



To: National Focal Points to the Bern Convention (by email)

Brussels, 18 November 2024

Subject: Call to reject EU's proposal to de-list the wolf under the Bern Convention

Dear Sir, Dear Madam,

On behalf of hundreds of thousands European citizens and the undersigned conservation and animal welfare organisations, **we urge you to reject the European Union proposal to downgrade the protection status of the wolf** under the Bern Convention. Attached to this letter you may also find an analysis debunking the arguments put forward by the European Union to justify its proposal.

The European Union proposal to lower the protection status of the wolf is clearly a **politically motivated U-turn away from an ambitious and science-based approach to species and ecosystems conservation**. Indeed, the Parties to the Convention have rejected similar proposals to de-list the wolf in the Bern Convention meetings in 2006, 2018 and 2022 based on the absence of scientific evidence to alter this species' protection status. There is still no scientific justification for it now, as shown also in the Commission's in-depth assessment of the situation of the wolf in the EU published in December 2023. According to Article 7 of the Convention, Parties shall ensure that the protected populations are not in danger. Only when scientific evidence demonstrates that they are not in danger can the change of status from strictly protected to protected be considered, based on adequate justification.

Despite the fact that wolf populations are recovering thanks to their strict protection, the wolf continues to be in a **Near Threatened or Vulnerable conservation status for six out of nine European wolf populations** according to the latest assessment submitted to the Bern Convention Standing Committee. Further efforts are still required to ensure that wolf populations are not endangered and to reach and maintain favourable conservation status across the region.

Making decisions that are not based on scientific evidence would set a very worrying precedent, contradict the provisions of the Bern Convention and **erode democratic decision-making** based on science, citizen interests, due diligence and a thorough analysis of costs and benefits. Moreover, such a decision would **undermine the Parties' compliance with their international commitments to safeguard biodiversity**, particularly the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including Target 4 prescribing to "effectively manage human-wildlife interactions to minimize human-wildlife conflict for coexistence".

The Bern Convention already offers significant flexibility for Parties to derogate from strict protection and to use lethal measures where justified under clearly defined conditions, which several Parties to the Convention have made use of. **Parties to the Convention, national**

and local actors are also making continuous efforts to implement measures aimed at fostering co-existence between wolves and local communities. Downgrading the protection status of the wolf now would undermine those efforts, as it fosters the false perception that hunting wolves is a solution to livestock depredation. However, scientific evidence shows that **continued investment in adequate preventive measures is the only effective way to solve wolf-human conflicts, minimise farmed animals' losses and foster coexistence, protecting the interests of farmers, communities and animals.**

In addition, there is a **high degree of support among rural communities and Europeans at large for the strict protection of wolves.** An [ongoing petition organised by Avaaz](#) has already garnered more than 315 000 signatures, **urging to maintain the strict protection of wolves.**

This indicates the **clear rejection from citizens towards lowering the protection status of the wolf. We trust you will listen to citizens' concerns and science, and strive to achieve coexistence with large carnivores, such as wolves.**

The politically motivated proposal of the European Union risks opening the door to other politically motivated changes to the Bern Convention. This would lead to legal uncertainty, set back years of effective conservation efforts by the Parties, and tarnish the reputation, effectiveness and accountability of the Bern Convention.

We therefore urge you to:

- **Reject the proposal by the European Union to downgrade the protection status of the wolf under the Bern Convention, and instead:**
- Ensure proper enforcement of the existing legal protection provided by the Bern Convention across Parties and eliminate illegal hunting of wolves. Parties have agreed to deter environmental crimes, in particular pursuant to Article 6 of the Convention, not legalise them.
- Provide appropriate tools for livestock farmers to maintain and enhance prevention measures, i.e. the combination of fencing, Livestock Guardian Dogs and human shepherding, hereby protecting pastoralism. These tools have demonstrated their efficiency when compared to culling, have benefited from significant investment over the past decades and are recognised as the appropriate long-term solution.
- Support initiatives to raise citizen awareness and provide accurate, science-based information about wolves to the public.

Thank you for considering this. It will make a fundamental difference.

Yours faithfully,

Avaaz

BirdLife Europe

ClientEarth

Eurogroup for Animals

European Environmental Bureau

Friends of the Earth Europe
Humane Society International/ Europe
International Fund for Animal Welfare
Pro Natura
Pro Wildlife
WWF EPO

Attached documents (2):

- Analysis 'Reviewing the justifications brought by the European Union to propose the downgrade of the protection status of the wolf under the Bern Convention'
- Avaaz petition calling to uphold the current protection status for wolves under the Bern Convention