



The hunter in Europe

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Throughout Europe and in many other countries around the world, hunting is a leisure activity or sport - although hunters may not always refer to it as such. Hunting is the opportunity to capture and kill game in open spaces while keeping to a set of **DEFINED RULES**. These rules are progressively being modified through the gradual evolution of long-standing hunting traditions and the implementation of Community regulations. These changes are mainly due to better knowledge of game biology and also to the influence - within the structures where these rules are developed, and in which hunters themselves are represented - of more urban lifestyles, further removed from country life, nature and its fruits.

European hunters have a long history behind them. They also are a modern-day reality as we approach the 21st Century. In this chapter, we will endeavour to determine their distinguishing features and common points.

The European hunter is neither isolated nor solitary

There is a significant number of hunters in each country of the European Union (table 1), often comparable in terms of membership to other sports federations, ranging from football to tennis.

	Number of Hunters	Population Density	Ratio to Population
Finland	300000	15	1:17
Norway	170000	13	1:25
Sweden	320000	19	1:27
Denmark	177000	120	1:29
Ireland	120000	51	1:30
Greece	293000	78	1:35
France	1 650000	106	1:35
Spain	1 000000	78	1:39
Portugal	300000	107	1:40
United Kingdom	625000	237	1:58
Italy	925000	189	1:60
Austria	110000	94	1:72
Slovenia	23000	94	1:84
Luxembourg	2200	153	1:160
Switzerland	30000	167	1:230
Germany	326000	226	1:247
Belgium	29000	330	1:348
Netherlands	33500	370	1:454
Poland	98700	123	1:389
Hungary	50000	111	1:206

(Table 1: hunter population data. Source: FACE, 1995)

Using the ratio of hunters to overall population of a country, it is possible to identify four areas:

- The Scandinavian area, with the highest ratio (1:25 on average). Hunting is a spontaneous leisure pursuit across all social classes, regardless of geographical origin (rural or urban). Nature is very present in Scandinavian hunting practice.
- The Latin area, plus Ireland, with a lower ratio (1:40), forms the largest pool of hunters in the Union. Hunting is regularly practised here, even more so among rural people and in the middle to lower income bracket (blue-collar workers). They are primarily interested in small game, migratory or sedentary.
- There are still large numbers of hunters in the Anglo-Saxon area, but their ratio to population (1:60) is lower. Hunting traditions and disciplines are probably more closely linked to land ownership and there is a more "sporting" approach: good, stylish shooting is particularly appreciated. Pheasants and partridges are the most sought-after game species.
- The German (1:250) and Dutch (1:400) areas are influenced by long-standing aristocratic traditions and heavily urbanised territories. Standard hunting practice calls for high income. Big-game hunting is subject to complex, efficient codes of conduct. The game management aspect of hunting originated in this area.

Poland and Hungary are in a class of their own because of the deep political changes that have taken place there in recent years. It would be interesting to see if, a few years from now, hunter population trends bring these countries into line with their "natural" hunting area (Austria, Slovenia) and its ratio (c. 1%)

There are, however, no watertight borders between these areas. Whatever their country of origin, all hunters have common characteristics that stretch beyond the basis of hunting (quartering, finding, shooting and retrieving).

European hunters have common characteristics

When asked in detail about their activity, all hunters speak of a GREAT AFFECTION FOR NATURE, farm and woodland, marshes, moors and scrub. Their answers often verge on veneration, with frequent reference to a Golden Age and a hunting paradise. This reverence stems from reminiscences of their first hunting outing, seen as an initiation to a world invisible to non-hunters, the rules of which must be learnt progressively.

Hunting territories are gone repeatedly in autumn and winter, often in poor weather conditions. An ability to **face adversity**, even when helped by modern clothing, is a characteristic shared by all hunters. This is also why most hunters are young and active. Contrary to widespread belief, people stop hunting well before the age of 60, on average.

Hunters all share another interest: DOG HANDLING. Hunting is most often practised with one or several dogs, and all hunters feel a thrill when seeing dogs working. The dog is a special companion, be it a hound in Latin countries, a Teckel in the German area, a pointer on lowlands, moors and marshes, a retriever or a bloodhound. The sight of hunters and their dogs working together never fails to cause astonishment and admiration among non-hunters.

