, which was held in September 2014⁵. Equally FACE calls for greater understanding of the importance of hunting for 7 million Europeans, and that their role in delivering the strategic objectives of the directives is better recognised.

*****ENDS*****

NOTES TO EDITORS:

FACE is the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation. Established in 1977, FACE represents the interests of Europe's 7 million hunters as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organisation (NGO). FACE is made up of national hunters' associations from 35 European countries including the EU-28. FACE also has 5 Associate Members and is based in Brussels.

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS, QUOTES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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⁴ Guide to Sustainable Hunting under the Birds Directive (EC 2008)

⁵ <http://face.eu/about-us/resources/news/hunters-call-on-the-eu-for-more-recognition-of-their-environmental-role>

