

# The Spring Hunting Report

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## Introduction

The Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) is the oldest piece of EU nature legislation. It creates a comprehensive scheme for the protection of naturally occurring European wild birds and was adopted by the Member States in 1979 due to concern about wild bird population declines due to pollution, habitat loss and unsustainable use. This was done in recognition that many of these species are migratory and hence, as shared heritage of Member States. Thus effective conservation would require international cooperation (EC, 2015). The directive bans activities that directly threaten birds such as deliberate killing or capture of birds by any method. Article 5 in the directive also states that member states will prohibit any deliberate disturbance of birds during periods of breeding (Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, 2010). Article 9 however states that Member states may choose to derogate from these provisions should “no other satisfactory solution” be found. In the case of Malta, derogation is present “to permit, under strictly supervised conditions and on a selective basis, the capture, keeping or other judicious use of certain birds in small numbers” (Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, 2010).

In light of the spring hunting referendum to be held on April 11<sup>th</sup>, S-Cubed circulated a survey amongst students of the University of Malta (both Science students and non) This survey was circulated between the 20<sup>th</sup> day of January and the 1<sup>st</sup> day of February through the organization website and Facebook page. The aim of this survey was to gather data about the opinions of University Students about Spring Hunting and the Derogation. The results of this survey (primarily the data obtained from science students) would also directly affect the stance S-Cubed took in relation to the Spring Hunting Derogation.

In addition to the survey results, S-Cubed also sought to take an objective view of Spring Hunting in order to further be informed about the effects of this derogation and hence be able to take an informed decision. The view of the organization was presented in the KSU Spring Hunting Assembla on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of February. The speech given at this event and the view of the organization can be found in the Spring Hunting Assembla document presented by KSU<sup>1</sup>.

This purpose of this report is to present an analysis of the survey circulated as well as to try to disseminate accurate information in relation to the Spring Hunting Derogation as well as its effects and repercussions, through this, S-Cubed hopes that students will be able to take a well-informed decision in the upcoming referendum.

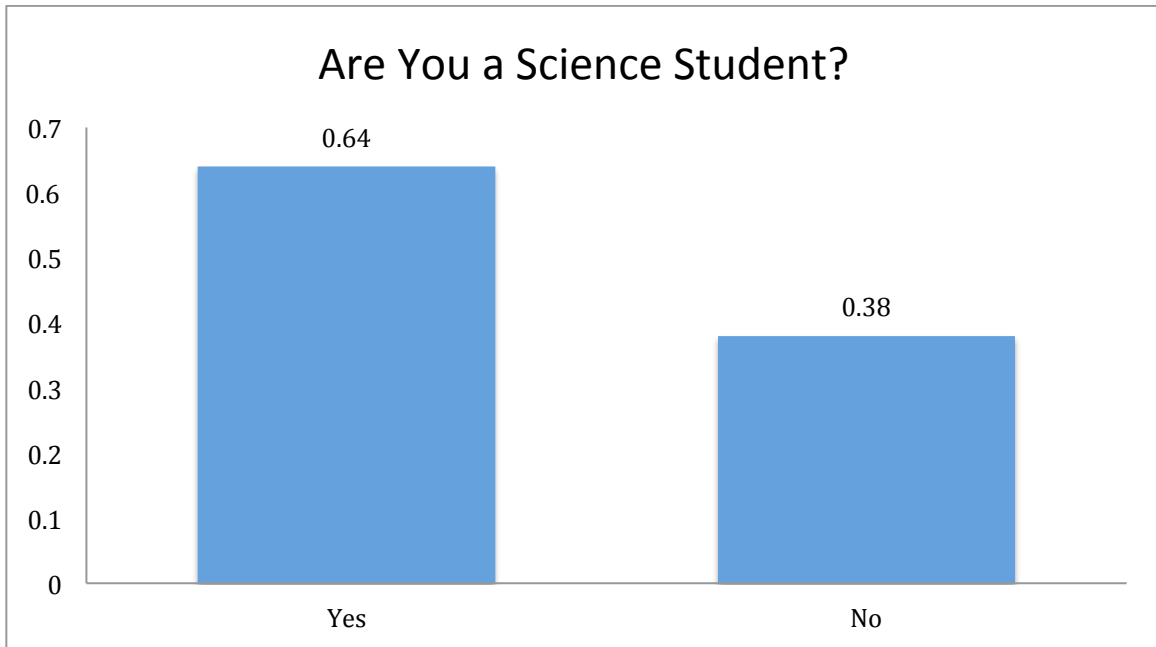
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<sup>1</sup> This document can be accessed from the following link: <http://www.scubed.org.mt/social-policy.html>



