



## Recommendation 1689 (2004)<sup>1</sup>

# Hunting and Europe's environmental balance

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that hunting is widely practised in all European countries and forged by a long tradition. However, individual hunting traditions differ greatly in Europe from country to country, ranging from hunting as a source of food to hunting as a sport or a social event. For some time, there has been a shift in the behaviour of hunters towards practices that are more respectful of nature, game and habitats, which also contributes to the preservation of rural lifestyles, particularly where farming and forestry are concerned. Some 120 000 full-time jobs are said to be generated by hunting in Europe.

2. Hunting may serve to regulate ecosystems but may also harm them if badly managed. For that reason the Assembly considers that, from the environmental point of view, it is important to control the impact of hunting on natural resources, in keeping with the principle of sustainable development and in compliance with the legal instruments of the Council of Europe, in particular the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention).

3. The Assembly regrets, however, that among the Council of Europe member states, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Russia, San Marino and Serbia and Montenegro have not yet signed the Bern Convention.

4. The countries of central and eastern Europe are in an unusual situation in that their game potential is far greater than that of most of the western countries, since hunting was relatively restricted in the communist era. Some species that have become or are becoming extinct in the rest of Europe are still abundant in central and east European countries, as is the case, for example, of certain large carnivores much sought after by hunting trophy enthusiasts: the brown bear (*ursus arctos*), the wolf (*canis lupus*) and the lynx (*lynx lynx*).

5. In this context, the Assembly is concerned at the changes made in recent years in central and east European countries concerning the liberalisation of hunting. Nevertheless, it believes that, if managed professionally and scientifically, the hunting tourism resulting from that liberalisation may prove to be a factor of development for rural and mountain regions. It may also make a significant contribution to rural tourism, ecotourism, job creation and the preservation of local traditions.

6. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

6.1. draw up a European charter on hunting, as a guide setting out common principles and good practices for hunting, particularly for the organisation of hunting tourism on the continent;

6.2. set up a mixed pan-European network, made up of hunters and ornithologists, with the task of monitoring migratory bird populations along the major migration routes;

6.3. harmonise, on a European scale, the systems for training hunters, which should be based on a common core syllabus backed up by specific training courses resulting, where applicable, in the awarding of a European hunting permit;

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1. (see [Doc. 10337](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Coifan). Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 23 November 2004



- 6.4. invite the member states to take measures with a view to:
- a. signing and ratifying, if they have not already done so, the Bern Convention and ensuring that its provisions are transposed into domestic legislation and complied with, particularly with regard to the protected species listed in Appendix II thereto;
  - b. applying in a uniform manner the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites – the “Washington Convention”);
  - c. encouraging dialogue between associations of hunters and ecologists, anti-hunting and animal welfare organisations, and between hunters and farmers, to foster better cooperation for the preservation of the environmental balance;
  - d. integrating hunting tourism in economic and ecological development programmes in rural and mountain regions;
  - e. encouraging the implementation of the new European Union Rural Development Regulations, particularly their provisions concerning wildlife protection.