

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

# Working Documents

1984-1985

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6 March 1985

DOCUMENT 2-1785/84

## Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on the Environment,  
Public Health and Consumer Protection

on Community trade in seal products and in particular  
products deriving from the white-coat pups of harp and  
hooded seals (*Pagophilus groenlandicus* and *Cystophora  
cristata*)

Rapporteur: Mr Hemmo MUNTINGH

PE 95.812/fin.  
Or. De.



At its sitting of 11 September 1984, the European Parliament referred the motion for a resolution tabled by Mrs CASTLE and others (Doc. 2-432/84) pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, as the committee responsible.

At its meeting of 20 November 1984, the committee decided to draw up a report and appointed Mr MUNTINGH rapporteur.

The committee considered the draft report at its meetings of 27 and 28 February 1985. It unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution as a whole.

The following took part in the vote: Mrs SCHLEICHER, acting chairman; Mr COLLINS, vice-chairman; Mr MUNTINGH, rapporteur; Mr ALBER, Mr BANOTTI, Mr BOMBARD, Mr BONACCINI (deputizing for Mr MORAVIA), Mr HUGHES, Mrs JACKSON, Mr LAMBRIAS (deputizing for Mr MICHELINI), Mr van der LEK, Mrs LENTZ-CORNETTE, Mr MERTENS, Mr PEARCE, Mr ROELANTS du VIVER, Mr SHERLOCK and Mrs VAN HEMELDONCK (deputizing for Mr SCHMID).

The report was tabled on 1 March 1985.

The deadline for tabling amendments to this report will be indicated in the draft agenda for the part-session at which it will be debated.

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Annex 1 Motion for a resolution (Doc. 2-432/84)

Annex 2 Motion for a resolution (Doc. 2-591/84)

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

A

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on Community trade in seal products and in particular products deriving from the white-coat pups of harp and hooded seals (*Pagophilus groenlandicus* and *Cystophora cristata*)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the motion for a resolution by Mrs CASTLE and others on Community trade in seal products and in particular products deriving from the white-coat pups of harp and hooded seals (*Pagophilus groenlandicus* and *Cystophora cristata*) (Doc. 2-432/84) and the motion for a resolution by Lord BETHELL and others on the continuation of the EEC directive concerning the importation into Member States of skins of certain seal pups and products derived therefrom (Doc. 2-591/84),
- having regard to its resolution on Community trade in seal products and in particular products deriving from the whitecoat pups of harp and hooded seals (*Pagophilus groelandicus* and *cystophora cristata*)<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 March 1982 calling for a Community ban on imports of products derived from harp and hooded seals<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to its resolutions of 16 September 1982 and 19 November 1982 on the same subject<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution on the Commission's failure to implement Parliament's resolution (baby seals)<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to Council Directive 83/129/EEC concerning the importation into Member States of skins of certain seal pups and produces derived therefrom<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution on the protection of the monk seal<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (Doc. 2-1785/84),