## The Students' Opinions – Survey Results

In order to be able to isolate the results of science students from those of non-science students, the participants were first asked whether or not they form part of the faculty of science. Out of 119 participants the results were as follows:



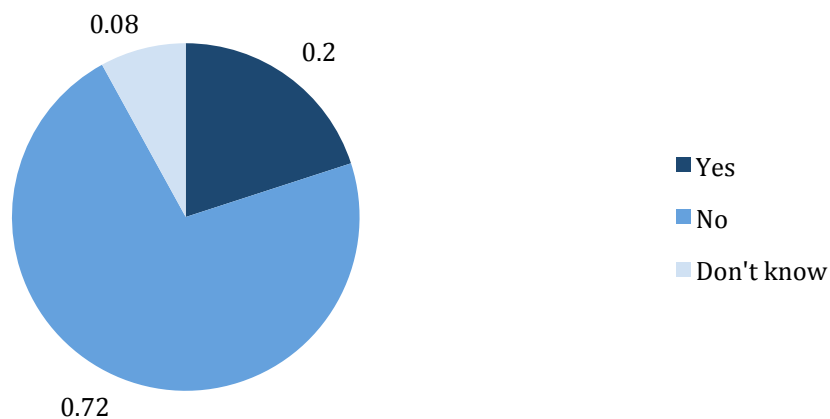
These results imply that out of 119 participants, 76 students were science students while 43 participants were from other faculties. Thus, a total of 18.36% of the science student population responded to this survey, which further implies that data obtained for students of the faculty of science has a confidence interval of 10.17 students at 95% confidence.

Due to the sample size of non-science students, the confidence interval too large for the data obtained to reliably reflect the true opinions of the University of Malta student population. Thus, results for non-science students will not be presented in this report but may be found in the appendix. In order for one to achieve relevant data, a questionnaire would need to be circulated to a much larger sample of students.

Since the primary argument in favor of the continuation of the Spring Hunting Derogation is that hunting is a Maltese tradition that should be respected, the participants were then asked whether or not they thought that hunting in general should be considered a tradition. Hence, the answers to this question made no discrimination between the hunting period that would be affected by the derogation and the hunting period that would be maintained either way the referendum goes.

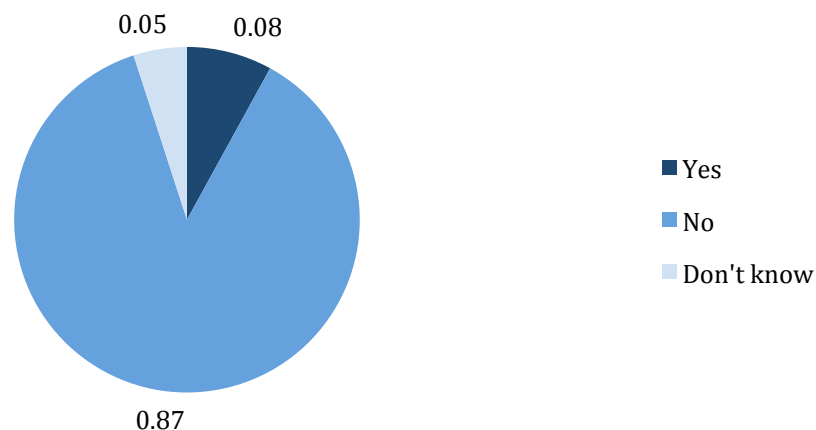


Do you think hunting in general should be regarded as a Maltese tradition?

