

SUSTAINABLE HUNTING and ANGLING

ELO believes that for hunting and angling to be sustainable they need to be well integrated into all the activities of the countryside as well as accepted by the public while respecting biodiversity (in part through the Natura 2000 management plans).

Wildlife territory managers, hunters and anglers have every interest in preserving the habitats and diversity of the species living on their territories and must therefore be considered capable of providing solutions to the challenges of biodiversity. Sustainable hunting and angling, together with the appropriate management of wild life territories provide undeniable added value to our common heritage.

However, these truths must be explained to society which all too often is unaware of them and misunderstands their vital function.

ELO has been constantly spreading the message, thanks to a vast communication campaign with the publication of articles in numerous periodicals, that communication is an essential part of conservation; the lack of it often leads to paralysis and even hostility. A constructive dialogue between wildlife managers and the different rural stakeholders is fundamental, requiring honesty and transparency. Sterile battles where both sides lose out are pointless, not to mention harmful to biodiversity.

The ELO's "Pilot Wildlife Estates" and "Sustainable Hunting" Initiatives are in line with the whole set of **EU environmental legislation**, as well as with the **Guidance Documents on Hunting of the EU Commission** and with the **Agreement between BirdLife and FACE**, the Federation of the EU Associations for Hunting and Conservation. ELO runs the Secretariat of the European Parliament Intergroup on Sustainable Hunting, Biodiversity and Countryside activities in partnership with FACE.

I. "Pilot Wildlife Estates" Initiative (PWEI)

It is in this spirit that ELO and its partners launched the 'Pilot Wildlife Estates' (PWEI) initiative in 2003. This new management and communication instrument sets up a network of hunting territories which are considered to be exemplary. This network acts as a catalyst for initiatives which are designed to lead to new management formulae. Apart from a highly beneficial exchange of experience, the initiative has established simple but precise principles for the good management and conservation of 'wild life'

territories throughout Europe, divided up according to the different biogeographical regions of the European Union. This initiative is currently being orchestrated by ELO in cooperation with ONCFS (National Office of Hunting and Wild Fauna), ANPC (Association of Portuguese Hunting Producers), IIMA (Iberian Institute for the Environment) and the European Commission.

Creating a set of principles, criteria and indicators means hunting and fishing grounds can be managed transparently and objectively, taking into account the three pillars of sustainability, i.e. conservation, economics and socio-cultural aspects.

The idea is to produce guidelines for each biogeographical region and a 'label' promoting the concept of 'sustainable hunting' in these areas. This label is to be based on good practice, using criteria and indicators identified in the exemplary territories selected.

To apply for a label each territory must follow a two-speed procedure. The first stage consists in signing a Charter listing the founding principles and concepts of the PWE initiative. Then to obtain the label the candidate territory fills in a questionnaire to prove it fulfils the eligibility criteria and other general requirements, as well as a series of specific criteria assessed against a grid for each biogeographical region. The specific criteria and assessment grids proposed by the first pilot territories were approved in full by the European working party during the plenary in Spa at the end of August 2007. These territories, which apply the concept of sustainable hunting fully according to both European and international regulations, received their labels on this occasion as recognition for exemplary management. They are the Crown Hunting Grounds (Hertogenwald and St Michel-Freÿr) for the region of continental Europe, La Garganta in Spain and Herdade da Raposa in Portugal for the Mediterranean, and the Chambord Estate for the Atlantic regions.

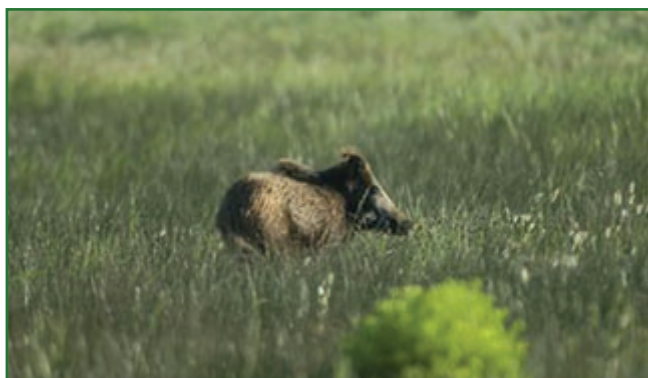


PWEi is an integrated initiative which does not simply focus on conservation of biodiversity but also accommodates socio-economic aspects. It in particular allows diversification of income in the countryside by creating a 'wild life products' economy such as hunting, bird-watching, marketing local produce or landscape conservation. This is crucial at a time when cuts to the Community budget will inevitably affect farming and the financing of rural development.

Turning now to the socio-cultural aspects of PWEi, they too clearly have a positive impact on the involvement of the local community as well as creating jobs in managing wild life and its habitats.

Wild habitats possess considerable potential for society, in part due to the show-case effect they have in raising awareness about the quality and variety of wild life and its habitats. The Crown Hunting Grounds are therefore a place of privilege where the Region of Wallonia can introduce both senior European civil servants and hunting managers from neighbouring countries to our countryside and forests.

Thanks to their exemplary management, the first areas with PWEi labels will serve as a model for many other territories. In November 2007, the initiative has been presented at EU level on the occasion of the business and biodiversity Conference that took place in Lisbon, organised by the Portuguese Presidency.



The next steps foreseen in 2008 for the initiative are the adaptation of the evaluation grid and the labellisation of test cases for the Nordic, Boreal and Alpine regions, followed by the setting-up of the national evaluation committees.

In a first period, labellisations will take place upon invitation of the members of the EU PWEi Evaluation Committee and through the various national Evaluation committees.

On the basis of these test cases a handbook of good practices and management in hunting estates will be produced. This handbook will consist in guidelines based on the different experiences of all partners involved today in the PWE initiative.

In 2008, it will be then proceeded to the extension of the labellisation to other estates.

II. Sustainable Hunting and Angling Initiative (SHAI)

ELO has launched the SHAI project, in partnership with FACE and IUCN and with the support of the European Commission. ELO had previously participated to the Sustainable Hunting Initiative (SHI) aiming at addressing the controversy and confrontation between hunters and other conservationists by facilitating dialogue on issues raised by the interpretation of the Birds Directive. The rationale behind this initiative was that these stakeholders share a common interest in preserving wild birds and their habitats.

Building on the achievements of SHI, the SHAI programme seeks to identify and assess the progresses and weaknesses in reaching the hunting community and explore the possibilities of extending the SHI to non-bird species covered under the Habitats Directive (mainly mammals) and engaging other wildlife recreational users particularly anglers.

ELO believes that one of the key obstacles in the creation of the network has been local opposition, often stemming from misunderstanding about the aim and implications of the network. For the future management of sites this problem is likely to persist. In this process, all concerned stakeholders – such as private rural actors, public authorities, conservation NGOs – must be involved. This is why raising awareness through the provision of clear and reliable information and by open and constructive dialogue between these stakeholders is essential to the success of the network. In this respect, hunters and anglers together form a stakeholder group which is highly representative of rural communities, with close links to land use practices, and covering a broad spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds. Raising awareness at hunters and anglers is therefore an efficient way to transmit the aims of the network to our rural actors at local level, living in and around Natura 2000 sites.

Therefore ELO's ambition in the SHAI programme ambitions is to further ameliorate the sound implementation of the Natura 2000 network to the benefit of the countryside and nature.

