

Brussels, March 17, 2025

To the Ministers of the Environment of the Member States of the European Union

Subject: Maintaining strict protection for the wolf in Europe

Dear ministers of European member States,

I am writing to draw your attention to the European Commission's proposal to revise the Habitats Directive. The aim of this proposal is to bring EU rules into line with the Bern Convention, which downgraded the status of the wolf on 6 March 2025. The amendment adopted in December 2024 by the Parties to the Bern Convention transfers the wolf from Appendix II (strictly protected fauna) to Appendix III (protected fauna). It is this amendment, which reduces the level of protection afforded to the wolf in Europe, that the Commission wishes to transpose into the Habitats Directive.

It is important to remember that the wolf's status as a strictly protected species has until now made it possible to prohibit the killing and capture of wolves and the destruction of their habitats, while authorising derogations under very strict and justified conditions to prevent significant damage to crops, livestock and forests without endangering the survival of the species. The new classification opens the door to more flexible regulations which, de facto, facilitate the culling of wolves and compromise the stability of populations that are still fragile in many parts of Europe.

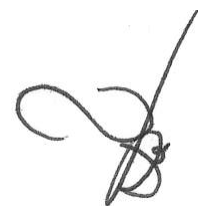
There is no scientific justification for this decision. In a study commissioned by the European Commission in December 2023, the European Alliance for Wolf Conservation (EAWC) confirmed that the wolf's conservation status remains inadequate in many European countries. The argument that the wolf is overpopulated has no scientific basis whatsoever. While it is true that wolf populations have increased in certain regions, their stability on a European scale is not assured. The wolf's decline is compromising decades of conservation efforts and jeopardising the species' long-term survival.

Several studies have also shown that culling wolves is not a viable solution for reducing conflicts with livestock farmers. On the contrary, the disorganisation of packs caused by arbitrary culling of individuals leads to an increase in attacks on herds. The only effective and sustainable approach is to put in place coexistence plans that guarantee both the protection of wolves and that of pastoral and agricultural activities.

In this context, I invite you, as a Member State, not to support the proposed revision of the Habitats Directive at the Council of the European Union, so that the wolf can continue to be considered as a strictly protected species and so that its full protection can continue, without compromising the commitments made in favour of biodiversity and the conservation of endangered species.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this matter further. Yours sincerely.

Emma Fourreau
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