

Some information about France, Spain and Germany. Document attached to the NGO PR about Wolves of 26 March 2026

ABOUT WOLVES IN FRANCE

France is one of the most aggressive wolf - killing countries in the European Union. Since 2014, administrative authorized killing has resulted in an estimated **1,500 wolf deaths**, and the **true number is likely higher due to illegal killings and other unreported mortality**.

The estimated wolf annual survival rate is estimated at 66%. Below this limit, the wolf population may not be sustained and may decrease (OFB 2025).

France operates an annual wolf-removal quota (*plafond de prélèvement*) that authorises a fixed number of wolves to be killed each year under its national wolf management plan.

In recent years, **killing quotas have steadily increased**, ranging from roughly 100 to around 200 wolves annually, with the 2026 increased ceiling set at approximately 200 individuals—**about 19% to 21% of the national population**. When cumulative quotas since 2014 are considered, the total number of authorised wolf killings plausibly exceeds 1,500. Despite these removals, the species has not reached a favourable conservation status in France and remains classified as “**unfavourable-inadequate**” under the latest assessments of the EU Habitats Directive (Art 17; Reporting).

According to the French Biodiversity Office, the estimated wolf population in France during the winter of 2024 –2025 **was approximately of 1,082 individuals** (less than 1/3 of the Italian population), **with no more population growth since winter 2021-2022** (OFB 2025), due to culling rate. From a simulation study, with 19% rate culling, there is a probability of 56% that population decreases (OFB/MNHN 2025). **With the new 2026 wolf removal rate (21 to 23 % of the population) this decrease probability rises to 61-66%.**

Nevertheless, in 2026 France plans to authorise the killing of about 200 wolves, representing roughly 20% of the national population, due to political pressure associated with sectorial interests¹.

From extinction to return (1990s) till today

- ✓ National extinction of the wolf in France (eradication campaigns through the 19th–20th centuries; species effectively extinct). **1930s**
- ✓ Official disappearance of wolves from France. **1940**
- ✓ No resident population; only occasional dispersing individuals from Italy. **1950–1980**
- ✓ Still no population; wolves remain absent from French territory. **1980s**
- ✓ First confirmed natural return: two wolves detected in Mercantour National Park (Alps). **1992**

¹ The estimated wolf annual survival rate is estimated at 66%. Below this limit, the wolf population may not be sustained and may decrease (OFB 2025).

- ✓ Genetic evidence confirms recolonisation from the Italian wolf population. **1990s**
- ✓ Early population growth in the French Alps; first stable packs **2000–2005**
- ✓ Expansion northwards along the Alpine chain; population increases steadily. **2010**
- ✓ Continued growth and spread into additional regions; monitoring network expanded. **2015**
- ✓ Population exceeds several hundred individuals; stable packs across Alpine regions. **2020**
- ✓ Ongoing lower expansion and small consolidation of several packs across France. **2023–2025**
- ✓ Scientific sources supporting the timeline: Biology Insights (2025); European Wilderness Society (2024); Life Wolfalps EU (2024); International Wolf Center (2025).

REFERENCES :

- **Office Français de la Biodiversité (OFB).** *Update of demographic estimates and population size of wolves in France during the winter of 2023/2024.* Confirms an estimated **1,003 wolves** and a **9% decline** in 2023.
- **Government of France – Annual Decrees on Wolf Removal Quotas (2014–2024).** *Arrêtés fixant le plafond de prélèvement du loup.* Establish the yearly authorised culling quotas, which cumulatively exceed **1,500 wolves** since 2014. (Public administrative decrees; quota ranges confirmed by AFP-validated reporting.)
- **European Commission.** *Habitats Directive – Article 17 Conservation Status Assessments.* Confirms that the conservation status of the wolf in France is **“unfavourable-inadequate.”*- latest available assessment.
- **AFP (via France 24).** *Culling controversy as French wolf population falls in 2023.* Confirms the official estimate of **1,003 wolves** and that the French administration intends to maintain a culling ceiling allowing **up to 209 wolves**, consistent with the projected **~200-wolf quota** for 2026.

ABOUT WOLVES IN SPAIN.

Spain hosts the largest wolf population in Western Europe, yet the species remains at the centre of political and social tensions. In 2021, Spain granted full national protection to the Iberian wolf—a genetically distinct sub-population—by adding the species to the *Listado de Especies Silvestres en Régimen de Protección Especial* (LESPE), thereby ending all legal hunting across the country.

Although the EU has recently moved to downgrade the wolf from “strictly protected” to “protected,” Spain initially confirmed that it would maintain full national protection regardless of the EU reclassification. However, in 2025 the Spanish Parliament voted to reintroduce controlled wolf hunting north of the Duero River (Law 1/2025) partially reversing the 2021 protection regime decision.

