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PRESS RELEASE

19 February 2025

Wolf Downlisting now challenged at the European Court.

The legal appeal process before the General Court of the EU has now been accepted. Five Associations request the legal annulment of the EU Council Decision while more EU - funded scientific evidence against the downlisting of wolves are available.

The Appeal process before the General Court of the European Union regarding the downlisting of the wolf (*Canis lupus*) has begun. The appeal was submitted by five associations: Green Impact (Italy), Earth (Italy), Nagy Tavak (Hungary), LNDC Animal Protection (Italy), and One Voice (Strasbourg, France). The lack of scientific support for the downlisting of the wolf has also been highlighted in a newly published scientific report on the **ecology and genetics** of large carnivores, funded by the European Union.

The appeal, filed by the five associations before the General Court of the European Union, seeks the annulment of the EU Council Decision and subsequent acts related to the Bern Convention regarding the downlisting of the wolf (*Canis lupus*).

The grounds presented in the appeal are summarized in the notice published in the Official Journal of the European Union, available in multiple languages – enclosed.

Main reasonings:

- **Underestimation of a series of internationally significant reports**, including those produced by academic institutions, which indicate that the wolf population in Europe is not free from significant risks.
- **The EU Council decided to propose the downlisting (downlisting) of the grey wolf (*Canis lupus*)** to the Bern Convention, relying on the same scientific data that, in 2022, led the European Union to vote against a similar proposal put forward by Switzerland.
- **Violation of the principles of proportionality and precaution**, abuse or misuse of power, procedural flaws concerning the disregard of the "best available science" principle, as well as **violation of the principles expressed by the Court of Justice** regarding derogations from the common wolf protection regime.



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- **Violation of EU Habitat Directive principles**, specifically the requirement to ensure a "favorable conservation status for the population of the species concerned within its natural range."
- **The contested decision is also in conflict with the guidelines established by Recommendation No. 56 (1997) of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention.** This recommendation states that amendments to Annexes I and II of the Convention must be made in a consistent manner and based on the best available scientific knowledge.

The five Associations express "great satisfaction in being able to present the Appeal against the downlisting of wolf protection before the General Court of the European Union"

If the EU Court proceedings result in the annulment of the 2024 EU Council Decision on the downlisting of the wolf, this annulment would have a **direct impact** on the subsequent EU proposal submitted to the Bern Convention in December last year, rendering it ineffective and devoid of legal significance.

How to Join the Legal Action - The Associations inform that **non-profit organizations registered in the European Union that wish to join the appeal by submitting a legal intervention** are invited to contact the following email address: wolveseuropeancourtcase@greenimpact.it

Scientific Community Opposition to Wolf Downlisting.

Information regarding **recommendations from the European scientific community** opposing the wolf downlisting - **including statements from the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (LCIE), IUCN, and a declaration signed by 700 scientists** - can be found at the following link: <https://www.greenimpact.it/science-policy-and-laws-to-prevent-the-killing-of-wolves-in-europe/>

The five Associations also draw attention to the **recent publication of an additional scientific report (2025, "Developing a Methodology for the Definition of Favorable Reference Values for Large Carnivores in Europe")**, which further demonstrates the **lack of scientific basis for the wolf downlisting decision**. This report was commissioned by the **European Commission in 2023** and published just a few days ago.

The report aims to develop new **European guidelines for defining Favorable Reference Values (FRVs)**, which are essential for assessing the **Favorable Conservation Status (FCS)** of wildlife species, particularly large carnivores (*brown bear, Eurasian lynx, wolf, wolverine, golden jackal*).



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Regarding the **wolf**, the report cites recent scientific literature (Mergeay et al., 2024) emphasizing the need to **introduce new parameters related to ecology and genetics** to accurately assess the actual size of wolf populations in Europe and their long-term conservation.

The report references the **best scientific methodologies** for defining FRVs, which currently suggest that **at least half of Europe's wolf populations exhibit insufficient genetic diversity**—notably **the Scandinavian, Iberian, and Italian populations**.

The conservation of genetic diversity is also part of the commitments signed by the **European Union under the UN Convention on Biodiversity (UN CBD)** and ratified at the **Montreal COP 2022 (Goal A7, Target 4, Kunming-Montreal, CBD)**.

*The legal work to file this crucial appeal before the General Court of the European Union was made possible thanks to the **generous donation from Gallifrey Foundation** to Green Impact.*

Further Information

January 2025 - *Developing a Methodology for the Definition of Favorable Reference Values for Large Carnivores in Europe*, drafted by the **Norwegian Institute for Nature Research** for the **Institute for Applied Ecology**, with contributions from the **IUCN/SSC Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (Chair: Dr. Luigi Boitani)**.

In 2023, the **European Commission** issued a tender (ENV/2023/OP/0019) titled "**Support for Coexistence with Large Carnivores.**" The contract, **No. 09.0201/2023/907799/SER/ENV.D.3**, was awarded to a consortium comprising the **Institute for Applied Ecology, Adelphi Consult, and Callisto**. The **Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA)** was subcontracted for a specific task (**B3 – Assessment of the Conservation Status of Large Carnivores**). The report was funded by the **European Commission**, and the contract was awarded in **2023**.



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Report Link:

<https://brage.nina.no/nina-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/3175288/LinnellDevelopingFRV%20REPORT%20FINAL2025diamant.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

Key Extracts:

- The report aims to develop new guidelines for defining Favorable Reference Values (FRVs) necessary to assess the Favorable Conservation Status (FCS) within the specific context of large carnivores (*brown bear, Eurasian lynx, wolf, wolverine, golden jackal*) in Europe.
- **Species recovery and long-term persistence require conservation planning science.** This involves a particular focus on ecological representation and resilience to changing environments, ensuring redundancy at least in part.
- **It also emphasizes a greater focus on long-term population genetics in addition to short-term demographic aspects.** Conservation science has made significant advances in mapping and understanding the diverse conflicts often associated with large carnivore populations in human-modified landscapes.
- **This approach requires a high level of coordination in cross-border monitoring,** with a strong emphasis on both **demographic and genetic properties.**
- **Not enough attention has been paid to genetic factors** in discussions about population variability.
- **Ecological functionality has also been insufficiently considered.**

CBD Montreal, 2022: <https://www.cbd.int/gbf>

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