<sup>1</sup>OJ No. C 87, 5.4.1982, p. 87

<sup>2</sup>OJ NO. C 267, 11.10.1982  
OJ No. C 334, 20.12.1982, p.135

<sup>3</sup>OJ No. C 267, 11.10.1982, p. 47

<sup>4</sup>OJ No. L 91, 9.4.1983, p. 30

<sup>5</sup>OJ No. C 77, 19.3.1984, p. 112

- A. welcoming the Council Decision of 28 March 1983 concerning a Community import ban on products derived from young harp and hooded seals, which entered into force on 1 October 1983 and will be valid for two years unless the Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission, should decide otherwise by a qualified majority,
  - B. noting with concern that the abovementioned ban expires on 1 October 1985,
  - C. noting that the senseless annual slaughter of seals still arouses a deep sense of outrage,
  - D. whereas it will continue to be necessary to protect harp and hooded seals in the future for the same fundamental reasons already advanced by Parliament in previous resolutions on this subject,
  - E. noting with the utmost concern the increasingly hopeless situation with regard to the continued survival of the monk seal in the Mediterranean Sea,
  - F. aware of the need for swift and effective action if there is still to be any chance of saving this species from extinction,
  - G. noting with appreciation the measures taken by the Commission since the adoption by the European Parliament of its resolution of February 1984 concerning the monk seal,
  - H. shocked to note that, in response to pressure from the Danish and Federal German Governments, the Council has, by Regulation No. 1872/84 of 28 June 1984 on Community measures relating to the environment, ruled out future financial participation by the Community in important measures to prevent the extinction of animal species other than birds, in other words including the monk seal, a fact which is deeply to be regretted,
1. Calls on the Commission to submit proposals as rapidly as possible to the Council extending for an indefinite period the present EEC Directive banning imports of skins of certain seal pups and products derived therefrom;
  2. Calls on the Commission, in accordance with the request contained in its resolutions of 11 March 1982, 16 September 1982 and 19 November 1982, to ensure that the EEC Directive banning the import of these products is applied in unambiguous fashion to all seals less than one year old;
  3. Calls on the Commission to continue to do its utmost to promote measures to save the monk seal;
  4. Calls on the Commission to include in the new preliminary draft budget a new item entitled 'Protection of endangered animal species of Community interest';
  5. Calls on the Member States bordering the Mediterranean Sea to do everything in their power, as quickly as possible, to help save the monk seal in the Mediterranean Sea;
  6. Calls on the Governments of France and Greece to make available as rapidly as possible the financial and technical resources for the establishment of reception and breeding stations in their countries;

7. Calls on the Governments of France and Greece to ensure that all the necessary administrative procedures relating to the establishment of such stations can be completed as swiftly as possible;
8. Calls on the Greek Government to implement effective protection of the area around the Northern Sporades as swiftly as possible;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the Governments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT1. EXTENSION OF THE BAN ON THE IMPORT OF SKINS OF CERTAIN SEAL PUPS AND PRODUCTS DERIVED THEREFROM

1.1. Seldom has an issue in the field of nature conservancy caused feeling to run so high in Europe as in the case of the hunting of young hooded and harp seals. The European Parliament too has on various occasions concerned itself in depth with this subject:

- on 11 March 1982 a resolution was adopted, on the basis of the Maij-Weggen report (Doc. 1-984/81), calling among other things for a Community import ban on products derived from harp and hooded seals;
- on 16 September 1982 a resolution was adopted, on the basis of the motion for a resolution by Mr Johnson and others (Doc. 1-582/82), urging the Commission actually to implement the resolution of 11 March 1982 and make proposals;
- in October 1982 the Commission submitted a proposal providing for an import ban (COM(82) 639 final). With reference to this proposal, the European Parliament adopted a new resolution on 19 November 1982, on the basis of the Collins report (Doc. 1-831/82), underlining once again the importance of implementing the previous resolutions and incorporating a number of amendments to the Commission proposal;
- on 28 March 1983 the Council finally decided on a Community import ban on products derived from young harp and hooded seals.

1.2. This import ban entered into force on 1 October 1983 for a period of two years. To date, no proposals have been made by the Commission to extend the ban beyond this period, i.e. after 1 October 1985.

Against this background, two new motions for resolutions were tabled in the European Parliament, one by Mrs Castle and others (Doc. 2-432/84) dated 2 August 1984 and one by Lord Bethell and others (Doc. 2-591/84) dated 24 September 1984.

1.3. The situation with regard to hooded and harp seals appears to have changed since 1982/83.

Owing to the very low demand now for products derived from seal pups, there was a sharp drop in the numbers caught in 1983 and 1984. For harp seals, the number caught fell from around 165,000 in 1982 (with Canada accounting for approx. 140,000, Norway for approx. 25,000) to somewhat less than 50,000 in 1983 (only from Canada) and 20,000 in 1984 (again only from Canada); these figures apply to Canadian waters. In other areas where the harp seal is hunted, the number of animals slaughtered also dropped sharply. A sharp reduction in the number of hooded seals slaughtered can also be observed; figures for 1984 were not yet available, however, at the time this report was drawn up.

The changed circumstances have also resulted in the setting up of a 'Royal Commission on all aspects of sealing' in Canada (June 1984). The Royal Commission has been given broad terms of reference covering social



and cultural aspects, economic dimensions, costs, ethical considerations, the status of the species concerned, the relationship between fish and seals, the methods of slaughter employed and the importance of sealing to the economic prosperity of many Canadians. The Royal Commission must report to the Canadian Government by 30 September 1985 at the latest. Fairly soon after the Royal Commission had been set up, criticism was voiced, particularly by those active in nature conservation, of the one-sided composition of the Royal Commission, which was such as to bias it in favour of Canadian seal-hunting.

In January 1985, the Canadian Minister of Fisheries announced that the annual seal hunt in Canada would be considerably curtailed.

