18. Stresses the importance of NGOs and women’s organisations in identifying women’s problems and in finding adequate solutions, particularly the Gender Task Force under the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, in developing the democratic processes and stability in the region; encourages the work of these NGOs and suggests the sharing of best practice in the field of gender equality among the countries concerned, as well as with European NGO networks;

19. Calls on the Commission to provide pre-accession funds for strengthening women’s rights in the Balkans, in particular through women’s NGOs and women’s organisations;

20. Calls on the Commission closely to monitor and to press for the fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria, in particular in relation to equal opportunities for women and men and women’s rights in the candidate and potential candidate countries; invites the candidate and potential candidate countries of the Balkans to harmonise their anti-discrimination and gender equality legislation with the acquis communautaire in view of possible future accession;

21. Calls on the Commission to ensure that its policy laid down in the above mentioned communication of 5 March 2008, which is directed at strengthening NGOs in the Western Balkans, should be particularly focused on the empowerment of women’s participation in civil society;

22. Stresses that Roma women suffer from multiple discrimination (racial, ethnic, gender), and are more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion; therefore a differentiated approach is needed to tackle these problems: Roma women in particular encounter prejudice in many countries and are affected by lack of citizenship, have limited access to quality education, face inadequate living conditions, are unable to access healthcare services and encounter high unemployment and low levels of political and public participation in society;

23. Notes with concern the lack of up-to-date statistical information and indicators which would assist in the assessment of the situation of women in the Balkans;

24. Calls on the candidate and potential candidate countries in the Balkans to guarantee the elimination of all forms of discrimination and prejudice against women who suffer from multiple discrimination, especially the Roma; calls on the Balkan countries to introduce an effective and practical antidiscrimination strategy to be implemented at all levels (national and local);

25. Calls on the European Institute for Gender Equality also to monitor gender equality in the countries of the Balkans with special attention on candidate countries;

26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the governments and the Parliaments of the Member States and the candidate and potential candidate countries concerned.

Towards a ‘European Cormorant Management Plan’

P6_TA(2008)0583

European Parliament resolution of 4 December 2008 on the adoption of a European Cormorant Management Plan to minimise the increasing impact of cormorants on fish stocks, fishing and aquaculture (2008/2177(INI))

(2010/C 21 E/05)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002 of 20 December 2002 on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the Common Fisheries Policy (1),

— having regard to the Commission Communication of 11 April 2008 on the role of the CFP in implementing an ecosystem approach to marine management (COM(2008)0187),


— having regard to the Commission Communication of 28 May 2002 on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (COM(2002)0181),

— having regard to the Commission Communication of 19 September 2002 entitled ‘A strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture’ (COM(2002)0511),

— having regard to the conclusions of the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 27 and 28 January 2003 in Brussels,

— having regard to its resolution of 15 February 1996 on the cormorant problem in European fisheries (2),


— having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A6-0434/2008),

A. whereas the number of cormorants (Phalacrocorax carbo) has been rapidly growing on the territory of the European Union, with the total population having grown twenty-fold over the past 25 years and now estimated to comprise at least 1.7 to 1.8 million birds,

B. whereas proven and sustained damage has been suffered by aquaculture undertakings and stocks of many wild fish species in the inland waterways and along sea coasts in many Member States,

C. whereas implementing an ecosystem approach to the management of marine and coastal areas and inland waterways requires a balanced policy which can reconcile the differing but entirely legitimate objectives of the sustainable use of fish stocks: bird conservation and the maintenance of diverse bird and fish fauna, on the one hand, and the legitimate interest of fishermen and fish farmers in the commercial use of fish stocks, on the other; whereas, furthermore, Council Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 of 18 September 2007 establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel (4) sets an example for a balanced policy of this type,

D. whereas, moreover, in many Member States cormorants have caused proven permanent damage to vegetation in certain geographical areas,

E. whereas there is at present no adequate bilateral or multilateral scientific or administrative coordination, either within the EU or with the third countries concerned, to address this phenomenon and counteract this trend, particularly with a view to collecting reliable and generally recognised data on the total cormorant population in the EU,

F. whereas the sub-species Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis (‘continental cormorant’) was deleted from the list of bird species to which special conservation measures in terms of habitat apply as far back as 1997 (Annex I to the Wild Birds Directive), since it had attained a favourable conservation status by 1995 at the latest, whilst the sub-species Phalacrocorax carbo carbo (‘Atlantic cormorant’), which had never been endangered, was never included on that list at all,

(2) OJ C 65, 4.3.1996, p. 158.
G. whereas Article 9(1)(a), third indent, of the Wild Birds Directive permits the Member States to take temporary measures to prevent ‘serious damage’, provided that this does not jeopardise the conservation aims of the Directive (specifically, the favourable conservation status of the bird species in question),

H. whereas the risk of serious damage increases disproportionally the closer the cormorant population in a given region approaches the carrying capacity of the region’s large bodies of water, thus at the same time greatly reducing the effectiveness of local protective measures,

I. whereas the term ‘serious damage’, which is not clearly defined in Article 9(1)(a), third indent, of the Wild Birds Directive and is the criterion permitting Member States to take direct action to regulate a bird population, has led to considerable legal uncertainty in national administrations and represents a major potential source of social conflict,

J. whereas the conclusions of the international committees of experts on the cormorant problem in Europe are fundamentally contradictory, as the concluding reports by Redcafe (1), FRAP (2) and EIFAC (3) show,

