
Keep the Wolf Strictly Protected and Make All Member States Respect Its Protection

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Due to its strict protection in the Habitats Directive, the wolf has returned and populations have increased in many member states. The return of the wolf to regions from which it had once been eradicated marks a significant conservation achievement.

However, wolf populations in the EU are still in unfavourable or inadequate conservation status in six out of seven biogeographical regions, according to the most [recent assessments](#) done under the Habitats Directive. The [latest International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) assessment](#) shows that six out of nine transboundary wolf populations in the EU are vulnerable or near-threatened. Thus, the main objective of both the Bern Convention and the Habitats Directive – ensuring the restoration and conservation of endangered species – has not yet been reached. There is therefore no scientific basis that supports an EU-wide weakening of the species' legal protection.

Several research papers confirm this conclusion, including the in-depth analysis on the situation of the [wolf in the European Union](#) prepared by the Commission and published in December 2023. According to that analysis, the threat to farm animals posed by wolves is exaggerated as wolves only kill a small percentage of livestock annually. Many effective tools to protect the livestock are available and there is no scientific evidence proving that lethal controls of wolf populations effectively reduce wolf attacks on livestock. Furthermore, the derogation system that already exists in the Habitats Directive allows member states significant flexibility in dealing with problematic individual animals and there is no real need for any additional mechanism.

Any weakening of the wolf's protection status threatens regression in the Habitats Directive's protection of other large carnivores, namely bears and lynx. Wolves are important to maintaining healthy ecosystems and biodiversity and existing populations are already exposed to many threats. For example, traffic and illegal killing cause a remarkable number of wolf deaths in the EU. For the sake of not only the wolf, but of all species and habitats protected by EU legislation, it is therefore important and urgent that the Commission takes further steps to make all member states respect the wolf's legal protection. Since 2010, Sweden has faced an infringement procedure for wolf hunting and the Commission has sent reasoned opinions twice(!), most recently in 2015, clarifying that Sweden is in violation of the Habitats Directive.

Because the Commission has not taken measures, several other member states have followed Sweden's negative precedent and set low reference values for wolf and other large carnivore populations. This step allows for the populations to be hunted down and fragmented into small, isolated and vulnerable remnants, compromising their good conservation status.

The joint presence of herds and large carnivores in grazing areas generates conflict situations between carnivores such as wolves and human shepherds and breeders. It is important that their cohabitation finds its balance between human activities and the presence of wild carnivores on our territories. The human responsibility is twofold: to protect herds of domesticated animals (to guarantee the continuity of economic activity) and ensure the sustainability of wild species such as wolves.

This issue is not merely about carnivores or the Habitats Directive but a question of rule of law. A reasoned opinion is supposed to be the last step before an infringement procedure is taken to the Court. If the Commission fails to take the next step, it signals to all member states that they do not need to respect EU environmental legislation. The continued inactivity of the Commission severely risks the credibility of all EU environmental legislation, and indeed the credibility of EU legislation in general.



The European Green Party:

- Calls on the Commission to cancel any plan to weaken the EU Habitats Directive and the protection status of the wolf and to keep the current strict protection status in the Habitats Directive despite the recent changes in the Bern Convention
- Calls on the Parliament and the Council of Ministers to reject any proposal for weakening the protection status of the wolf
- Calls on the Commission to promptly initiate and resolve pending infringement procedures against member states where, despite the protection of wolves under the Habitats Directive, wolf populations are killed in large numbers every year through licensed hunting
- Urges the Commission and member states to establish financial support mechanisms for farmers to introduce and extend the use of effective, non-lethal methods to protect their assets from damage caused by protected species
- Calls on the EU to ensure sufficient compensation for livestock damage caused by large carnivores to promote co-existence
- Calls on the Commission and the Parliament to take action on education and distribution of scientific, evidence-based information about wolves

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