



PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND ANIMAL RIGHTS  
CASA LEONI, ST JOSEPH HIGH ROAD, SANTA VENERA, MALTA

20<sup>th</sup> February, 2014

Ms Julie Girling, MEP  
European Parliament  
Rue Wiertz  
Willy Brandt 05M091  
B-1047 Brussels

Dear Ms. Girling

Thank you for your letter and your interest in the implementation of the EC Birds Directive in Malta.

May I assure you and your constituents that Malta is fully committed to the implementation of the EC Birds Directive. In our country, implementation of the Birds Directive falls under the responsibility of the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights within the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change. The Parliamentary Secretariat has a dedicated institutional structure, namely the Wild Birds Regulation Unit, which together with a number of other institutional stakeholders, is responsible for the correct implementation of the Birds Directive.

You may wish to note that any derogations applied by Malta under Article 9 of the Birds Directive adhere strictly to the relevant legal and environmental parameters stipulated in the EU and national legislation. This adherence is strictly monitored and supervised not only by the relevant national structures, but also by the European Commission, with which we maintain a constant and fruitful dialogue. Reports on the outcome of such derogations are submitted to the European Commission, and are also publically available on the website <http://msdec.gov.mt/en/Pages/WBRU/Reports-and-Statistics.aspx>

Extensive information about Malta's national legal framework in this area is available under the following link: <http://msdec.gov.mt/en/Pages/WBRU/Legislation--Policy.aspx>.

It may be of interest to your constituents that enforcement of the relevant provisions of the Birds Directive constitutes one of the highest priorities of my Ministry. A revamped legal framework adopted in October 2013 (S.L. 504.71 - Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations) envisages penalties for infringements, which are objectively amongst the harshest in Europe. For example, offenders illegally targeting protected birds may face financial fines of up to

€15,000, confiscation, permanent revocation of relevant licenses, imprisonment of up to 3 years and possibility of mandatory community service.

Moreover, Malta has established a robust enforcement regime in the field, through coordination amongst several law enforcement agencies, including the dedicated Specialist Enforcement Branch of Wild Birds Regulation Unit, the Malta Police Force, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, and the Armed Forces of Malta.

During peak migration periods of protected birds, Malta deploys the highest ratio of enforcement officers in the field per square km of countryside anywhere in Europe (roughly one enforcement officer per 2 square km of countryside). Work is also underway to establish a dedicated Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit within the Police Force.

As it is the case in any area of law enforcement, isolated incidents of illegal targeting of protected species do unfortunately occur from time to time; however whenever such incidents happen, perpetrators are invariably brought to face justice and bear the full brunt of the law. Indeed, with over 95% conviction rate for bird-related crime, our record of prosecution is comparable to best practices EU-wide.

Moreover, the Maltese Government places significant emphasis on education and awareness raising, which are implemented through hunter education programmes, as well as through various initiatives and programmes implemented jointly with the non-governmental organisations and civil society groups. The Maltese Ornithology Committee, which provides a high level platform for stakeholder involvement in the area of conservation of wild birds is particularly instrumental in this regard.

In parallel, habitat and species conservation measures are also being implemented through various measures including through designation and management of protected areas, habitat restoration and species re-introduction programmes. More information on conservation initiatives is available on the website of the Malta Environment and Planning Authority's website [www.mepa.org.mt](http://www.mepa.org.mt).

Should you require any specific or detailed information to any of the above, please feel free to contact me.

Yours Sincerely



Roderick Galdes  
Parliamentary Secretary  
For Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights