

Protect EU Conservation wins: Maintain strong wolf protection and strengthen coexistence efforts

The undersigned civil society and animal welfare organisations call on EU Member States to reject the European Commission's proposal to weaken the protection status of wolves under the Bern Convention. We urge you to instead intensify efforts to achieve coexistence with large carnivores, such as wolves and bears.

The wolf is a strictly protected species and must remain so according to scientific evidence. Once nearly extinct due to persecution, hunting and habitat destruction, wolves have made a remarkable comeback to Europe's landscapes, due to the legal protection granted by international and EU law, as well as the efforts of competent environmental authorities, farmers, scientists, NGOs, and local communities. However, their populations are still far from being in a good and viable conservation status¹. The latest IUCN assessment shows that six out of nine transboundary wolf populations in the EU are vulnerable or near-threatened. Lowering their protection now would put the species at greater risk and undermine the EU's legal requirement to achieve viable and stable wolf populations.

At present, there is no scientific basis to support an EU-wide modification of the existing legislation. The wolf's recovery is still ongoing, and the main objectives of both the Bern Convention and the Habitats Directive (i.e. to ensure the restoration and conservation of endangered species) have not yet been reached. Additionally, and as confirmed in the Commission's in-depth analysis, there is no scientific evidence that culling effectively reduces depredation on farmed animals. The objective of the Commission proposal is to reduce such wolf depredation, but there is no scientific evidence on the effectiveness of culling to achieve this. In fact, it could even be counterproductive, and increase attacks on farmed animals since it risks disrupting the wolves' social structure.

The Commission's proposal comes at a time of ongoing efforts to achieve coexistence between local communities and wolf populations. Over the past decade, the EU and its Member States have invested significant time and resources to enhance coexistence. This is facilitated by several EU and regional platforms, and successful LIFE-funded projects showcasing mutually beneficial solutions in the short and longer term. The proposition to reduce wolf protection undermines all those efforts and investments. It would be a shift away from the EU's goal of achieving harmonious coexistence between humans and large carnivores.

We acknowledge the challenges that arise from the return of the wolf in some EU regions, and the impact it can have on individual farmers and animal owners. Therefore, stepping up efforts to make existing prevention measures, such as fencing, guarding dogs and reinforcing human presence, more accessible for animal owners and supporting them with the appropriate prevention tools is essential. Efforts should be maintained to adapt existing solutions to their needs. Moving away from a coexistence approach towards

¹ Wolf populations in the EU are in unfavourable or inadequate conservation status in six out of seven biogeographical regions according to the most recent assessments done under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.

lowering of the protection of the wolf would ignore all the farmers who have invested in and are successfully protecting their herds from wolves for years.

It is essential to recognise that safeguarding wolves in Europe goes beyond protecting a single species; it involves preserving biodiversity and fostering a balanced living together with nature. Wolves play a vital role in ecosystem stability. Their return to regions from which they had once been eradicated marks a significant conservation achievement. In the current global biodiversity crisis, we cannot risk compromising this progress.

Recent surveys indicate strong public support across Member States for maintaining stringent protections and promoting coexistence with wolves, even among rural communities most affected by the presence of large carnivores. Wolves are an integral part of our shared European heritage and landscapes.

Rather than diminishing wolf protection, the EU should instead:

- Maintain and enhance efforts to promote coexistence between wolves and local communities, emphasising prevention measures to reduce depredation on farmed animals and improving compensation schemes. Many Member States should make better use of existing information on co-existence measures, good practice examples and available EU funding opportunities.
- Ensure proper enforcement of the existing legal protection provided by the EU Habitats Directive across all Member States and eliminate illegal hunting of wolves. Member States must deter environmental crimes, not legalise them, as confirmed in a recent case of the Court of Justice of the European Union².
- Support initiatives to raise citizen awareness and provide accurate, science-based information about wolves to the public, including on the ecosystem and socio-economic benefits provided by large carnivores, and the appropriate behaviour in case of an encounter. EU citizens have the right to be well-informed.
- Respect the due scientific process enshrined in EU nature conservation legislation. According to Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, Member States will submit their conservation status assessment in 2025. Any discussion on the protection status must be based on those reports, and not be based on political pressure.

Downgrading legal protections for the wolf would not only hamper conservation efforts, but also go against strong public support and scientific evidence favouring wolf conservation in Europe. Furthermore, the politically motivated proposal of the European Commission severely risks creating a precedent for other species and opening the door to other changes in EU Nature Laws. This would lead to legal uncertainty and set back years of effective conservation efforts across the continent. Such a move would seriously tarnish the EU's reputation as a leader in environmental protection.

² Judgment of 11 July 2024, *WWF Österreich and Others*, Case C-601/22, ECLI:EU:C:2024:595.

Names of organisations having signed by 17/09/2024

1. ADDA Asociación Defensa Derechos Animal
2. African Conservation Foundation
3. AG Wildtiere am Forum am Forum Wissenschaft & Umwelt
4. Umwelt
5. Agent Green
6. Aktion Kirche und Tiere (AKUT)
7. Alpe Adria Green
8. Alsace Nature
9. Anima Helvetia
10. Animal Alliance of Canada
11. Animal Angels
12. Animal Cross
13. Animal Defenders International
14. Animal Friends Croatia
15. Animal Law Italia ETS
16. Animal Liberation Private Foundation
17. Animal Protection Agency
18. Animal Protection Party of Canada
19. Animal Rights Association B.and T.

20. Animalistes per la independència
21. Animals Asia Foundation
22. AnimaNaturalis
23. ARBA Sistema Litoral 2017
24. ARBAI
25. ARCHELON
26. ARCTUROS
27. ARION-Cetacean Rescue and Rehabilitation Research Center
28. ASCEL
29. Asociación Animalista LIBERA
30. Asociación Nacional Defensa Animales
31. ASPA Vosges
32. Associació Mediambiental La Sínia
33. Associació ànimaL: som ànima animal
34. Association Biom
35. Association de Protection des Animaux Sauvages
36. Associazione Naturalistica Argonauta
37. Associazione per i Vivai ProNatura OdV
38. Avenir Loup Lynx Jura

39. Aves France
40. BALKANI Wildlife Society
41. Biofuelwatch
42. Biomass Action Group
43. BirdLife Cyprus
44. BirdLife Europe and Central Asia
45. BirdLife Hungary /MME
46. Bond Beter Leefmilieu
47. Born Free Foundation
48. BOS+
49. Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland
Landesverband Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V.
50. BUND Naturschutz in Bayern e.V.
51. BUND
52. CALLISTO Wildlife and Nature Conservation Society
53. Canine Efficiency
54. CAP Loup
55. Center for Protection and Research of Birds
56. Centre for Bat Research and Conservation

57. Centre4NI
58. CENTRO STUDI NATURALISTICI
59. Cgam imola
60. Charity Foundation Sofi
61. Charles University
62. Chris Buerki Consulting
63. Chsrles university
64. CHWOLF
65. Circolo Svizzero Parma Italy
66. CIÊNCIA NATURA
67. ClientEarth
68. Code animal
69. Comitee pour la protection des oiseaux
70. Compassion in World Farming
71. Corpo Forestale Volontario ESAF
72. Corpo Guardie Ambientali Metropolitane
73. Czech Society for Ornithology
74. Danish Mammal Society

75. Danish Society for Nature Conservation
76. Danmarks Vilde Natur
77. David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and Fondation Franz Weber
78. De Jonge Klimaatbeweging
79. De Unge Biodiversitetsambassadører
80. DEPANA
81. Deutsche juristische Gesellschaft für Tierschutzrecht e.V.
82. Deutscher Tierschutzbund e.V.
83. Dier&Recht
84. Dierenbescherming
85. Dierencoalitie
86. Dierenwelzijnsorganisatie VIER VOETERS
87. Djurskyddet Sverige
88. Društvo Dinaricum
89. Društvo Lajka
90. Društvo S hrti za hrte Slovenija
91. Društvo za dobrobit živali AniMa
92. Društvo za zaščito in pomoč živalim v stiski Lajka
93. Društvo za zaščito živali Kočevje

94. Društvo za zaščito živali Novo mesto
95. Društvo za zaščito živali Pomurja
96. Dryade
97. Dyrenes Beskyttelse
98. Earth Ethics, Inc.
99. Earth Thrive
100. Ecoflix
101. ECOLOGICAL RECYCLING SOCIETY
102. Ecologistas en Acción
103. Ecologistas Sierra de las Nieves
104. Ecologistes en Acció de Catalunya
105. EDEN center
106. Education Ethique Animale
107. Eko - svest Skopje
108. Elephant Reintegration Trust
109. ELLET
110. Environment East Gippsland inc
111. Environmental Organisation iSea

112. Environmental Pillar
113. Environmental Sustainability Agency
114. Eurogroup for Animals
115. EuroNatur Foundation
116. European Alliance for Wolf Conservation
117. European Environmental Bureau
118. European Institute for Animal Law and Policy
119. European Young Rewilders
120. Fair Carbon
121. Faia Brava - Associação de Conservação da Natureza
122. Fauna4Life
123. Federazione Nazionale Pro Natura
124. Focus Association for Sustainable Development
125. Fondation Franz Weber
126. Fondation Miaou & Co
127. Fondation pour la recherche sur la biodiversité
128. Fonds Culture Nature et Patrimoine de Saint Lizier et du Couserans
129. Forests NOW
130. Forests of the World

131. FORUM Salviamo il Paesaggio
132. FOUNDATION CONSERVATION CARPATHIA
133. France Nature Environnement
134. Freundeskreis freilebender Wölfe e.V.
135. Friends of the Earth Europe
136. Fundación para el Asesoramiento y Acción en Defensa de los Animales
137. Fundacja AgriNatura
138. Fundacja Psubraty
139. galanthus
140. Gallifrey Foundation
141. Geology Society of Denmark
142. GEOTA-Grupo de Estudos de Ordenamento do Território e Ambiente
143. Gesellschaft zum Schutz der Wölfe e.V.
144. Global Youth Biodiversity Network European Chapter
145. Global Youth Biodiversity Network France
146. Great Lakes and Wetlands Association / Nagy Tavak és Vizes Élőhelyek Szövetsége
147. Green Impact
148. Green Squad

