



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Delegations

Subject: Cormorant management plan
– Note from the French delegation

Delegations will find attached a note from the French delegation on the above question, which will be examined under "Other business" at the meeting of the Environment Council on 21 June 2011.

Cormorant management plan

- Note from the French delegation -

The cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) is protected under the general system of protection for all species of birds referred to in Article 1 of Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds, which is known as the "Birds Directive".

Alongside the rapid growth in populations in the 1980s, arising particularly as a result of that protection, there has been an increase in the distribution areas of wintering populations in France: fish-farming industries in inland areas, where the presence of this species causes significant damage, have joined the river routes which are a traditional breeding grounds for this species. France, which is at the centre of European migratory routes, has become the most important wintering area for this species. However the issues and challenges of its presence are widely shared by other European countries, in particular Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, Finland and Denmark.

At the Council meeting of ministers responsible for agriculture in November 2008, the majority of ministers recognised that the excessive number of cormorants in Europe poses a problem for aquaculture. They expressed support for managing the population of this bird species at a European level, whilst respecting the need for environmental and species conservation as well as the interests of the aquaculture industry.

On 4 December 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on a European Cormorant Management Plan to minimise the increasing impact of cormorants on fish stocks, fishing and aquaculture (Kindermann Report, 2008). The European Parliament referred the matter to the European Commission, which set up a working party of Member States on the issue in January 2009, but the draft European management plan was left unfinished.

Three key issues have now led France to renew its request that the European Commission establish a European cormorant population management plan, and to seek the support of the EU Member States:

- **Predation by cormorants on wild species of fish, and on fish farms, is significant.** Unless this is managed at a national and community level, the impact of cormorants on fish farming stocks, and more generally on fishery resources, is particularly disadvantageous for many aquaculture production businesses (aquaculture ponds) and fishing businesses.
- **The issues and challenges that the presence and protection of this species entail are unquestionably shared at a European level,** particularly on account of both the numbers of cormorants (the European population is estimated as being at least 1.8 million, that is a twentyfold increase in the last 25 years), and the migratory nature of the species.
- **The lack of a joint and coordinated response is known to undermine the effectiveness of measures taken at a national level** to protect wild fish species and to prevent significant damage to fish farming, whilst those measures not only remain within the framework set by Directive 79/409, but are also fully warranted given local conditions. A coordinated response by the Member States in question, with the support of the European Union, would help strengthen the effectiveness of national measures, and this would be in the ultimate interests of the protection and social acceptance of the species.

This European management plan designed to regulate cormorant populations more effectively could be based on the following key principles:

- the retention of the favourable conservation status of this species;
- the setting up of a Europe-wide comprehensive, reliable and uniform system for assessing the cormorant population numbers, population changes and geographical distribution;
- at an initial stage, the adoption of a Community initiative implemented voluntarily throughout Europe, including those Member States with major breeding grounds and where no action has been taken to date (egg sterilisation, in particular);
- at a later stage, should voluntary action prove ineffective, review of the question of making the European management plan legally binding.