The wolf remains strictly protected south of Duero River (however in those area there are very few wolves). The most populated wolves regions are the ones located at northern Duero river (Asturias, Galicia, Cantabria, Castilla y León and a bit of La Rioja). Several subpopulations—particularly in the South—remain small, isolated, and at risk of local extirpation.

Wolves continue to die from illegal killings, poisoning, and traffic collisions. Spain does not maintain a unified national mortality database; instead, mortality data are fragmented across autonomous communities. This lack of standardised national reporting limits the ability to assess the true scale of human-caused mortality.

Wolf killings—legal or illegal—occur predominantly in the northern regions of Spain, where most wolves live and where conflicts with livestock are highest: Castilla y León, Asturias, Cantabria, and Galicia. These regions historically authorised wolf hunting and continue to report the highest levels of illegal killings and conflict-related mortality.

In 2026, the Spanish Supreme Court (Tribunal Supremo) issued a landmark ruling (Judgment of 12 February 2026, published 16 February 2026) *establishing that wolf culling may only be authorised as a last resort, and only when all non-lethal alternatives have been demonstrably exhausted*. The Court held that regional governments must prove necessity, proportionality, and the absence of reasonable alternatives, and must demonstrate that any lethal control is compatible with maintaining the species in a favourable conservation status. This ruling significantly restricts the ability of regional authorities to reopen hunting and reinforces the strict conditions for derogations under Article 16 of the Habitats Directive.

Despite these pressures, wolves in Spain remain classified as being in an “unfavourable-inadequate” conservation status under the EU Habitats Directive latest updates (Art 17, Reporting) The European Commission’s 2023 in-depth analysis confirms that no EU Member State—including Spain—has demonstrated favourable conservation status for the species.

RÉFÉRENCES

- **MITECO – Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico.** *Censo Nacional del Lobo Ibérico 2021–2024*. Provides official estimates of **333 wolf packs** and confirms moderate population growth.
- **LESPE (2021)**. National listing granting full protection to the Iberian wolf across Spain.
- **European Commission (2023)**. *In-depth analysis on the conservation status of wolves in the EU*. Confirms that **no Member State**, including Spain, has achieved favourable conservation status.
- **CJEU – Court of Justice of the European Union (Case C-436/22)**. Confirms that hunting cannot be authorised when conservation status is unfavourable, blocking regional attempts to reopen an easy wolf hunting in the north of the Duero.
- Sources: https://spanishnewstoday.com/supreme-court-sets-strict-limits-on-wolf-hunting-in-spain_1000040-a.html (spanishnewstoday.com in Bing).
- **Autonomous Communities (Castilla y León, Asturias, Cantabria, Galicia)**. Regional mortality reports indicating illegal killings, poisoning, and traffic

collisions as major causes of non-natural mortality; absence of a unified national mortality database noted in national reporting controversies.

NORMATIVE CHANGE / LEGAL STATUS OF THE WOLF IN SPAIN

- ✓ **2000–2010** The wolf remains legally huntable north of the Duero River with management plans (Annex V Habitat Directive); strictly protected south of the Duero under EU Habitats Directive Annex IV.
- ✓ **2011–2020** Regional management killing plans continue; hunting allowed in Castilla y León, Asturias, Cantabria, Galicia (north of Duero). Wolf remains protected south of Duero river.
- ✓ **2021** The Spanish government adds the wolf to the LESPRES (Listado de Especies Silvestres en Régimen de Protección Especial), granting full national protection and banning hunting across all Spain.
- ✓ **2022–2023** Legal disputes and regional opposition intensify; rural regions challenge the national protection status.
- ✓ **2024** The EU (Bern Convention Standing Committee) votes to downgrade the wolf from “strictly protected” to “protected”, opening the door to reduced protection from March 2025.
- ✓ **2025 (March)** The Spanish Congress approves reinstating wolf hunting north of the Duero River, overturning the 2021 full protection. This effectively reduces national protection (“operational downlisting”).
- ✓ **2026 (February)** The Spanish Supreme Court rules that wolf culling is allowed only as a last resort, after proving that all non-lethal measures have failed, and only if necessity, proportionality, and a favourable conservation status are demonstrated. The ruling severely restricts the practical application of the 2025 decision and re-strengthens wolf protection.

Sources: Tribunal Supremo (Sentencia 12/02/2026); Spanish News Today (2026); El Diario (2026); Euro Weekly News (2025). —

ABOUT WOLVES IN GERMANY.

