

European Commission
Ms Vesna VALANT
DG ENVI, BRU/BERL/11/180
1049 Brussels

Sint-Niklaas, 15 April 2010

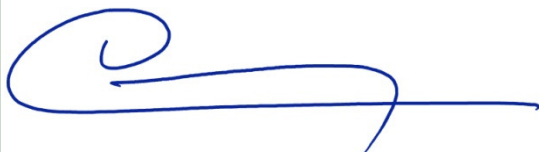
Concerns: Spring hunting in Malta 2010

Dear Ms Valant,

In spite of its conviction by the European Court of Justice on 10 September 2009 EU Member State Malta will once again declare the hunting season open for quails (*Coturnix coturnix*) and European turtle doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) from 24 until 30 April 2010. Although the Maltese Government has set quota restrictions this time for both of these migrant bird species (quail: 3,900 and European turtle doves: 3,600) the hunting of birds during their migration to the breeding grounds in Europe violates the provisions of Articles 7 and 9 of Council Directive 74/409/EEG of 2 April 1979 as regards the conservation of wild birds (Birds directive). As regards migrant birds the Member States have to ensure that the species covered by hunting legislation are not hunted during the breeding season or during their migration to their breeding grounds. Moreover, the numbers of both of these species have dropped considerably throughout Europe; hence the unconditional protection of quails and European turtle doves in Flanders.

During successive visits our organization has established that these birds are only shot for pleasure in view of the fact that the hunters often do not take home the wounded or shot birds but abandon them in the fields. This is absolutely not a "judicious use" of wild birds, as set out in art. 9, 1, C. Moreover spring hunting in Malta has taught us that the hunting season is abused to kill other, unconditionally protected migrant bird species. As regards the 'strictly supervised conditions', as set out in the aforementioned article, we assume that there are none. The police departments in Malta are so understaffed that efficient control in the field is almost inexistent. Our association will petition the Commission to ban spring hunting in Malta.

Yours sincerely,



Paul COECKELBERGHS
Secretary



Jan RODTS
Managing director