The Commission would like to underline that, while it was not invited to intervene at this hearing on ‘cormorant predation on fish populations’, its services have participated in and followed the discussions on the cormorant with great interest.

Cormorants are part of the Europe’s native fauna and are protected under the Birds Directive¹. The Commission recognises that cormorants may be a source of conflict with other interests, including aquaculture and the conservation of protected fish species. In some regions the decline of the Grayling may be linked to predation by cormorants.

The Strategic Guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture² adopted by the Commission in May 2021 recognise that predators can be a challenge to aquaculture activities. This is why the future guidance document on environmental performance in the aquaculture sector, envisaged among other actions in those Guidelines, will include the mapping of good practices on the management of predators.

The Commission is not planning an EU-wide cormorant management plan as Member States already have the necessary tools to deal with conflict situations with cormorants. Namely, Article 9 of the Birds Directive gives Member States the flexibility to derogate from the strict protection provisions under the conditions specified therein.

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