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E-003865/2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall
on behalf of the European Commission
(9.12.2025)

The Great Cormorant¹, like all naturally occurring wild bird species in the EU, is protected under the Birds Directive (BD)². The Commission is aware of the large increase of the European cormorant population over the past decades which has caused local conflicts between cormorants and certain economic activities.

Preventive measures can and should be implemented whenever possible to avoid or mitigate damage to fisheries and aquaculture. However, if these measures prove ineffective and no other satisfactory solutions are available, the BD allows for derogations from the general protection regime, including for the use of lethal control where duly justified and proportionate.

To assist Member States and stakeholders in implementing the BD, particularly its derogation provisions, the Commission published guidance on the Great Cormorant in 2013³. This document is being revised and will be integrated into new, broader guidance on the general system of protection of bird species under the BD. In addition, in 2024, the Commission provided detailed online information on how to address conflicts between cormorants and human activities⁴.

To further support Member States, the Commission convened a structured dialogue with the competent national authorities to address national challenges on the use of derogations and identify how the Commission can assist on this matter. The Commission will continue encouraging cooperation and coordination among Member States on effective measures to address these conflicts.

In the context of the implementation of the ‘Strategic guidelines for EU aquaculture’⁵, the Commission will start work, in 2026, on a document providing recommendations and good practices on managing interactions with predators⁶.

¹ *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo*.

² Council Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds, OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7-25.

³ Great Cormorant, applying derogations under Article 9 of the Birds Directive
<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/eb3840b0-937d-4f0b-b616-107fe9825801/language-en>.

⁴ Section on cormorants at https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/birds-directive_en.

⁵ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/blue-economy/aquaculture/aquaculture-guidelines_en.

⁶ including cormorants, also announced in the European Ocean Pact: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/european-ocean-pact_en.