Seeking OTHER HUNTERS' COMPANY is another common characteristic. Hunting has always been a group activity. Of course, many hunters reminisce on "setting out alone with their dog on a bright autumn morning", but the vast majority of them have never hunted alone. Contrary to fishing, hunting most often involves groups of friends. Other hunting forms exist of course, but only for a minority of hunters. The fact that hunters seek social contact is always a wonder to non-hunters, who marvel at these rituals where every single detail of the area, dogs, game, and shots is repeated and re-examined - reinvented, cynics might say - hunt after hunt, season after season!

To the outsider, the fact that the hunter's CLOTHING varies little from Northern to Southern Europe may also be a bit of a wonder. The need for camouflage when stalking game partly explains this similarity. More subtly, in any given hunting situation (woodland stalking is not the same as duck flighting or shooting migrating thrushes), technical solutions (colour, type of clothing) combined with cultural traditions create a social uniformity during the hunting day. Ethnological investigations have repeatedly shown this feeling, as often expressed by the words: "when out hunting, we're all hunters and nothing but hunters". Of course, to be realistic, there are both costly or aristocratic outings and inexpensive or democratic outings. However, on a particular hunting day, all hunters do not come from any particular social class, but are rather "aficionados" who spend time and money on the same passion, each according to available income and time.

The HUNTER'S TEST is another practice that strengthens this sense of belonging to the hunter's world. Interviews show that passing the exam gives new hunters a sense of having been selected, chosen and hence distinguished. Most hunters take the exam when young (in 90% of cases, between the ages of 16 and 25) and thus consider it a gateway into the adult world. All in all, an exam is certainly a good way of integrating hunting into our modern society.

This test is theoretical and sometimes practical. It exists only in a certain number of countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Sweden). Like any other exam, this procedure tends to eliminate certain categories of applicants, mostly from lower social strata. But this is not its sole disadvantage. Potential hunters from more educated classes with better verbal mastery (journalists, high-ranking civil servants and businessmen, politicians) will be dissuaded from hunting by this exam through lack of time (which is not a valid motive) and - more to the point - fear of failure. Non-hunters, on the contrary, view this exam as a token of seriousness. The European will probably be towards an adaptation of the exam to a predominantly visual modern culture.

Relationships with nature, dogs and other hunters; temporary levelling of social classes; access through an exam. All these elements create an European hunting ethic. and lead to a common "language" thanks to which, for example, a Spanish hunter will quickly feel at ease in a group of Scandinavian or Irish hunters. Hunting in North America differs, in a sense, through the emphasis it places on big trophies and impressive game bags.

The hunter carries a gun

This obvious point does not strike hunters. In Europe however, it sets hunters apart from the average citizen who associates firearms with violence and war. Hunting firearms have always been regulated, and generally strictly so, in all European countries. New European legislation will mean that all European hunters will have to declare their weapons, and in some cases obtain authorization.

This stems from the philosophy that ownership and carrying of firearms should be subject to controls; in a few years' time, this formality will be completely integrated in hunting culture.

The hunter keeps to his territory

Most of the time, hunting rights are linked to land ownership. Game physically lives in a particular area, a territory. Hunting means gaining legal access to this territory, mostly through payment of a hunting rent to the owner of the land. However, this is not the main reason why hunters tend to stay in the same territory. It should not be forgotten that hunting is a sport practised over hundreds or even thousands of hectares. Game is scattered across this large territory and seldom concentrated at one single location. In order to have a reasonable chance of success, and therefore maintain interest, the hunter has to physically know his hunting territory. This is the main reason why hunters stay in a given area: they like to face new circumstances in well know scenery, they like to find - or not find - game where, on previous occasions, everything was so similar and yet so different. The hunter's motto is "*carpe diem*": when out hunting, everything is an intense experience because game will be seen for one fleeting moment, punctuated or not by a shot. Hunting regularly in the same area¹ is due not only to traditional factors (home, family or friends) but also to a major development in modern European hunting: *the management of the hunting territory*. Growing knowledge of the ecological needs of game has led to the application of techniques aimed at improving living conditions for game and increasing the overall carrying capacity of the hunting territory. This work is often carried out by hunters themselves, hence their regular visits to certain preferred spots: they want to collect the fruits of patient work. Culling also ties hunters down to a given area.