K. whereas, although the approval and funding of measures to restrict cormorant damage falls within the area of responsibility of the Member States and/or regions, the migratory nature of the cormorant means that sustainable management of populations can only be ensured by coordinated action by all affected Member States and regions with the help of the European Union,

L. whereas the Commission, in its abovementioned Communication entitled ‘A strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture’, in the section headed ‘Predation by protected species’, states that: ‘Aquaculture facilities may suffer from predation by some protected wild species of birds and mammals. Predation may significantly reduce the profitability of an aquaculture enterprise and predator control is difficult, especially in large extensive ponds or lagoons. The efficacy of scaring devices is doubtful, because animals quickly become used to them. In the case of cormorants, probably the only protection for fisheries and aquaculture activities consists in the management of the still-growing wild populations’,

M. whereas the Council, at its meeting of 27 and 28 January 2003 stated, in connection with a strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture, that it ‘is also necessary to develop a common strategy on fish-eating animals (for instance, cormorants)’,

N. whereas according to the Guidelines for Population Level Management Plans for Large Carnivores (4) recently issued by the Commission, particularly as regards the clarification of the terms ‘favourable conservation status’ and ‘minimum viable population’, it may be easier to achieve conservation aims if the number of individuals of a species is kept below an area’s theoretical maximum carrying capacity,

O. whereas the wide variety of national, regional and local measures attempted so far have clearly had only a very limited impact in restricting damage by cormorant populations,

P. whereas in recent years the resources available for data collection in the fisheries sector (e.g. budget heading 11 07 02: Support for the management of fishery resources (improvement of scientific advice)) have not been fully exploited,

(1) Redcafe (Reducing the Conflict between Cormorants and Fisheries on a Pan-European Scale) is a project funded by the Commission under the 5th Research and Development Framework Programme, concluded in 2005.
(2) FRAP (Framework for Biodiversity Reconciliation Action Plans) is a project funded by the Commission under the 5th Research and Development Framework Programme, concluded in 2006.
(3) EIFAC (European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission) is an FAO regional fisheries advisory body for inland fisheries and aquaculture.
Q. whereas the derogations for local damage prevention currently in force in nearly all Member States under Article 9 of the Wild Birds Directive have not led to a sustainable alleviation of the problem in spite of considerable administrative expenditure and social costs,

R. whereas, in spite of repeated requests from those affected (fishermen’s and anglers’ associations, aquaculture undertakings, etc.), from the scientific world and from bodies and delegations from the Member States and regions, the Commission has not been prepared to submit new proposals to resolve this Europe-wide problem,

1. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, by promoting regular scientific research, to provide reliable and generally recognised data on the total size and structure of cormorant populations in Europe, as well as their fertility and mortality parameters;

2. Proposes that, by means of systematic monitoring of cormorant populations supported by the EU and the Member States, a reliable, generally recognised and annually updated database should be drawn up on the development, size and geographical distribution of cormorant populations in Europe, with closer involvement on the part of fishery research institutes and fishery authorities;

3. Calls on the Commission to put out to tender, and finance, a scientific project aimed at supplying an estimation model for the size and structure of the total cormorant population on the basis of currently available data on breeding population, fertility and mortality;

4. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to foster in an appropriate manner the creation of suitable conditions for bilateral and multilateral scientific and administrative exchanges, both within the EU and with third countries, identifying the origin of the findings, communications, contributions or publications, and in particular the statistics, in such a way as to make clear whether they come from academic or official sources or from associations, in particular nature and bird conservation associations;

5. Calls on the Commission to carry out a comparative study of the contradictory conclusions concerning a cormorant management plan reached by Redcafe, on the one hand, and FRAP and EIFAC, on the other;

6. Calls on the Commission to set up a working party with a binding mandate to carry out within one year a systematic cost-benefit analysis of possible cormorant management actions at Member State level, to assess their credibility on the basis of logical and scientific criteria and to submit a recommendation; the composition of the working party should reflect the degree to which the stakeholders are affected;

7. Calls on the Commission to submit a cormorant population management plan in several stages, coordinated at European level and seeking to integrate cormorant populations into the environment as developed and cultivated by man in the long term without jeopardising the objectives of the Wild Birds Directive or Natura 2000 as regards fish species and marine and freshwater ecosystems;

8. Urges the Commission, in the interests of greater legal certainty and uniform interpretation, to provide without delay a clear definition of the term ‘serious damage’ as used in Article 9(1)(a), third indent, of the Wild Birds Directive;

9. Calls on the Commission also to produce more generalised guidance on the nature of the derogations allowed under Article 9(1) of the Wild Birds Directive, including further clarification of the terminology where any ambiguity may exist;

10. Urges the Commission and the Member States to promote the sustainable management of cormorant populations by means of increased scientific and administrative coordination, cooperation and communication, and to create appropriate conditions for the drafting of a Europe-wide cormorant population management plan;
11. Calls on the Commission to consider all the legal means at its disposal to reduce the negative effects of cormorant populations on fishing and aquaculture and to take into account, when developing its initiative for the promotion of aquaculture in Europe, the positive effects of a Europe-wide cormorant population management plan and, where appropriate, to propose solutions to the cormorant problem in this context;

12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make some of the funds earmarked in the EU budget for data collection in the fisheries sector, in particular under heading 11 07 02: Support for the management of fishery resources (improvement of scientific advice), available for investigations, analyses and forecasts of the cormorant population on the territory of the European Union, in preparation for the future regular monitoring of these species;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.