



MEP Bart Staes
ASP 5F262
Wiertzstraat 60
1047 Brussels

Commissioner Karmenu Vella
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

23th of March 2015,

Dear Commissioner Vella,

Subject: The illegal trapping of migratory birds in Cyprus

BirdLife, a global partnership of independent organisations, has published an article¹ about the huge practise of illegal trapping of migratory birds in Cyprus.

According to the article, in 2014 more than 2 million migratory birds were illegally trapped in Cyprus through 'mist' nets or so-called limesticks (birds feet got stuck in glue). The trapping of migratory birds has only one purpose: 'ambelopoulia', a local delicacy of Blackcaps or other tiny songbirds. Estimated, the trade in caught migratory birds would have resulted in a profit of 15 million euros a year, since a dozen birds can be sold for the price of 80 euros. Apart from catching 'profitable' birds, also other species got caught like swallows and owls.

In 1974 the government of Cyprus implemented a law which made the trapping of songbirds and migratory birds illegal, but in reality it did not result in a disappearance of the practice or the prosecution of poachers. The lack of effective measurements taken by the government of Cyprus is in conflict with the European law on the 'conservation of wild

¹BirdLife, *Tackling illegal trapping in Cyprus*: <http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/tackling-illegal-trapping-cyprus> and BirdLife Cyprus, *UPDATE on illegal bird trapping activity in Cyprus*: <http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/upload/Trapping%20Reports/Autumn2014TrappingReport.pdf>



birds² and the council directive of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EC)³.

Is the Commission prepared to take actions against the government of Cyprus because of the lack of effective enforcement of the European law on conservation of wild birds? Has the Commission other methods to undertake action?

How will the Commission⁴ support the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan of BirdLife Cyprus, which is now in its final discussion? Will the Commission update its 'roadmap towards eliminating killing, trapping and trade of birds' in line with the findings mentioned in the Cypriote Strategic Action Plan?

I'm looking forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Bart Staes, MEP (Flemish Greens)

²EU legislation on conservation of wild birds: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=URISERV:ev0024&qid=1426841604436&from=NL>

³ Council Directive on conservation of wild birds: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31979L0409&from=EN>

⁴ EC roadmap towards eliminating illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/docs/Roadmap%20illegal%20killing.pdf>