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**Wolf (*Canis lupus*) downgraded: the European Parliament chooses politics over science.**

**LNDC Animal Protection and Green Impact denounce a serious retreat in biodiversity protection, based only on unfounded media scaremongering and not on scientific data, totally ignoring the will of the public and the scientific community and pandering to the wishes of the breeders' lobby, already amply compensated for the few losses due to predation.**

The European Parliament today officially approved the **downlisting of the wolf**, moving it from Annex IV (strict protection) to Annex V of the Habitats Directive. It is a decision that confirms the European Commission's Proposal, which was strongly supported by President Ursula Von der Leyen, who had long spoken out publicly in favor of the measure, including in the wake of the alleged killing of her pony by a wolf in 2021.

Defending the protection of the wolf **was only the voice of The Left group**, which is also joined by MEPs from the 5 Star Movement, who expressed their opposition in the chamber by stressing **the total absence of solid scientific basis and deep doubts about the regularity of the procedure** that led to this vote. Voting against the downgrading en bloc were The Left and Greens group, while the EU Parliament's Environment Committee inexplicably refrained from opening a debate on the matter, instead accepting an emergency procedure, an institutional shortcut not justified by any real emergency and in blatant contrast to the democratic principle of transparency.

As already pointed out by **Green Impact and LNDC Animal Protection**, the downlisting is based on a **technical report prepared by a private consulting firm**, paid for by the Commission itself, and whose data has never been validated by independent scientific bodies or universities. **More than 700 scientists** and authoritative institutions, including the IUCN and the Large Carnivore Initiative coordinated by biologist Luigi Boitani, have already spoken out against this decision, denouncing **the scientific groundlessness of the proposal**.

Hundreds of **environmental and other civil society groups** have been clamoring for the withdrawal of the proposal, sending letters to the Commission, Member States and MEPs. However, today's vote confirms that **science and active citizenship are now excluded from EU policy decisions**.

There are **serious irregularities** in the procedural process that led to this outcome, including the absence of Parliamentary scrutiny in 2024 on the EU position to the Bern Convention, and the failure to apply the unanimity vote in the EU Council last March, as required by the Habitats Directive for amendments to Annex IV.

The next step will be the European Council vote scheduled for June, which unfortunately is expected to be purely formal.

Italy, by supporting this choice, **loses the battle to safeguard *Canis lupus italicus***, a unique subspecies in the world, now a symbol of biodiversity and a resource for sustainable economy. The wolf-in addition to its **intrinsic value** as a living being with its own dignity-has a central role in protecting biodiversity, attracting tourists, supporting jobs, skills, and environmental and scientific projects developed over the past 50 years, made possible precisely by its legal protection introduced in 1980. Today there is a risk of **thwarting all this progress**, falling back into an anachronistic culture that in the 1970s had led to the almost total extinction of the species in Italy, with just 100-200 individuals surviving throughout the country.

A backward step dictated by a desire to pander to unfounded media scaremongering, ignoring the reality of the facts: **wolf predation accounts for only 0.07% of the causes of mortality in the sheep and goat sector**, which already benefits from substantial European funds through the CAP, both for compensation and for prevention (often ignored by the farmers themselves).

Contrary to the advocates of downlisting, moreover **Annex IV already allows for targeted interventions**, including the possible killing of individual specimens in exceptional cases. Moving to Annex V, on the other hand, paves **the way for legal wolf hunting** without any effective control or balancing mechanism.

The situation is aggravated by the total absence of national monitoring of poaching, which is estimated to **kill more than 1,000 wolves a year in Italy alone**. An alarming figure that makes the species vulnerable and already close to the risk of extinction, especially in the Alpine area.

*"Europe and Italy have chosen politics over science, they have chosen fear over reason. We continue to choose the wolf, biodiversity and the future. Together with other associations we have filed an appeal to the European Court of Justice requesting the annulment of the downgrading of the wolf's protection status. An appeal joined by writ of intervention by 17 other associations from all over Europe, and the outcome of which will be known in a few months, with the hoped-for possibility that today's decision by the European Parliament will be overturned on the basis of scientific data,"* **Green Impact and LNDC Animal Protection** state.

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