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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

41st meeting
Strasbourg, 30 November – 3 December 2021

New complaint: 2020/8

**Alleged threat to biodiversity due to draft
amendment of hunting legislation (Bulgaria)**

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by
The Ministry of Environment and Water of Bulgaria*



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

**Alleged threat to biodiversity due to proposed
draft amendment of hunting legislation
– (Bulgaria) –**

29 January 2021

The Complaint 2020/8 „Alleged threat to biodiversity due to proposed draft amendment of hunting legislation“ has been received by the Ministry of Environment and Water from the Bern Convention Secretariat on 28 October 2020. The complaint refers to draft amendments proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (MAFF) to the National Hunting and Game protection Act.

The draft was elaborated by interinstitutional working group with representatives from government bodies, including Veterinary services, the Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW), and Hunting organisations. The main goal was to determine appropriate measures against dissemination of African swine fever. Despite several discussions and expressed opinions against the proposed free use of forbidden methods for hunting the draft was uploaded for public consultation. At the same time the draft was formally send for consultation with MoEW, and MoEW has returned two official letters to the MAFF and the Executive Forest Agency (EFA) in order to draw the attention to the inexpediency and illegality of the proposed amendments. MoEW does not support the proposed amendments on the ground that they contradict Art. 44 and Annex 5 of the Biological Diversity Act (BDA), Annex VI of Council Directive 92/43 / EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, Annex IV of Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds as well as number of other international agreements to which Bulgaria is a party, including the Berne Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species, etc.

In addition, MoEW has indicated that the use of these hunting methods will inevitably lead to a negative impact on local populations of a number of species, including protected ones, if the prohibited methods are indiscriminate. For example, the use of poisons will directly affect all predators, carnivores and scavengers that feed on the remains of poisoned animals.

The use of non-selective and non-hunting methods are extremely risky to apply and, in addition to destroying all animals, they endanger human health and life. In view of the above-mentioned, MoEW does not consider the use of these prohibited methods to be effective in achieving the goal set in the draft law, namely to reduce the wild boar population as response to dissemination of the African swine

fever. It is necessary to use the existing permitted selective methods of hunting in higher intensity, introduction of material incentives for hunters, etc.

The MoEW has also proposed alternative solutions to reduce the wild boar population, based on the recommendations of the competent international organizations in the field of animal health, including the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), which include stopping the feeding of wild boars during the winter season, increasing biosecurity, etc.

A similar opinion was expressed by a number of other members of the Hunting Council, namely the representatives of the University of Forestry, Professional Hunting Association in Bulgaria (PLAB), the National Hunting and Fishing Association "Union of Hunters and Fishermen in Bulgaria", scientific, civil and non-governmental organizations and others. Following the above, at the meeting of the Hunting Council, held on 27.10.2020 it was decided to withdraw the draft amendment and to have additional discussion in the working group in order to remove the disputed texts and reach a consensus. We expect this action to be undertaken by the MAFF and the EFA.

In order to answer the Complaint 2020/8 the MoEW has sent a request to the MAFF and EFA to seek the opinion of both institutions in respect to it.

The answer, received from the Executive Forest Agency informed MoEW that all the controversial amendments are discussed with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) and Four Paws Bulgaria and both organisations are satisfied by the results.

We expect the BSPB as the Complainant to confirm it.

In conclusion, we would like to assure you that the policies of the Ministry of Environment and Water are fully oriented towards the protection of life and health of both humans and animals and does not support controversial amendments with dubious effectiveness, contrary to good practices, and established international standards.