

# **Guidelines on Sustainable Hunting in Europe**

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## I. Introduction

### **Purpose**

These guidelines have been prepared by the *Wild Species Resources Working Group* (WISPER) of the IUCN-SSC *European Sustainable Use Specialist Group* (ESUSG). They aim to apply wider international principles and guidelines for the sustainable use of wild living resources at the European regional level. The focus is on recreational hunting involving the shooting of birds and mammals. However, much of what is put forward should be applicable in other contexts, such as subsistence or commercial hunting or hunting with hounds or falcons.

### **Evolution**

WISPER is one of five thematic groups within ESUSG, which is the European constituent of the *Sustainable Use Specialist Group*, itself a group of voluntary experts within the *Species Survival Commission* of IUCN, the *World Conservation Union*. WISPER has some 50 members from 23 countries. Among them are academics who research and teach wildlife and forestry management, those working as administrators and managers for conservation, forestry, hunting and animal welfare bodies. At a personal level some are hunters while others are not. All are committed to the mission of IUCN.

At a meeting of WISPER hosted by the Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology (FIWI) of the Vienna Veterinary University in October 2002 the Austrian example of a set of principles and criteria for sustainable wildlife management was presented by Friedrich REIMOSER: 'Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Hunting' 2001 (in German and English; [www.biodiv.at/chm/jagd](http://www.biodiv.at/chm/jagd)). This presentation formed the spur for the development of the *Guidelines* presented here. The members of WISPER decided that it would be desirable to build on the Austrian experience in order to develop a shorter and more general document, focussing on guidelines that would be applicable all over Europe. They also agreed that the final product of the WISPER group should subsequently be submitted for testing and further refinement to other members of the conservation community, not belonging to WISPER. Since the Vienna meeting the present document has been elaborated by correspondence and by two further meetings in Brussels (2003) and Hanover (2005).

## International policies

In the year 2000, as a culmination of some two decades of debate and analysis within the conservation community, IUCN's 2<sup>nd</sup> World Conservation Congress, meeting in Amman, Jordan, adopted a *Policy Statement on the Sustainable Use of Wild Living Resources*. This declared, *inter alia*, that 'Use, if sustainable, can serve human needs on an ongoing basis, while contributing to the conservation of biological diversity' and 'Use of wild living resources, if sustainable, is an important conservation tool because the social and economic benefits derived from such use provide incentives for people to conserve them. The need for criteria and principles to analyse the sustainability of the 'use' became a prerequisite in this context.

Meanwhile the *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*, signed in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, made sustainable use of the components of biological diversity one of its' three main objectives (Article 1). Sustainable use was defined in Article 2 of the *Convention* and was elaborated in Article 10. In 2000 a process to articulate practical principles and guidelines for sustainable use was started. Following regional thematic workshops and a synthesis workshop in Ethiopia in 2003, the 7<sup>th</sup> CBD Conference of the Parties' meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2004 adopted in decision VII/12 the *Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity*. The key elements of the 14 inter-dependent Principles and accompanying Guidelines for enhancing the sustainable use of biodiversity may be summarised as:

- Supportive & linked governance at all levels
- Empowerment & accountability of local users
- Adaptive management using science, local knowledge, monitoring & timely feedbacks
- Equitable sharing of benefits for local people
- Transparency & international co-operation
- Public awareness of the benefits.

## General remarks

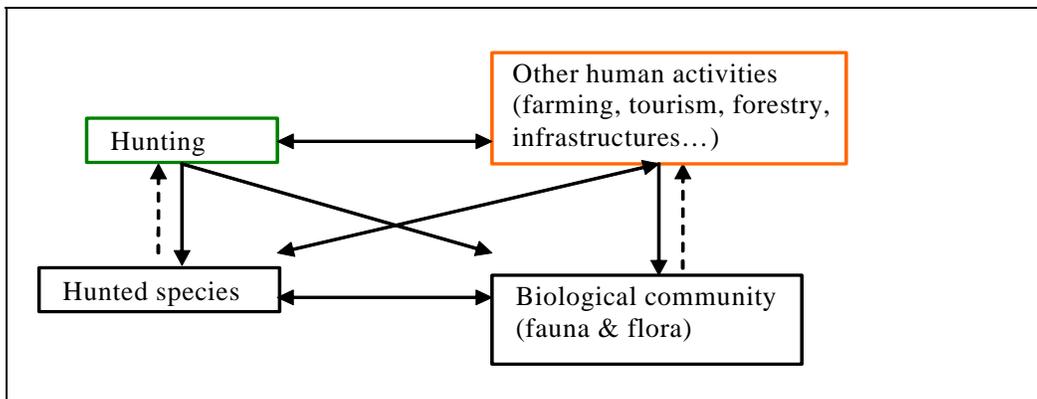
The aim of the document is to provide a (non-binding) set of **guidelines** for the sustainable hunting of wild bird and mammal species, generally classified as “game” and subject to regulated hunting in Europe. The aspect “sustainability” is addressed here mainly from an *ecological* point of view. In addition, this paper makes a first analysis of certain (combined) *socio-economic* considerations. There can be little doubt however that it would also be useful to develop further the tools to assess the *economic* and *socio-cultural* sustainability of hunting.

In case of conflicting interests between these three aspects, resolution of that conflict should be based on the best available science, or otherwise on professional management experience. It should however be clear that ecological guidelines should prevail – in other words, if hunting is ecologically unsustainable, this cannot be “compensated” by economic and / or socio-cultural sustainability.

These guidelines should be considered and applied at the scale of the “entity of use” – e.g. hunting territory, management unit or estate, being under private management or that of a public authority.

The guidelines should be seen as an instrument to facilitate the identification of those aspects of the current hunting management and practices which may be improved and in this way contribute to halting the decline of biodiversity - the “2010 target” – or even to its conservation.