Around 1600 wolves are supposed to be present in Germany², just above $\frac{1}{3}$ of the current Italian population. Despite wolves were classified as *endangered* across Germany by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) - a status that should preclude any killing-NGO and press sources revealed that the German Ministry of the Environment has adapted this classification³ in a way that presents the species as being close to a “favourable” conservation status⁴. For the preparation of the Article 17 report (reporting

² DBBW (Federal Documentation and Advisory Centre on Wolves) Pressrelease from Nov. 11th, 2025 <https://www.dbb-wolf.de/mehr/pressemitteilungen/details/ergebnisse-des-wolfsmonitorings-2024-25-veroeffentlicht-bestandsentwicklung-stagniert>:

³ BMLEH, *Bewertung des Erhaltungszustandes beim Wolf erfolgt künftig auf Basis einer überarbeiteten Methodik*, 31.07.2025

⁴ <https://www.wwf.de/2025/oktober/statement-zur-nachmeldung-erhaltungszustand-wolf>;
<https://www.dbb-wolf.de/mehr/literatur-download/statusberichte>;

<https://www.ad-hoc-news.de/politik/berlin-mainz-im-bundesumweltministerium-wurde-wie-die-anca/65543212>;

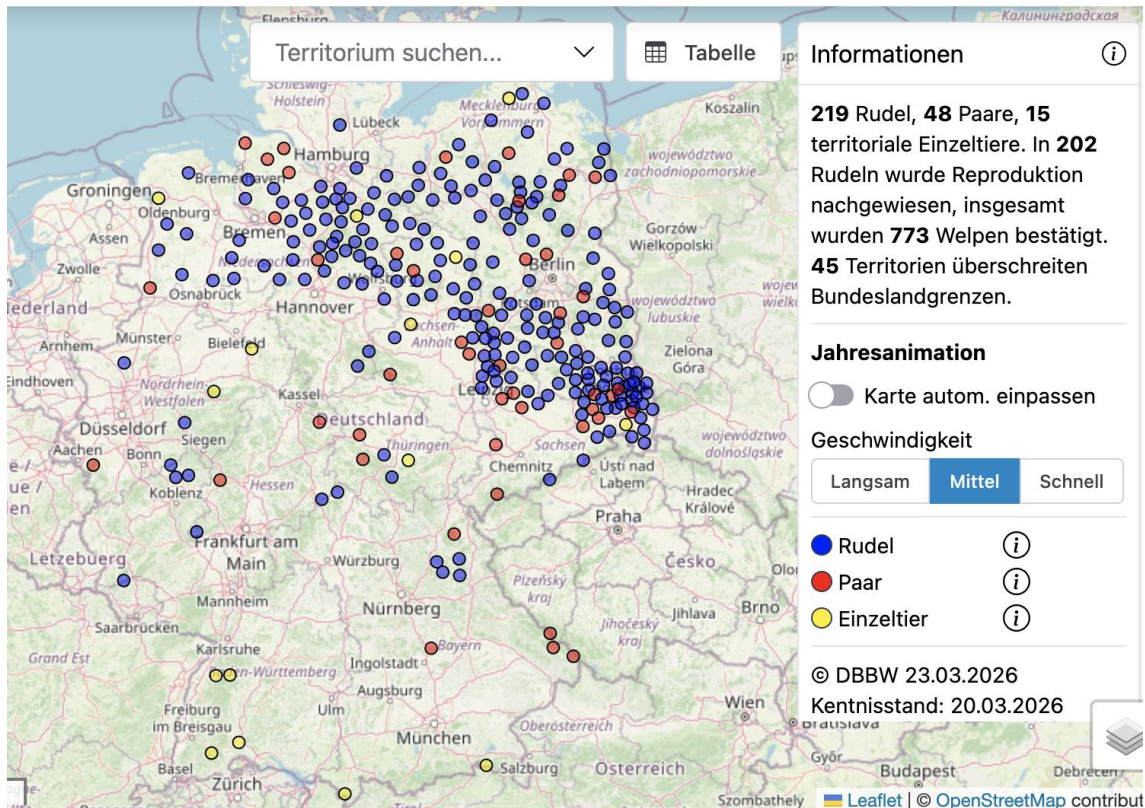
to the EU) for 2025 under the Habitats Directive, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, under political pressure and without a solid scientific basis, used a methodology adapting the key parameters for assessing the wolf's conservation status as prescribed by the Habitats Directive in such a way that the report to the European Commission presented the wolf's conservation status in Germany as 'favourable'.

According to those sources⁵, a solid draft report for assessing the wolf's conservation status for the 2025 Habitats Directive (Article 17) report was under preparation by Federal Agency for Nature Conservation BfN. It was prepared in cooperation with the expert authorities of the Federal States and was based on extensive multi-year scientific studies. The scientists' conclusion was unequivocal: the wolf's conservation status in Germany is **unfavourable–bad (U2)**. **The draft of BfN was never published.** According to those source, the Federal Ministry for the Environment has instead delivered an adapted version of the report using a different assessment methodology and hand it out to the European Commission.