Furthermore, there have been reports that the emphasis of sealing will shift from hunting seal pups for their fur to hunting somewhat older animals with a view to the processing of leather and leather products.

- 1.4. The general impression is that the aim of the Community import ban has in fact, to a not insignificant extent, been attained; the objectionable practice of hunting seal pups is on the decline.

It should, however, be pointed out here that this is solely a result of the collapse of the market for seal products. In order to guarantee that the original intention has a lasting impact in the future, it will be essential to maintain the appropriate inducements, viz. the import ban on products.

In past years this measure has proved its worth and, for that reason alone, it should not be discarded.

- 1.5. Although, in practical terms, the original objective has been partially attained, it also has to be said that no response whatsoever has yet been forthcoming to the fundamental objections to sealing, insofar as it will ever be possible to respond to such objections. This circumstance also prompts the thought that, as soon as there is a revival of demand for the products in question, sealing will resume on the previous scale.

The following arguments in favour of fundamental opposition to sealing remain extremely important:

- hunting baby seals is unethical, immoral and cruel and will always be so; shifting the emphasis of sealing from baby seals to somewhat older animals (which may be envisaged) is equally reprehensible, not least because sealing will take place during the same season;
- the slaughter of (wild) animals for no other reason than the manufacture of luxury goods is and will remain unacceptable;
- to date there is not a shred of scientific evidence that seal populations need to be 'managed', for example, in the interests of the fishing industry; the prevention of over-fishing by the fishing industry itself is a more effective means of maintaining a healthy fisheries sector than making unfounded allegations about seals being responsible for the disappearance of over-exploited commercial varieties of fish;

- if it is not spelled out absolutely clearly that commercial sealing with a view to the manufacture of luxury products is unacceptable, it will be impossible to draw up satisfactory rules governing subsistence-level hunting by the indigenous population of countries such as Greenland.

- 1.6. Various considerations lead to the inevitable conclusion that the ban on imports of skins of seal pups and derived products should be extended for an indefinite period after 1 October 1985.

At the same time, the Commission should be asked to evaluate the results of the Canadian Royal Commission on all aspects of sealing and the European Parliament should be asked to draw up a report on its findings.

Your rapporteur would, however, point out that he is convinced that this Royal Commission will not be able to put forward arguments capable of meeting the fundamental objections to this form of hunting so that modification of the import ban on the basis of its report will not be necessary.

## 2. THE MONK SEAL

### 2.1. ACTION IS NEEDED NOW BUT MAY ALREADY BE TOO LATE

- 2.1.1. The monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) has also received much attention from the European Parliament in the past.

However, compared with the attention shown on many sides for the problems of the hooded seal and the harp seal, the non-committal and ineffective nature of much of the interest shown in the monk seal all too often appears rather hypocritical and inadequate.

Criticism has rightly been voiced of the hunting techniques employed against young harp and hooded seals in Canada. This attention paid to a species of animal whose numbers run into hundreds of thousands or even to more than a million contrasts sharply, however, with the lack of action on behalf of seals in European waters that are seriously threatened.

In the Baltic Sea, the stocks of all seal species there have declined considerably during this century; since 1900, the grey seal has declined from roughly 100,000 to around 1,500, the common seal over the same period from around 15,000 to around 200, and the ringed seal from around 500,000 to 7,000 - 12,000.

Since 1930, the number of common seals in the Waddenzee has dropped from 5,500 - 6,000 to approx. 4,500 at present; in the Dutch sector of the Waddenzee, where the problems are gravest, the number has dropped from around 3,000 to approx. 750 at the present time. The seal population in the Dutch Waddenzee can survive only through the arrival of fresh stocks from the more easterly sectors of the Waddenzee. Partly as a result of polluted water, its own reproductive capacity has become insufficient to maintain the level of the population.

The most serious example of a threatened species of seal is, however, to be found in the Mediterranean Sea. A previous report (Doc. 1-1401/83) already dealt at length with the rapid extinction of this species and sounded the alarm.

- 2.1.2. The situation with regard to the monk seal has only deteriorated still further in the meantime. Reports by research workers show that monk seals are to be found in fewer and fewer places. There are reports that in Greece the skins of monk seals are sent to market for sale and, in October 1984, it was reported that the last surviving monk seal in Sardinia had been shot dead.

Time is pressing more than ever if the monk seal is to be saved from extinction, assuming that this is still possible.

Only where the population of monk seals off the coast of Mauritania, which faces the Atlantic Ocean, is concerned, are the reports less gloomy (for example, MARCHESSAUX).