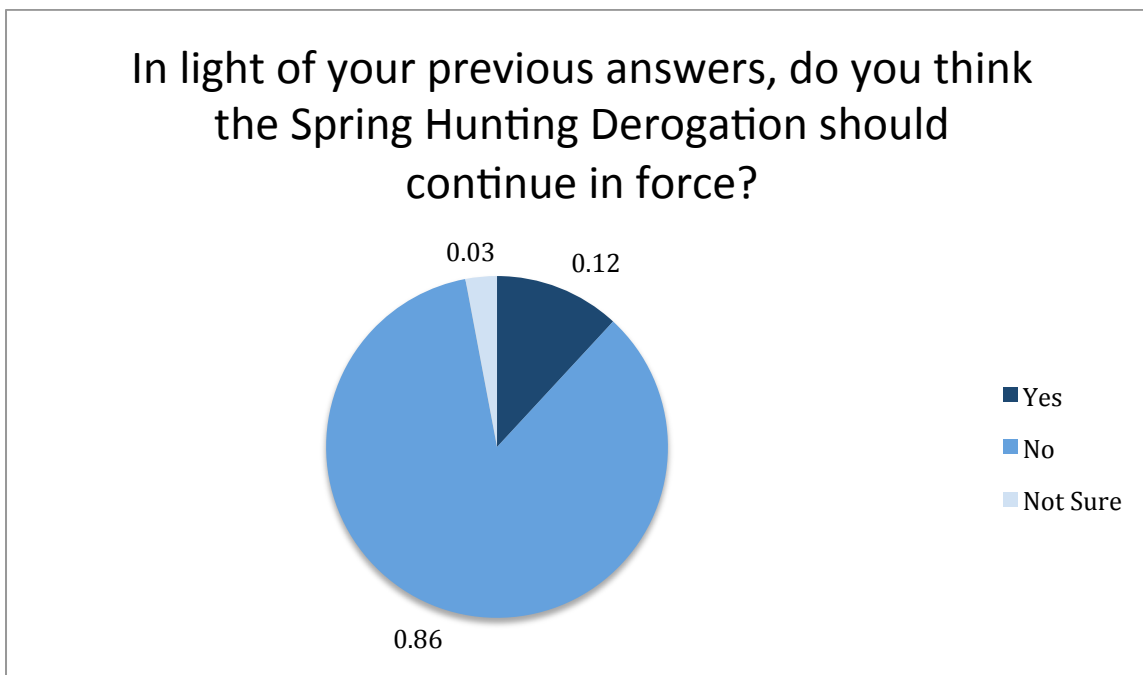


Since the derogation is allowed by the Birds Directive all hunting should be carried out under strictly supervised conditions. There have been claims however, by advocates against spring hunting, claiming and giving evidence that this is not so (BirdLife Malta, 2014). Thus participants in the survey were next asked whether they felt that the derogation was sufficiently enforced.

Do you think the Spring Hunting Derogation is sufficiently enforced?



These results show that the vast majority of science students feel that the derogation is not sufficiently enforced. This response is expected to reflect in the final question of the questionnaire where participants were asked whether, in light of their previous answers, they thought that the derogation should continue in force. This question is in effect, a paraphrasing of the question to be asked in the upcoming referendum.



A clear trend can be seen in the results whereby the majority of participants seem to not think that hunting is a tradition, not think that the derogation is enforced and feel that law should ban all Spring Hunting. This emphasizes a correlation between the lack of enforcement of the derogation and its retention.

### Additional factors

In order to further analyze the reasoning behind students' decision, participants were also asked whether any additional factors were influencing their decision.

Since no statistical value is given to these additional factors, additional factors of all students will be considered. These opinions are those of the participants and do not reflect the stance on the organization.



### *Factors in favor of the retention of the Spring Hunting Derogative*

The following are the additional factors presented by students who were decisive that the Spring Hunting Derogation should continue in force.

- Limited data on bird migration and their populations. The facts presented by both sides of the argument are mostly opinion based and highly exaggerated. Data is not available to the public in a simple and understandable way, allowing them to take an informed decision. Thus most people will go with their guts when it comes to voting.
- The prime minister is voting in favor and therefore so will the participant.
- The participant in question was himself a hunter.
- Very few birds cross over Malta in comparison to the numbers that pass over other countries where there are seasons for unlimited hunting on certain species such as swans, seals, deer, foxes etc.
- Everyone has his own pastime and nobody's past time should be stopped, everybody bothers someone in some way or another. Continuing in this direction would result in having a referendum about everything. When hunters broke the rules, they suffered the consequences of their actions. [Similar sentiments were expressed by another participant]

### *Factors against the retention of the Spring Hunting Derogative*

- The impact Spring Hunting has on the Maltese environment.
- The argument that hunters are a minority is invalid. Birdwatchers are also a minority.
- **The wish to enjoy the countryside in spring.**<sup>2</sup>
- Harm to migrating bird populations.
- It is the mating season for these species.
- The participant had never hunted before.

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<sup>2</sup> Bold lettering implies that the same sentiments were expressed by several participants.