Obviously, there are also hunters who are perpetually on the move within their country and abroad. Although a minority, they have a significant economic contribution to make. Hunting tourism has developed in various countries of the Union, especially Ireland, Scotland, Spain and, to a lesser extent, Austria.

Enclosed territories, or game parks, are also hunting grounds. Often linked to game rearing activity (Pheasants, Partridges, Mallard, Wild Boar), these enterprises embody both the best and the worst in hunting. Tiny enclosures with insufficient cover, tame game of doubtful genetic origin, all this is a disgrace to hunting. Fortunately, pressure from hunters and their organisations is helping eliminate - or at least minimize - these game reserves which are unworthy of their name. On the other hand, when these enclosed territories offer quality game good cover and a chance to survive "ecologically", they contribute both to receiving certain visiting hunters and to the local economy. One should remember that they are part of hunting tradition, the best examples being the royal game parks.

The hunter is an economic player

For decades, national hunters' organisations and FACE have undertaken and carried out studies on the economic impact of this leisure activity from the financial and job-creation point of view. These studies have helped improve analytical techniques, data collection methods and comparisons between countries. The most reliable method is for a sample number of hunters to list hunting-related expenses. Any discrepancies in the results are mainly due to the setting of the sample and can be corrected to provide representative overall results.

¹ The "Chasseurs en France" study has shown that 80% of hunters hunt less than 15 kilometres from home.

Hunting means spending

Quantifying this expenditure means - as in any company - identifying the successive actions taken in a hunting context. The end result is a spending chart with boxes which can then be filled in. This expenditure falls into major categories which are now well defined.

- Legal expenditure

In most European countries, access to hunting is controlled by the authorities which may impose an exam, a hunting licence (national or not, annual or not), a weapons permit, insurance cover etc. A special licence may sometimes be required to hunt certain game species. Depending on the country, this expenditure accounts for 6 to 10% of the total. Although relatively low, when repeated every year, it becomes psychologically sensitive and looms disproportionately large in the hunter's mind. Moreover, certain studies have shown that younger hunters, often with more limited financial resources, feel this even more acutely.

- Expenditure on yearly hunting rights

Most hunters hunt on territories they do not own, be they private or public areas (state forests or properties). Access to these areas means paying fees or rents. This expenditure is higher in more densely populated countries where free circulation in open spaces is limited.

This money goes to the landowners, as well as to the game-keepers and rangers who contribute to the overall hunting quality of the territory. Game breeders also benefit indirectly from hunting rents, as very few hunters buy game themselves. That said, there are hardly any game breeders in Scandinavia.

The share of hunting fees in total spending varies from country to country and place to place from 0 to 25%, with an average between 15 and 18%.

- Expenditure on equipment

The most specific item of hunting expenditure. Just as the fisherman is recognized by his fishing rod, the hunter is by his firearm. Firearms (shotguns or rifles) and ammunition (cartridges for small game or bullets for large game) are definitely not the only item of equipment. Whether an economy or luxury model, the firearm is always a long-lasting item written down over a long period of time. In this sense, the impact of this one-off purchase is relatively low compared to overall expenditure on equipment.

Specialised equipment (scopes, binoculars, knives), cartridge belts, game bags, gun sleeves and yearly maintenance are included in equipment expenditure, along with smaller items (whistles, decoys, ...).

This expenditure also includes a third line: general clothing (tough water and windproof clothes, shoes or boots) and special items (headgear, special clothes, shooting sticks, nets, etc.)

This heading covers a large range of equipment, but it is usually inexpensive and long-lasting, and therefore written down over a number of years.

The overall share of equipment in total spending is around 15%.

- Expenditure on transport

Europeans are increasingly urban beings. Hunting is more popular in rural areas, and virtually unheard of in city centres.

Like their fellow citizens, hunters drive to their hunting territory; this means expenses. Two major categories of hunters can be identified in this respect:

- "regional" hunters, who do not drive far but hunt often (in some cases over 100 outings a year);
- "national" hunters, who hunt less frequently but further away.