In the light of the gravity of the situation and the possibility that the progressive extinction of this species cannot be stopped, it has to be said that not enough has been, and is being, done to save the monk seal.

This observation is not, incidentally, intended as a criticism of the activities pursued by various persons and organizations, which are appreciated; it is directed at those who do nothing and, above all, at those who direct their indignation selectively at issues far away from home.

## 2.2. Action taken by the Commission

- 2.2.1. The valuable measures taken by the Commission within its limited range of options are worth a mention here. Over the period in question, the Commission has initiated or facilitated (through joint financing) the following activities:

- identification of areas of importance to the monk seal in order to ascertain where monk seals maintain their habitat or areas that would be suitable as habitats for the monk seal, with particular reference to Greek waters;
- programmes were drawn up and implemented with the aim of fostering more positive attitudes among fishermen towards the monk seal on the basis of experience gained on the Greek island of Alonissos;
- in cooperation with the Greek authorities, a three-year project was drawn up with the aim of protecting the monk seal in the Northern Sporades;
- a study was made into the viability of establishing and running reception and possible breeding stations for seals in the Mediterranean area;

- a procedure was drawn up for the reception and rescue of seals found abandoned and/or ill;
- methods were elaborated with the aim of drawing public attention to the need to protect the monk seal, in particular through a programme of information and education in schools on islands and along the coast.

2.2.2. New measures were recently taken by the Commission:

- aid will be provided for a new, two-year biological survey;
- further research will be carried out into the viability of a reception-cum-breeding station in Greek waters and into possible means of rescuing abandoned and/or sick animals;
- negotiations are still continuing on a three-year programme aimed at coordinating the various activities devoted to saving the monk seal (see also the answer by Mr NARJES to a question by Mr Francois Roelants du Vivier (OJ No. C 4, 1985, p. 14); this programme includes provision for measures relating to:
  - . the protection of monk seals living in the wild,
  - . public information and education aimed both at a broad public and at the local population (including fishermen),
  - . the holding of a seminar on the monk seal bringing together all the parties concerned, public authorities, non-governmental organizations, etc.,
  - . the establishment of a reception-cum-breeding station.

It is expected that agreement can be reached in the short term on a subsidy from the Community for this programme.

2.2.3. However, having expressed the appreciation for the measures which have been and are being taken by the Commission, it should, also be pointed out that further measures will perhaps not be feasible.

By a decision of the Council prompted, in particular, by the extremely negative attitude displayed in this connection by the Danish and Federal German Governments, there will no longer in the future be a legal basis in the Community budget for releasing funds for the protection of the monk seal. By this Council decision, appropriations entered under item 6611 (Protection of the natural environment in certain sensitive areas of Community interest) may be used only for expenditure covered by the Directive on the protection of birds.

This development is disastrous; the measures to protect the monk seal should be continued, otherwise the monk seal will become extinct. The Community should continue to play a role here in the future.

The new budget should therefore include a new item specifically earmarked for the protection of endangered species of animals so that once again there is a legal basis for the allocation of appropriations for the protection of the monk seal (and possibly other species in danger of extinction). The Commission should draw up appropriate proposals.

- 2.2.4. It goes without saying that the Member States concerned also have an important part to play in saving the monk seal. The Commission can act as a stimulus here and, through a clear statement of its position, the European Parliament can also help spur the Member States concerned to action.

The Member States concerned should, in particular, make available adequate technical and financial support, in the first instance, for the establishment of reception and breeding stations.

Top priority should be given in the short term to the setting up of such stations, since such action is, in all likelihood, the only possible way of ensuring that the monk seal can reproduce in sufficient numbers and repopulate the Mediterranean Sea.

This is a matter primarily for the French and Greek Governments because, in both French and Greek waters, the viability of such a station has been investigated and the preparations are so far advanced that a station of this nature can start functioning in the short term.

Financing is the only obstacle yet to be surmounted. In addition, the governments in question should adopt a constructive attitude in respect of the procedures to be completed with a view to obtaining all the necessary authorizations.

Time is pressing.

- 2.2.5. After breeding stations have been established, it is also essential that the attention of the Member States bordering the Mediterranean Sea be directed towards the setting up of protected nature reserves that are also suitable for repopulation by the monk seal.

Fortunately, the initial steps in this direction have been taken in a number of places along the Mediterranean coastline; however, some of those involved are not making sufficiently rapid progress. Greece in particular should be urged to take steps rapidly to designate the Northern Sporades a protected area.