Wolves in Germany were classified as **“unfavourable-inadequate”** under the previous EU Habitats Directive reporting system (Art 17, Reporting). the European Commission's 2023 in-depth analysis on wolves confirmed that no Member State — including Germany - has demonstrated favourable conservation status at national scale.

In addition, national data on wolf mortality is considered to be limited especially for illegal killing; between the years 1991-2026 the records report that 1381 wolves were found dead for the following: traffic accidents (1031), illegally killing (128), natural cause of death (111), unclear motives (73) - often then acknowledged as illegal killing, killing with official authorisation (almost all of cases turned out to be associated to the lack of use of wolf-deterrent livestock protection measures)14 still pending and 3 other.

⁵ <https://www.ad-hoc-news.de/politik/berlin-mainz-im-bundesumweltministerium-wurde-wie-die-anca/65543212>; <https://www.wwf.de/2025/juli/pressestatement-erhaltungszustand-wolf>;



Source: Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle des Bundes zum Thema Wolf (DBBW) ; <https://www.dbb-wolf.de/wolfsvorkommen/bestaetigte-territorien/karte-der-territorien>

As the map shows, the wolf population extends in a band from east to west. This stagnation in the population's expansion has persisted for years. Although sufficient suitable habitat is available in the forest-rich south-western German states, no stable wolf populations are establishing there. From a scientific perspective, there is not yet explanation for this.

In April 2026, a new **Federal Hunting Act**⁶ is expected to enter into force. It contains provisions under which wolves may, **de facto**, be hunted from July to October, even **without a specific cause** and without protection for parent animals. The federal states will be able to establish **wolf-free zones** and regionally hunt wolves or “manage” the population. **Preventive culling** is to be permitted even if wolves have not previously killed any livestock.

Preventive measures for wolf predations, when used correctly, have proven to work out. In 2023 over 350 pastures covering almost 1,700 hectares were protected by around 400 km of modern, wolf-deterrent fences. Of those receiving the targeted support, none have recorded damage caused by wolves. Wolf predation remains a very minor cause of death for sheep and other reared animals compared to other

⁶ <https://www.tierschutzbund.de/en/about-us/news/press/notification/federal-states-criticize-governments-unilateral-approach-to-wolves/>

causes. In 2025, the Association Deutscher Tierschutzbund together with others, underlined that the German wolf population is still in a recovery phase rather than excessive, and that the scientific evidence available does not indicate otherwise. It therefore concluded that Germany lacks a scientific basis for supporting a downgrading of the species' protection status.

FROM EXTINCTION TO RETURN (1995) TILL TODAY

- ✓ National extinction of the wolf in Germany (last individuals killed in most regions between the late 19th and early 20th century). **~1900**
- ✓ No resident population; the wolf is officially considered extinct in Germany. **1950**
- ✓ Situation unchanged: zero packs, only extremely rare dispersing individuals from Eastern Europe, with no reproduction. **1970**
- ✓ Still no population: the wolf remains absent from German territory. **1980**
- ✓ First legal protections and early ecological corridors with Poland, but no packs yet. **1990**
- ✓ First wolves observed again in eastern Germany, but no stable reproduction. **1995–1998**
- ✓ Natural return of the wolf: first reproducing pack in Lusatia (Saxony). Beginning of recolonisation. **2000**
- ✓ Slow population growth: several stable packs in eastern Germany. **2005**
- ✓ Expansion into additional federal states; population exceeds 20 packs. **2010**
- ✓ Continued growth: around 60 packs. **2015**
- ✓ More than 100 confirmed packs. **2020**
- ✓ Between 180 and 200 packs across Germany. **2023–2025**

Sources :Brückner & van Maanen (2024); Jarausch et al. (2021); Zwilling et al. (2024); Niedziałkowski (2023). —

REFERENCES

- **Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN).** *Rote Liste der gefährdeten Tiere, Pflanzen und Pilze Deutschlands*. Confirms that the wolf is classified as “**endangered**” at national level.
- **European Commission (2023).** *In-depth analysis on the conservation status of wolves in the EU*. Confirms that **no EU Member State**, including Germany, has achieved favourable conservation status for the wolf.
- **EU Habitats Directive – Article 17 Reporting (Germany).** Official conservation status assessment listing the wolf as “**unfavourable-inadequate.**”- **according to latest available information.**
- **DBBW – Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle des Bundes zum Thema Wolf.** Provides national monitoring data but does **not** publish a complete national mortality dataset including illegal killings, poisoning, or traffic collisions.
- [ENV - Wolf monitoring data 2021/2022 Germany](#)

2023, Livestock depredation and large carnivores in Europe: Germany livestock damages and wolf https://adelphi.de/system/files/document/lc-platform_livestock-depredation_germany.pdf

Deutscher Tierschutzbund (2025). *Deutscher Tierschutzbund mahnt zu wissenschaftlichem Blick*. Pressemeldung, 30 April 2025.