In both cases, this means high overall mileage, and travel costs thus account for around 25% of total yearly spending.

- Dog-related expenditure

"A good hunter never hunts without his dog", in the (translated) words of a French tongue twister. This is fairly true: less than 12% of European hunters do not have a dog and, conversely, at least 5% have four or more.

Unlike guns, dogs need daily feeding, increasingly on purchased petfood. Specialised breeds (hounds, pointers, bloodhounds or retrievers) are often bought from professionals. They need veterinary care, sometimes following injury. Leashes and other equipment must be bought.

The dog therefore represents the biggest expenditure heading in the hunter's budget - around 30% on average.

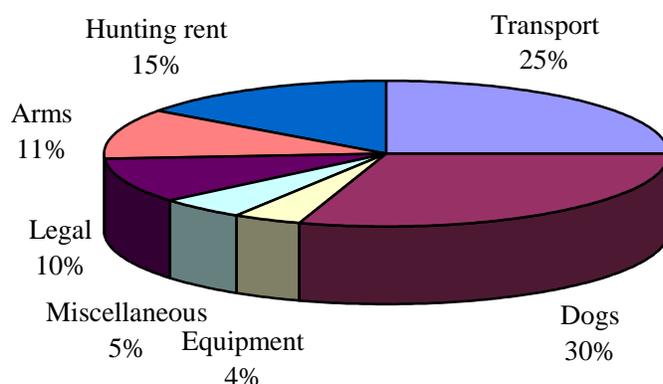
- Miscellaneous expenditure

Although it breaks down into various lines, this heading accounts for no more than 5% of the average hunter's budget.

It includes membership fees of specialised associations, expenditure on hunting trips outside the home area or abroad (less than 10% of the hunter population), information (books and magazines), gifts (exceptional purchases of luxury clothing), souvenirs (paintings, prints, sculptures).

This miscellaneous spending represents no more than 5% of the average budget.

These budget headings may vary from country to country but the chart below illustrates the typical European average.



On this basis, and using existing regional studies, it is possible to calculate the average European hunter's budget.

The most recent studies give the following information:

Belgium	€5,800 (1992)
Spain	€2,450 (overestimated, 1993)
Scotland	€1,720 (1990)
France	€1,200 (1993)
Ireland	€350 (underestimated, 1992)

After weighting the figures according to numbers of hunters in each country, the average expenditure comes out at €1,680. Bearing in mind the methodological differences in terms of coverage and representativity of the sample, an average of €1,500 per European hunter could be seen as reliable estimate.

Hunting expenditure in Europe thus amounts to €9.88 billion, i.e. around €10 billion.

It is then possible to allocate the average European hunter's expenditure to the various headings and calculate, at European level, the financial flows in each sector concerned (tab. 2):

	average European hunter's yearly expenditure (in million €)	financial flow for the sector (in million €)
Legal	150	988
Hunting rent	225	1481
Firearms etc.	165	1 086
- guns and rifles	88	580
- ammunition, maintenance	77	506
Equipment	60	395
- basic	45	296

- specialized	15	99
Dogs	450	4435
- food	360	3 478
- care and miscellaneous	90	957
Transport	375	2 470
- kilometres	270	1 778
- misc.	105	692
Miscellaneous	75	493
- Hunting trips	20	131
- Books and magazines	35	230
- Souvenirs	8	53
- specialized associations	12	79

(Table 2: expenditure per heading)

National studies identify various categories of hunters in terms of total annual spending, just as for any consumption of goods. Table 3 is another way of allocating spending among the three main categories, based on distances travelled to hunt. Hunting abroad substantially increases annual spending, but such expenditure must be seen in relative terms: it is irregular and seldom repeated on an annual basis. Besides expenditure directly arising from this, all other spending (legal, rent, equipment, information souvenirs, etc.) is higher.

type	%	population	individual expenditure (in €)	total expenditure (in billion €)
Regional European hunter (never hunts outside his country of origin)	70	4 610 000	1 200	5,53
National European hunter (hunts in several places in his country and occasionally abroad)	20	1 315 000	1 800	2,37
Transnational European hunter (hunts more regularly outside his country of origin)	10	660 000	3 000	1,98
Total	100	6 585 000	1 500	10

