

KARMENU VELLA

Member of the European Commission

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Ms Ann Dahlerus
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Dear Ms Sandahl, Mr. Westman and Ms Dahlerus,

Thank you very much for your letter of 31 October 2014 addressed to my predecessor Commissioner Potočnik, concerning wolf hunting in Sweden.

I note that your letter is dated 31 October 2014, only a day after the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) decided to delegate decision-making on licensed wolf hunting to the County Administrative Boards. I understand that you are deeply concerned because a large-scale licensed hunt of wolves is in preparation and the public and NGOs will have limited possibilities to appeal the Counties' hunting decisions.

I appreciate that you have drawn my attention to this issue. The Commission closely follows these developments and, since December 2013, is aware of the plans in Sweden to delegate decision-making on wolf hunting in general to the Counties.

Please be assured that my services have assessed comprehensively the consequences of this delegation. Indeed, hunting decisions issued by the County Administrative Boards can only be made subject to an administrative review by SEPA, and are not made subject to a judicial review. The Commission in July 2014 launched an infringement case against Sweden for failure to ensure appropriate access to justice, including to judicial review of administrative decisions, such as hunting decisions. Sweden's reply on this issue is currently under assessment.

The Commission's view is that Swedish courts and authorities are primarily responsible for ensuring that requirements of EU law are complied with and therefore appropriate access to justice needs to be ensured. In that context, I note that the licensed hunt decided in 2013 was successfully dealt with in a recent judgment by the Administrative Court of Appeal and that the licensed hunt decided in 2014 is currently still subject to judicial appeal proceedings in a Swedish Court.

Please be assured that the Commission is closely monitoring this issue and that it will not hesitate, if needed, to take all measures necessary to ensure that European Union environmental law is complied with in Sweden's management of wolves.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Klaus Wehner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.