- 2.2.6. Finally, it only remains to say that there is of course a task here for non-governmental organizations too. After the combined activities of nature conservancy organizations in the matter of hooded and harp seals had obtained the desired result, it would not have been a bad thing if more attention had been paid to the monk seal.

### 2.3. The outlook for the monk seal

- 2.3.1. It has already been pointed out a number of times in this report that it may already be too late to save the monk seal. If no reception-cum-breeding stations are established, it will certainly be too late because the conditions favouring the successful reproduction of the monk seal will not then exist and the small groups living in isolation will slowly but surely die out through lack of replacement stocks.

The chances of setting up two breeding stations must, from a technical angle, be judged very favourable.

In France (Port Cros) and Greece (e.g. in Rhodes) a breeding station could start functioning in the fairly short term. An important part of the infrastructure necessary for such a station already exists. In Greece in particular, it will be possible to locate such a station in, or very close to, protected possible habitats for the monk seal.

In addition to these possibilities, it should also be considered whether Madeira might be a suitable place for such a station. Here as well, there is apparently such a place in the vicinity of a suitable habitat for the monk seal.

- 2.3.2. A reception-cum-breeding station can, let it be said once again, also play an important part in information and educational activities. If a station of this nature were to be established in a place where it is also easily accessible for the local population and fishermen, it could exert a very positive influence.
- 2.3.3. Saving the monk seal calls for immediate and effective action, but will also take a long time. It will be at least 20 years before effective action taken now can produce the desired results; this is because the rate of reproduction of the monk seal is fairly slow (4 to 5 years from birth to fully grown animal).

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

tabled by Mrs CASTLE and others

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on Community trade in seal products and in particular products deriving from the white coat pups of harp and hooded seals (*Pagophilus groenlandicus* and *Cystrophora cristata*)

The European Parliament,

- A. having regard to the Motion for Resolution carried by the European Parliament on 11 March 1982 contained in the Maij-Weggen Report (Doc.1-984/81),
  - B. noting with approval the action subsequently taken by the Council in temporarily banning imports into the community of harp and hooded seal pup products,
  - C. noting with concern that this ban is due to end in October 1985,
  - D. noting also that the annual seal slaughters are still arousing as deep a sense of public outrage as before,
1. Calls for immediate examination by the European Commission of the steps needed to extend the ban after its expiry date;
  2. Requests the Commission urgently to put before the Council a proposal to extend the ban beyond 1985 in such a way as to ensure that there is no break in the ban, and to include products derived from all harp and hooded seals;
  3. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.

**MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

tabled by Lord BETHELL, Mr SELIGMAN, Mr HOWELL, Mr SIMPSON, Mr MUNTINGH, Mr SHERLOCK, Mr de COURCY LING, Dame Shelagh ROBERTS, Mr BEAZLEY, Mr GRIFFITHS, Lord DOURO, Mr MARSHALL, Mr PEARCE, Ms QUIN, Mr LOUWES, Mrs MAIJ-WEGGEN and Mr C. JACKSON

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on the continuation of the EEC directive concerning the importation into Member States of skins of certain seal pups and products derived therefrom

The European Parliament,

- A. recalling its resolution of 11 March 1982 in favour of a ban on the import into the European Community of products deriving from harp and hooded seals,
  - B. recalling also its resolutions of 16 September 1982 and 19 November 1982 on the same subject,
  - C. welcoming the Council's decision of 28 February 1983 to impose a ban on the import into the EEC of products coming from young harp and hooded seals, such a ban to take effect on 1 October 1983 and to extend for a two-year period unless the Council acting on a proposal from the Commission should decide otherwise by a qualified majority,
  - D. noting that the EEC directive mentioned above came into force on 1 October 1983,
  - E. whereas there is a continued necessity to protect harp and hooded seals for the reasons already agreed by the Parliament when it adopted the earlier resolutions on this subject,
  - F. whereas the Commission has not yet made the necessary proposals to the Council for an extension of the period of effectiveness of the directive beyond 1 October 1985,
1. Calls on the Commission to send the necessary proposals to the Council as soon as possible for the continuation sine die of the existing EEC directive;
  2. Invites the Commission to ensure that the EEC directive applies unambiguously to all seals less than one year old, as requested in the Parliament's resolutions of 11 March 1982, 16 September 1982 and 19 November 1982;
  3. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.