

# Resolution on illegal bird hunting in Malta

2007/2531(RSP) - 15/03/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the hunting and trapping of migratory birds in spring in Malta with 300 votes in favour, 253 against and 35 abstentions, taking note of the report on the fact-finding mission of the Committee of Petitions, and supporting the recommendations in the report.

To recall, Parliament had received several petitions against the practice of hunting and trapping migratory birds in spring in Malta, including a petition from the Belgian Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, signed by 300 000 people in Europe, more than 4 000 of whom were from Malta. 115 000 people in Europe, notably from the UK, petitioned the Maltese Government in February 2007 in protest against the spring hunting. The Petitions Committee found that, although certain efforts had been made by the Maltese authorities responsible to bring national legislation and its application into line with Community law, the survival of populations of several species of migratory birds still faced serious threats from illegal hunting and trapping when birds of those species pass through Malta during their spring migration. Opinion polls appeared to show that a broad majority of Maltese society is against current hunting practices. However, the Government of Malta had decided to open a spring hunting season for Turtle Dove and Quail, both declining species, from 10 April to 20 May 2007, and a trapping season from 26 March to 20 May 2007.

The Commission was investigating whether Malta's transposition of the Birds Directive fulfils the requirements of the Directive and whether the legislation is being correctly applied, and has commenced infringement proceedings against Malta for failure to comply fully with Article 9 of the Directive. Parliament shared the concerns expressed in the report on the fact-finding mission, in particular in respect of the authorisation given as regards the hunting of resting migratory birds in spring and the illegal hunting and the trapping of protected species, including in areas protected under Community law. It condemned all types of illegal hunting in all Member States, and called on the Maltese Government to fully comply with the Birds Directive, relevant Community law and the terms of the Accession Treaty as signed by the Maltese Government. It reminded the Maltese government of the duty to cooperate in good faith.

It welcomed the decision of the Maltese Government to address cases of abuse, inter alia, by increasing fines to a maximum of EUR 14 000 and providing for terms of imprisonment of up to two years and the permanent revocation of hunting licences in the case of recidivists.