

## **Wolf future at risk: politics not science, behind Commission's downgrade plan *Decision on the EU proposal due on 2 - 6 December 2024 at the Bern Convention***

**Brussels, 21 November 2024** - Environmental Association [Green Impact](#), together with [Great Lakes and Wetlands](#) and others, denounced the lack of science-backing and breach of democratic process stemming from the European Commission's proposal to weaken the legal protection of the European Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*). [The associations called on Mikaël Poutiers](#), the Secretary General of the Bern Convention, not to allow a vote at the forthcoming Standing Committee December meeting.(1)

The European Commission has presented at the EU Council a legislative proposal to weaken the legal protection of the European Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) and it got a majority in favour.(2) However, to make this happen, a vote to downgrade the wolf from Appendix II to Appendix III at the Bern Convention (on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats) is needed before the relevant EU law (Habitat and Species Directive) could be changed.(3)

**Gaia Angelini, president of Green Impact, said:** *"The Secretary General of the Bern Convention is bound by the Convention's rules which allow the downlisting of species only on scientific grounds. The international scientific community is advocating against the downlisting, highlighting the lack of scientific supporting evidence of the EU Proposal. Weakening the protection of the wolf would result in the violation of the Bern Convention's rules and breach of democratic processes with potential dangers for the future of nature conservation in Europe."*

The EU Proposal to downgrade grey wolf protection across Europe has been based on a non-peer reviewed single report, contracted out by the European Commission and lacks verified, independent data. Farmers broadly back the proposal, as does [European Commission President von der Leyen](#), whose own pony Dolly [was killed](#) by a wolf in 2022.

[Hundreds of scientists and academics are currently signing](#) on two scientific statements - about wolf conservation and the role of wolves in ecosystem recovery - initiated by a group of experts, explaining why there is no science behind the proposal to downlist wolves, and urging the Bern Convention not to weaken the current wolf protection scheme. The [call for experts' signatures remains open until 30 November](#). 320 signatures have been collected to this date.

The Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe/IUCN Specialist Group, a leading science advisor on wolf matters, has also [published a statement against the downlisting](#) - reinforcing the message from the European scientific community.

Last July, the [European Court of Justice issued a mandatory judgement](#) on wolf killing establishing that European Regions cannot authorise the killing of wolves if their population numbers are still low at the national level, making the case for even higher, rather than lower protection, for wolves.

**Zoltan Kun, president of the Association Great Lakes and Wetlands, said:** *“There is a wealth of evidence proving that there is no need to open up the killing of wolves in Europe, and that we have the know - how for practising coexistence with people. Additionally, illegal killing of wolves is widespread on the continent and poorly monitored, and puts the species at a higher risk than assessed by current publications. We cannot afford to give the green light to nature conservation decisions stemming from politics rather than solid science.”*

On 2 - 6 December, the [Standing Committee of the Bern Convention](#), which is an agreement under the Council of Europe - not a EU body, and regroups European countries beyond the EU27 - will meet to discuss and vote on the proposed downlisting.

### Notes

(1) The [Bern Convention of the Council of Europe](#) is a binding international legal instrument in the field of nature conservation, covering most of the natural heritage of the European continent and extending to some States of Africa.

The following associations have already written to the Bern Convention: Green Impact (Italy), Great Lakes and Wetlands (Nagytavak, Hungary), Friends of Ferto Lake (Fertobaratai, Hungary), European Bioeconomy Bureau (EBB, Belgium).

(2) A majority vote supported the Commission’s proposal on 26 September. However, Ireland and Spain voted against the downlisting and Belgium, Malta, Cyprus and Slovenia abstained. [EU Council Decision \(EU\) 2024/2669 of 26 September 2024](#)

(3) [Recommendation N. 56 \(1997\)](#) prescribes that amendments of the Convention’s Appendixes should be taken into account when presented “in a coherent manner, based on best available science.”

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[Green Impact website provides more information](#) on initiatives, letters and scientific statements.

[EU Proposal to amend the Bern Convention](#) (Proposal to amend Appendixes II and III of the Bern Convention of the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats by moving the wolf (Canis lupus) from Appendix II to Appendix III).

[Link to the open letter sent to the Secretary General of the Bern Convention.](#)

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