

**Question for written answer E-009786/2011
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Andrea Zanoni (ALDE)

Subject: Alarming campaign in support of wolf hunting in Italy

In Italy the wolf (*Canis lupus*) is a strictly protected species, as it is listed in Annex IV to the Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive)¹. Furthermore, in accordance with Article 12 of the directive, all forms of deliberate capture or killing of specimens of this species are prohibited.

According to press reports, in early 2011 a number of dead wolves were found in the Ravenna area of the Italian Apennines, between the Faenza and Brisighella mountains. At least one of the wolves was confirmed by the local police to have been killed with a shotgun. This serious incident is the tangible outcome of a shocking press campaign, strongly supported by hunting organisations, which blames wolves for problems in the Italian livestock sector. Furthermore, poaching, which is on the increase, has been, in a sense, given political backing by a proposal approved in July 2011 by the Chamber of Deputies' standing committee on agriculture, which, if brought into law, could allow wolf hunting for the 'prevention of serious damage to crops and livestock', as is permitted under the derogation provided for in Article 16(b) of the above-mentioned directive.

This proposal has been strongly criticised by leading environmental groups – the WWF, the LIPU (Italian society for the protection of birds), the LAC (league for the abolition of hunting), the LAV (anti-vivisection league) and the ENPA (national body for animal protection) – as it is based not on scientific evidence but on age-old and unfounded fears, and does not take into account the extremely important role a large predator such as the wolf can play in combating the artificial and excessive proliferation of wild boar, which were released into the wild for hunting purposes and whose numbers are now completely out of control. Furthermore, it would appear that the cost of the total damage attributable to the predatory behaviour of wolves in recent times amounts to no more than EUR 50 000 for Italy as a whole. In light of the above, can the Commission:

1. provide a precise definition of the term 'serious damage' to crops, livestock, etc.;
2. say whether, should the competent Italian authorities permit the slaughter of wolves, they would do so in breach of the Habitats Directive's provisions, given that other solutions to the problem are available, which do not involve the unacceptable slaughter of wolves – for example, the speedy compensation of farmers suffering damage caused by wolves and, as a preventative measure, the introduction of livestock protection systems.

¹ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.