(Table 3)

Hunting creates jobs

Individual spending by hunters and the corresponding financial flows generate both direct and indirect benefits. In countries with a centralised organisation, it is comparatively easy to evaluate the number of jobs in the legal sector. Similarly, sectors closely related to hunting, such as the gun and ammunition trades, can provide estimates which can then be validated by professional structures. Employment generated by gundog expenditure is more difficult to ascertain, as is that generated by expenditure on hunting rent, gamekeeping and game rearing. In terms of general equipment (from manufacture to retail), it is nearly impossible to collect data, as companies are generally non-specialised. Finally, expenditure linked to transport, hotel accommodation and restaurants is never taken into consideration when assessing employment repercussions.

One should be very careful with national assessments as published in various countries, especially regarding the number of indirect jobs. Evaluations based on a local sector or on a specific type of hunting may provide misleadingly optimistic results. Data is not always adjusted when extrapolated to the national level.

We would favour a minimum evaluation. Even here, hunting already provides quite an impressive employment figure for a leisure-related expenditure. Aggregated national studies show an average estimate of

1 job per 65 hunters

This estimate means 101,300 jobs! Based on the degree of reliability of the data, we can conclude that hunting accounts for **100 000 jobs in the European Union**.

A comparison of financial flows (€10 billion) and employment (100 000) leads one to the conclusion that, in the hunting sector, €100 000 of financial flow generates one job.

This is far from negligible, all the more since part of this employment is rural and calls for special skills. These jobs may not be easy to identify as hunting-related because they tend to be scattered in small and medium-sized companies or in small structures, but they still remain hunting-created jobs.

Voluntary work

The financial assessment of hunting obscures another important dimension of hunting. There is virtually no country in the European Union where hunters are not involved in the ecological study of game (demography, counts, etc.) and habitats (mapping, identification of degradation). Evaluating partridge stocks requires at least twenty observers, deer counts can mobilise up to 100 participants. Preventing winter losses with regular feeding rounds or summer losses with water deliveries, restoring the habitats of various species (from ducks to partridges and rabbits to deer) are actions undertaken by many ordinary hunters. Of course, gamekeepers and officials complement the hunter's actions here and there, in which case this activity is included in the number of jobs created. Most of the time, this is voluntary work and cannot therefore be financially estimated.

Such work can mean a large number of outings. It is estimated that in France, on the basis of 3.5 ecological outings² per hunter, 6 million outings take place every year which gives the impressive figure of 11 outings per 100 hectares per year. Obviously, figures vary between areas and regions, but it seems obvious that the hunter's impact on game and territory amounts to much more than mere shooting and wasted lead.

Evaluation of voluntary work from other Union Member States would be useful in order to consolidate this data.

THE CHALLENGES OF THE YEAR 2000

Better knowledge of the hunter and hunting motivation

One of the main challenges for hunting in the year 2000 is to get to know the hunter as well as one knows the ecology of many game species, even some rare ones!

In many European countries, hunting has accumulated a wealth of traditions, but this cultural aspect means the hunter remains hidden behind his practice.

There is plenty of literature on all kinds of hunting: driven partridge, ducks from hides, walked-up snipe, boar or deer stalking and many more. Game itself is equally well documented, both practically and scientifically. There are dozens of hunting magazines Europe-wide. The study of game has become part of ecological studies of animal species and countless university students write theses on the subject. The International Union of Game Biologists regularly holds congresses.

Compared to this abundant knowledge of hunting practice and game, there is LITTLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE HUNTER as a sociological or economic being. In this poorly researched field, the greatest body of information is to be found in studies based on two methodological approaches:

- statistical sociology studies which describe the hunter according to traditional parameters such as age, sex, socio-professional categories, geographical distribution and correlations with other general demographic parameters. These studies are neither carried out in depth nor (above all) followed up. The difficulty in gathering scientifically valid data is a serious and discouraging limitation to these studies.
- Richer and methodologically more reliable is the ethnological approach. A large number of studies concentrate on one hunting practice (boar hunting, bird netting, hunting with hounds, etc.), the ritual of which is analysed in detail. Comparisons are solid and well made. Unfortunately, it is difficult to extrapolate from these results. Furthermore, these studies tend to focus on rather rare practices for methodological reasons and for the sake of originality.

