

### **Wild Birds Regulation Unit hosts informal meeting of EU Hunting Directors**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> November, the Wild Birds Regulation Unit proudly hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Informal Meeting of EU Hunting Directors in Malta. The meeting is an informal annual gathering of high-level representatives of hunting and game management administrations from EU member states.

This year's meeting, which took place at the Victoria Hotel in Sliema, was attended by representatives of hunting administrations from Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden, as well as by representatives of the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE) and the European Commission.

During the two-day event, the participants discussed a wide range of issues concerning sustainable hunting governance and game management practices across the EU. Latest policy developments at EU level, including action to control invasive species, updates on the implementation of EU Birds Directive, initiatives to phase out leaded munitions, and the upcoming review of nature legislation were discussed amongst other topics. Hunting Directors also discussed the legal and institutional governance landscape pertaining to hunting in various EU member states, as well as topical presentations such as innovative alternatives to leaded munitions in Germany, the management of African swine fever in wild boar populations in Latvia, the tools for efficient regulation of hoofed game in the Czech Republic, the legal reform in Estonia, and the monitoring of wolf population in Slovakia, amongst other issues.

Hunting governance and enforcement in Malta also featured prominently on the agenda, with two presentations delivered by the Wild Birds Regulation Unit's officials to highlight challenges and opportunities in this field, with a particular emphasis on enforcement. It was noted that due to the country's bio-geographic context, Malta is facing a significantly different set of circumstances compared to other EU Member States. These circumstances, amongst other include territorial constraints, extremely high population density, absence of resident game populations (with the exception of wild rabbit) and reliance on bird migration to sustain traditional hunting practices. The use of modern technologies in hunting regulation and enforcement in Malta, such as unmanned aerial surveillance vehicles, electronic real time game reporting system, and portable GIS-enabled devices, was also highlighted.

Towards the end of their stay in Malta, EU Hunting Directors also had an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the local traditional hunting practices, which were explained in a commentary during a field trip, as well as with Maltese history and culture, during visit to Mnajdra and Ħaġar Qim prehistoric temple complexes, and to Mdina.