The evaluation of current hunting management and practices has to be undertaken bearing in mind the *possible* interactions between on the one hand hunting and other human activities (farming, tourism, forestry, etc.) and on the other hand hunted species as well as biological communities - schematically presented in the diagram below.



## II. Principles, Targets en Guidelines

### I.A Principles

The two main *ecological principles* that need to be respected are:

- A. Hunting should not adversely affect the long-term *conservation status* of the hunted species (Category “A”) across its natural range.**
- B. Hunting should not adversely affect the long-term *conservation status* of the biological community - fauna and flora - (Category “B”) to which the hunted species belongs.**

A possible definition of “Conservation status” can be found in the European Commission’s *Guidance document on hunting*.  
The term conservation status of a species is defined in Article 1 i) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC as “the sum of influences acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations ....” It is considered to be favourable when “population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitat, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced in the foreseeable future, and there is, and will continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its population on a long-term basis.”

### II.B Targets

To ensure the respect of these principles, hunting of wild “game” species (and the associated hunting management) should focus on the following *ecological targets*:

As far as the “**game**” **species (A)** is concerned:

- a) to maintain population abundance, distribution, structure and behaviour compatible with its conservation;
- b) to maintain genetic diversity compatible with its conservation, e.g. by encouraging maintenance of sub-populations;
- c) in case the species / population is in an *unfavourable conservation status*, to contribute to the improvement of its status.

As far as the **biological community (B)** to which the hunted species belongs is concerned:

- a) to uphold or improve species diversity;
- b) to uphold or improve habitat diversity.

## **II.C Guidelines**

The above targets are most likely to be met if the hunting of wild “game” species (and the associated hunting management) adopts the following **guidelines** of best practice. Their order does not necessarily reflect any priority. They should further always be applied “*as far as possible / feasible / practical*”. As is the case for the *Addis Principles*, these guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive but to be applied to the degree relevant to a particular case.

As far as the ecology of the “game” species (A) is concerned, hunting (and hunting related activities) should:

**A.1** Take fully into account, and where possible mitigate, the negative consequences of other human activities on the survival of wild species or on their natural behaviour (such as their diurnal activity pattern) in so far as this would have a significant impact on the conservation status of the population concerned.

**A.2** In order to conserve the genetic diversity present in the population, avoid focusing *exclusively* on external phenotypical or behavioural characteristics as criteria for selection.

**A.3** For species of which the annual activity range of individual animals exceeds the scale of the management area, encourage co-ordination with neighbouring management areas, if necessary even at international level.

**A.4** Take into account seasonal fluctuations in the availability of habitat elements (such as cover, food, etc.) and in climatic conditions, as well as the reproduction, feeding and resting patterns of the species.

**A.5** Take fully into account, and where possible mitigate (e.g. by efforts to restore important habitat elements), the negative consequences of habitat degradation, fragmentation and loss due to other human activities.

**A.6** Accept the *natural* re-colonisation (and establishment) of species belonging to the original native species (\*).

**A.7** Only reintroduce game species belonging to the list of native species in accordance with the IUCN guidelines on reintroduction of species (\*).

**A.8** Not introduce or encourage non-native (alien) species (\*).

**A.9** Be based on recorded management planning (including at least management objectives and measures for each species / group of species).

**A.10** Encourage bag-recording (where useful, subdivided into sexes and age-classes, and possibly with other relevant data) in order to better understand

population dynamics and to facilitate the monitoring, evaluation and, if required, revision of management planning (*cf.* adaptive management).

(\*) *Several guidelines require the existence of scientifically based lists of native and alien species, including the conservation status of these species.*

As far as the ecology of the **biological community (B)** to which the hunted species belongs is concerned, hunting (and hunting related activities) should in general have no significant negative impact on the biological community the hunted species belongs to, and in particular:

**B.1** Take into consideration the international, national and regional conservation status of fauna and flora, *inter alia* the presence of rare or endangered species.

**B.2** Only undertake habitat restoration or afforestation with plant material of local provenance (*assuming the existence of material certified as such*).

**B.3** When regulating predators, to consider the long-term conservation status of the hunted prey species as well as of the predator and of the biological community to which they belong, including the interaction between the predator species and other species.

**B.4** Aim for an abundance, distribution and behaviour of hunted species that are compatible with maintaining the biological community to which the exploited species belongs.

As far as the **social and economic (C)** context is concerned, hunting (and hunting related activities) should aim at:

**C.1** Maintaining or regulating hunted species so that their abundance, distribution and / or behaviour are compatible with the interests of other socio-economic sectors, including farming, forestry, fisheries, traffic, public health, etc.

**C.2** Using local employment and services.

**C.3** A fair return (in kind or in cash) for the providers of hunting opportunities – e.g. landowners or -users, local communities.

**C.4** Including participation of local hunters.

**C.5** Taking into account access to, and use, of land by other users (including recreational users).

**C.6** Optimising utilization of meat and other (by-) products from game.

**C.7** Informing the public about hunting (values, organisation, methods, etc.) and hunting management (objectives, hunting planning, etc.), *inter alia* in order to demonstrate the contribution of sustainable hunting to the conservation of biodiversity and to rural development.

**C.8** Considering the views and feelings of the public, in particular of local people.

**C.9** Preserving the cultural, historical and artistic values related to hunting and to wildlife.

**C.10** Including appropriate facilities for tracking and retrieving wounded / killed specimens, and in general taking all reasonable precautions to eliminate avoidable suffering of wild animals.

For specific expertise and support in the practical application of these *Guidelines*, as well as for presenting feedback and comments, please contact the Editors (see page 1) or the WISPER W.G. [wisper-iucn@hotmail.com](mailto:wisper-iucn@hotmail.com)