Therefore, knowledge about the average hunter is scarce. Information is therefore needed about hunter numbers and their individual profile in order to make progress.

² Hunting promotion outings not included

- Hunter numbers

In all European countries, supra-regional organisations compile statistics of local hunter numbers, each using their own technique. Calculating national totals is then, in principle, an easy matter. These figures are given by FACE. However, in certain countries, such as the United Kingdom and Spain, even such elementary data is uncertain.

- The hunter's motivation

In a number of countries, national organisations have noticed a drop in hunter numbers. Restoring numbers seems desirable for economic or demographic reasons. It is therefore necessary to study hunters as customers rather than as users, since what they are not a captive public. The basic technique needs a representative sample.

- Creating a representative sample

Hunting is a leisure activity practised by individuals scattered throughout the whole population. While representative samples of the national population taken by public opinion research consultants do include hunters (at least in those countries where hunters are sufficiently numerous), such samples can hardly be used in specialised studies, as hunters form far too small a group within them. Their representativity as sociological, economic, or regional samples, or samples of hunting methods, is therefore far from certain.

To compile a **representative national sample** of the hunting population, individual hunters must be **chosen randomly** in the hunting population at large. This requirement, a precondition if results are to have any meaning, automatically rules out questionnaires collected by hunting magazines. Collecting such a sample is subject to a number of definite rules; it need not be difficult, as long as all the organisations have computerised files, which is not often the case, and even where it is, access to the data is often protected - and quite rightly so.

A sampling ratio of 1% seems an acceptable compromise. It is not too costly and provides a sufficient number of questionnaires. Circulation of the questionnaires should be proportional to regional hunter density, with a random selection protocol. The major distortion comes from failure to answer, and its impact must be carefully ascertained.

With these reservations in mind, it is possible to create a representative national sample of hunters as a basis for statistical and typological processing. Studies can only be repeated every four to six years, because this activity shows a strong cultural inertia.

In society as a whole, these representative samples are commonplace and are regularly used by marketing managers in companies. Organizations and companies in the hunting sector often have neither the financial means nor the know-how to do so - nevertheless, such surveys will be one of the challenges in years to come.

Hunting and public opinion

For at least a decade, hunting has been denigrated, pressured and attacked in various Member States. These attacks are all the more vicious as they come from minority groups whose ideology includes an anti-hunting strand.

Concurrently, public opinion in European societies, if not in agreement with these extreme positions, tends to show a lack of interest, an indifference unfavourable to the coexistence of this and other forms of country leisure (hiking, horse riding, mountain biking, etc.)

It is virtually impossible to change these major trends in contemporary society. However, by the year 2000, national hunters' organisations will need to have information on how hunting is perceived by the public at large. This generally comes relatively cheap and can be obtained from public opinion consultants. Surveys carried out every two or three years should be sufficient to ascertain the state of public opinion and the impact of any targeted communication campaign. It would be of great use for FACE to collect the data from these national surveys, as this would make it possible, using intra-European comparisons, to draw a picture of the hunter's image across societies with different lifestyles and hunting cultures.

Hunting and rural areas

Another major challenge in years to come is the investigation of interactions between the hunter, his activity, the countryside and rural society.

Under pressure from technological progress, the common agricultural policy and the evolution of lifestyles, rural societies have undergone deep changes in the last two decades. The hunter no longer deals with the farmer, nor even with the land and hunting right owner. Few serious studies have gone into these interactions. The hunter seeks to develop game stocks through his actions in the countryside. He meets other users, be they professionals (farmers, foresters) or people on leisure activities. Mini-conflicts arise which are not well known and are hence badly managed. At European or national level, hunters' organisations are acknowledged as competent in wildlife matters. This is certainly less true at local level. What European hunters have to seek to achieve in years to come is recognition as participants in rural life, sources of ecological knowledge and providers of a rich and varied wildlife, thus showing the link between hunting and conservation.

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