- **The need to enforce conservation of the hunted species.**
- **Abuse of the derogative by hunters.**
- Hunting is morally and ethically wrong.
- Noise pollution from guns.
- A bad light is shed on Malta for having such a derogative.
- Harm to ecosystems.
- **Population declines of the hunted species.**
- Hunting should not be considered a sport.
- The unsustainable consequences of the derogation.
- Hunting in other countries is used as a means of controlling population levels. Such control is not required on the Maltese islands.
- The participant has witnessed the long, painful deaths of shot birds.

## Concluding remarks

From the results obtained from the questionnaire, it is clear that a vast majority of the students of the science faculty are taking a stand against spring hunting in the coming referendum, thus as an organization that aims to represent its students in the best way possible, S-Cubed will be taking the same stance. This decision has been made after sufficient research on the topic, which led to several additional factors that were also taken into consideration. These factors have been outlined in the speech given at the KSU Spring Hunting Assembly mentioned earlier. We urge students to inform themselves about the consequences of the upcoming referendum in order to be able to take an educated decision.



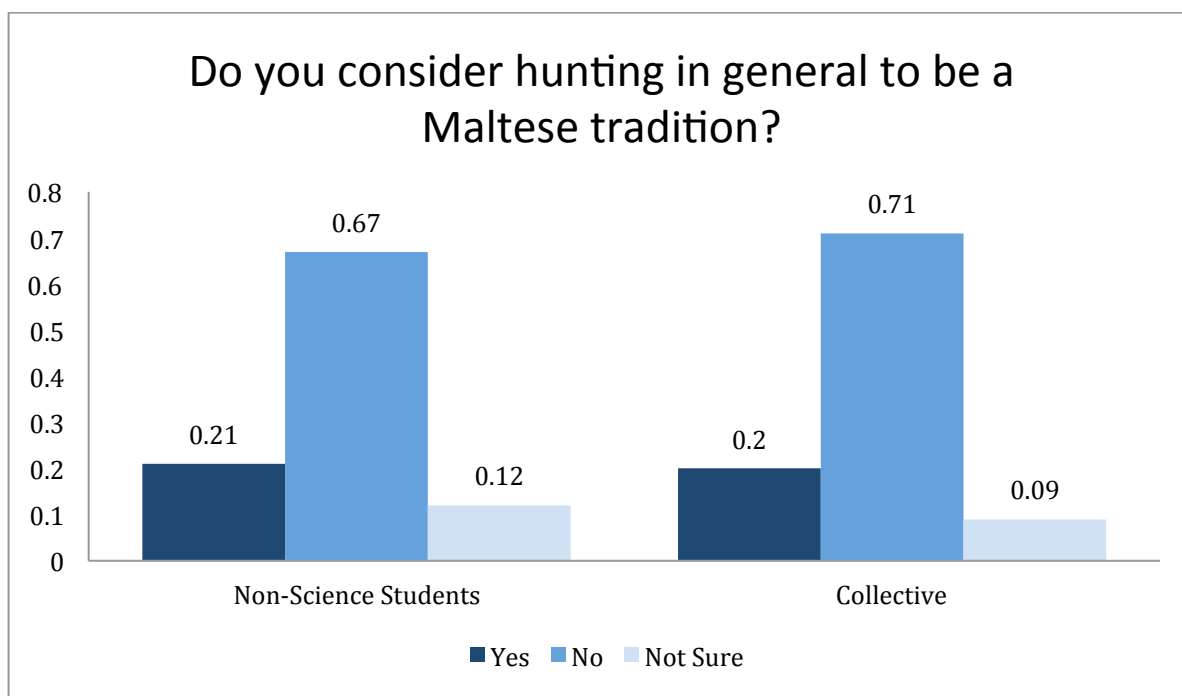
## Works Cited

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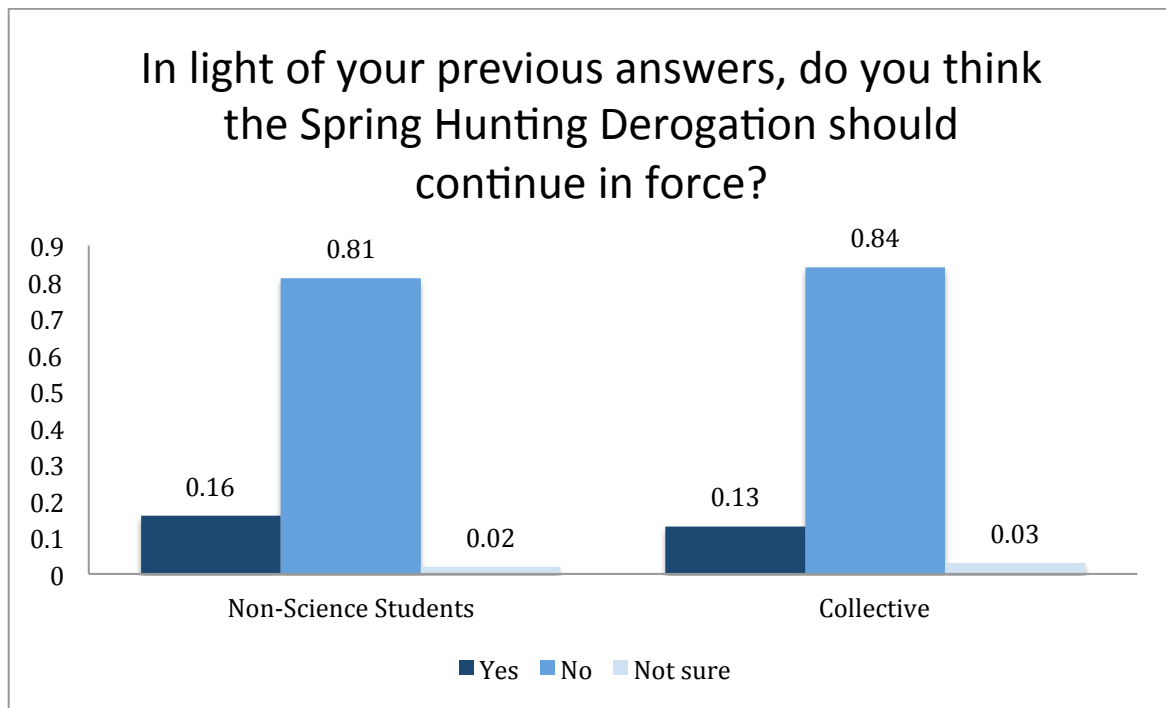
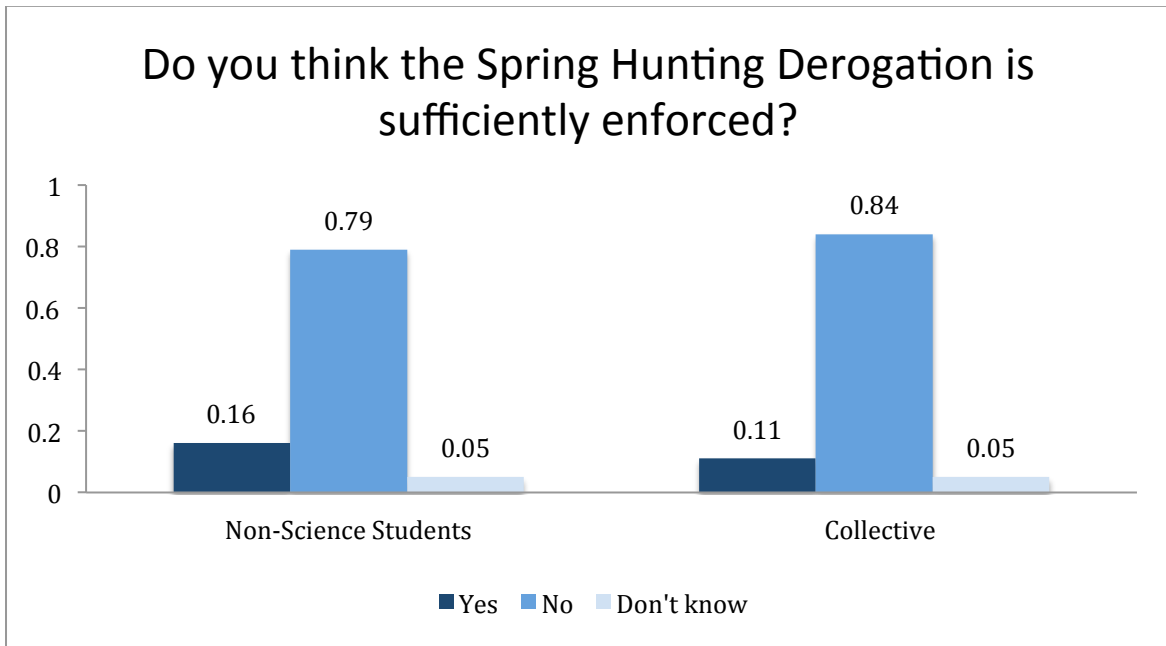
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## Appendix







<sup>i</sup> The term collective here refers to the pooled data of all participants.

