



Hunting with bow and arrow in Europe







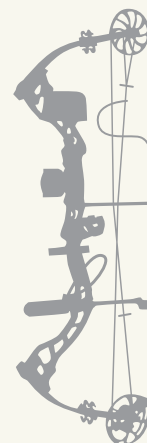


**T**HE BOW and arrow have served man for over 30,000 years. Prehistoric sites reveal our past as hunters with bow in hand. The Valtorta cave in Spain, the Holmegaard bow found in a bog in Denmark and the Stellmore bog bows of the 'Reindeer Eaters' in Germany illustrate a Europe-wide heritage.

In recent years the equipment has been highly developed. Archery equipment will effectively harvest European game of all sizes. Efficacy is on a par with the common hunting tools of today. Studies demonstrate that the hunting bow meets animal welfare expectations and modern game management 'sustainable' and 'vice use' standards.

The close proximity to hunted prey that is an integral part of bowhunting provides participants with a high quality experience.

This document discusses some of the issues surrounding bowhunting in Europe today.



Hunting with bow  
and arrow in Europe

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## The need for hunting

Today's diverse wildlife management situation demands a well-educated hunter as well as an adaptive forest and land management strategy. Hunting in the western hemisphere is in reality all about the chase or the quality time used to get in a situation where you can deploy your preferred hunting system.

The acute need to hunt for food may be mostly a thing of the past, though a fantastic benefit from the hunt is the quality meat that can be harvested and brought to the dining table. The use of bow and arrow can increase the time spent out there in nature due to the time needed to get into the short shooting distances of around 20 meters that are common.

Other values pointed out by experienced exponents are the bowhunter's proximity to nature and the hunted prey, and opportunities for acquiring additional knowledge of the game and the environment.

The EBF sees the hunter who has chosen to use bow and arrow as an individual with a keen interest in hunting and nature, as well as an in-depth interest in animal behavior.

A positive effect of hunting with bow and arrow – and the short distances involved – is a natural targeting of younger and less experienced game. Mature and experienced game are given a much better chance of surviving to a quality breeding stage.



## The EU on bowhunting

No EU document or directive bans the use of bow and arrow as a hunting tool. The EU document Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity rather describes the bow and arrow as one of several sustainable means of harvesting game.

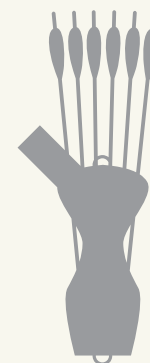
Some nations have mistakenly interpreted the Habitat Directive, where in Annex 5 the crossbow is surprisingly listed as an indiscriminate hunting tool along with poison, glue sticks and explosives! Most nations do now realize that the Habitat Directive only governs the game mentioned therein.

## Archery and bowhunting equipment

The major difference between sport archery equipment and an archery-based hunting system is the hunting arrow tip or 'broadhead'.

The hunting bow used to harvest larger game usually has a draw force of at least 50 pounds (23kg). Typically a bow designed for hunting is covered in a dark colour or a camouflage patterned finish.

A modern hunting arrow has a total weight, including the hunting point, of approximately 25g (400 grains) up to 35g (550 grains). 25g is also the minimum weight in several of the national bowhunting regulations in force.



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## The working parts of the bow and arrow system

The 'broadhead' has two or more extremely sharp cutting edges tooled out of high grade steel and has a cutting diameter of 25mm or more. The extremely small frontal area of the broadhead gives the arrow the potential for deep penetration.

The vital area on game is located as with rifle in the chest cavity with its massive concentration of arteries and veins. A hunting arrow that hits this area will cause an immediate circulatory collapse. The prey will succumb in a matter of seconds.

A recent trend is the expandable or mechanical broadhead that will fly in a closed fashion until the impact, where-upon the blades deploy. This type of hunting point will usually inflict a 35 to 50mm wide channel and has aerodynamic benefits.

All European game can be successfully harvested by modern bows and arrows in combination with a quality hunting arrow point.

## Just another hunting tool

Most hunters using a bow and arrow emerge from the hunting community and also utilize rifles, shotguns, and may practice falconry and or conduct trapping. Some individuals see a similarity between the use of bow and arrow as a hunting tool and the extra interest fly fishermen enjoy in their outdoor activity.

## Bowhunter education

There are several well-developed bowhunter educational systems in place in Europe. Most of these are based on an existing national hunter education system, to which the special aspects of hunting with bow and arrow are added. The EBF and its member nations have the capacity and knowledge to support any nation seeking support with bowhunter training.

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## Non-toxic and reusable projectiles

Modern society demands a low environmental impact from the equipment we use to harvest game. The modern hunting is commonly constructed from either aluminum or a carbon epoxy lamination and can usually be reused. Both materials are inert (non toxic) and relatively harmless if left in nature. The arrow is commonly found in the process of retrieving the shot game. Thus retrieved, an arrow can in many instances be reused when the hunting point has been re-sharpened or the blades replaced.

## Special uses

One consequence of the low-noise and safe short-distance projectile characteristics of hunting bows is that they have been shown to work successfully in urban areas in North America where the use of high powered rifles is banned because of the proximity of communities.

Urban bowhunting seasons have been widely established. In most cases these have been successful in reducing deer populations. Similar European examples have been the 'Helsinki Project' in Finland's capital, where rabbits and hares have been



targeted by a trained group of hunters using bow and arrow.

A more recent project has been launched in Madrid, where a select group has targeted the wild boar population in a very successful manner (coordinator Javier Sintez Pelas). The Spanish authorities have also implemented a successful reduction of Ibex in a national park by trained hunters using the bow and arrow, especially targeting females and juvenile individuals.

## The poaching myth

A major misconception is that archery equipment is commonly used for poaching. The EBF has posed this question to several nations that have implemented hunting with bow and arrow in recent years. None of the national hunting or environmental agencies have indicated the existence of such a problem in their countries.

Modern poaching is usually undertaken to provide an income. The meat may be sold to restaurants or individual consumers. Systems for reducing the risk of exposure are needed. Any means of providing a quick and quiet shot are used such as night vision, suppressors, subsonic ammunition, and vehicles to approach and pick up the harvested carcass.

Highly unethical shots aimed at the head or spine are the norm, since no post-shot tracking can be conducted due to the risk of being caught in the field i.e. animal welfare is of no interest to such criminals.

## Bows and arrows in criminal activity

Bows are only considered licensed weapons in a few of the European nations. Actual crimes committed with bow and arrow in Europe are so few that only a small number of offences have been brought to the EBF's notice in the past ten years. A recent incident in Sweden describes a woman using a traditional bow and arrow to launch a cellphone to an intern across a surrounding prison wall.

Bows and arrows are not mentioned in EU weapons directives. EBF strongly advises that any permit should go with the practitioner, not the hunting tool.

## National development

The following nations have integrated the bow and arrow as a hunting tool alongside existing wildlife management tools.

- Italy
- Portugal 1986
- Lithuania 1992  
later deregulated due to EU harmonization of regulations)
- Hungary 1993
- Finland 1993
- France 1995
- Spain 1997
- Denmark 1999
- Aaland 2006
- Bulgaria 2009
- Slovakia 2009
- Greenland 2012
- Estonia 2013
- Belarus 2014
- Serbia 2015
- Walloon part of Belgium 2016
- Croatia 2016
- Romania 2016-17
- Sweden 2016-17
- Latvia 2016-17





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