149. Grup Signatus
150. Gruppe Wolf Schweiz
151. Gruppo Società e Ambiente
152. Hellenic Animal Welfare Federation
153. HELLENIC ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY/BIRDLIFE GREECE
154. Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature - HSPN
155. Hnutí DUHA šelmy
156. Humane Society International / Europe
157. IFAW
158. IG Berner Wald
159. IG Wild beim Wild
160. In Defense of Animals
161. International Otter Survival Fund
162. International Wildlife Coexistence Network
163. Io non ho paura del lupo APS
164. Kemer National Park Fund
165. La Fondation Droit Animal, Éthique et Sciences
166. Lajka
167. Latvian Ornithological Society

168. Latvijas ainavas
169. Law of the Wild
170. Le Klan du Loup
171. Lega Anti Vivisezione
172. Legambiente ImolaMedicina
173. Legambiente
174. Les Agulles - Ecologistes en Acció
175. Liga para a Protecção da Natureza
176. Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux
177. Lipensko pro život
178. Lipu
179. Lithuanian Fund for Nature
180. Loomus
181. Luchs- und Wolfsschutz Bayerischer Wald
182. Luonto-Liiton susiryhmä
183. MEDASSET
184. Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos
185. Menschen für Tierrechte - Bundesverband der Tierversuchsgegner e.V.
186. Merman Conservation Expeditions Ltd

187. MOm
188. Morigenos
189. Mouvement Ecologique
190. MTÜ Eesti Suurkiskjad /Estonian Large Carnivores
191. NABU Landesverband Hessen
192. NABU, Landesverband Baden-Württemberg e. V.
193. NABU, Landesverband Rheinland-Pfalz e.V.
194. NABU
195. Natagora -Gtloup
196. Natagora
197. National Wildflower Centre/Scouse Flowerhouse
198. natur&ëmwelt a.s.b.l.
199. Natura 2000 Coalition Romania
200. Natural Heritage Foundation
201. Nature Nova Scotia
202. Nature Trust FEE Malta
203. Naturefriends Greece
204. Natuurmonumenten

205. Natuurpunt
206. Naxos Wildlife Protection
207. NBSCLIMATE
208. Niech Żyją!
209. NOAH - for animal rights
210. Noé
211. Nzatu
212. Oasicostiera OdV
213. Observatoire des Carnivores Sauvages
214. OIPA
215. One Voice
216. OneKind
217. OSCAP Outraged South African Citizens Against Poaching
218. OurLand Thailand
219. Palombar - Associação de Conservação da Natureza e do Património Rural
220. Paragraf 3 & Bilag IV ApS
221. Peter Jeffs Holistic
222. Plataforma Grup Llop Catalunya
223. Plataforma loboiberico.pt

224. Polish Society for the Protection of Birds
225. Politischer Arbeitskreis Tierrechte in Europa
226. PRO NATURA ANIMALI
227. Pro Natura Firenze APS
228. Pro Natura Genova
229. Pro Natura L'Aquila
230. Pro Natura Torino APS
231. Pro Natura Val Susa
232. Pro Natura. Bisceglie Trani
233. Pro Wildlife
234. Project 1882
235. Protect the Forest
236. Protect ▪ Natur-, Arten- und Landschaftsschutz e.V.
237. Puse Latvijas
238. Pôle Grands Prédateurs
239. Rewilding Academy
240. Rewilding Europe
241. Rewilding France
242. Rewilding Portugal

243. Romanian Ornithological Society
244. ROYAL WOLF RANGERS del Lazio - O.d.V.
245. Save Estonia's Forests (Päästame Eesti Metsad)
246. SCOTLAND: The Big Picture
247. SEY Animal Welfare Finland
248. SFEPM
249. Silviculture
250. Skye Environmental Centre Ltd
251. Slovenian Alliance of non-government organisations for the protection of animals
252. Society for Ecological Restoration
253. Society for The Protection of Animals Ljubljana
254. Society for the Protection of Biodiversity of Thrace
255. Society for the Protection of Prespa
256. Société nationale de protection de la nature
257. Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny
258. Stichting De Faunabescherming
259. Stowarzyszenie Carpatica
260. Suomen luonnonsuojeluliitto
261. Svoboda zvířat

262. Swedish society for nature conservation
263. Swedish Society for the Protection of Animals
264. Tendua association pour la protection de la biodiversité
265. Terra Anima, society for deep ecology
266. Terra Cypria Cyprus Conservation Foundation
267. The Danish Anglers Association
268. The Danish Mammal Society
269. The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy
270. The European Nature Trust
271. The Green Tank
272. The Irish Wildlife Trust
273. The Swedish Carnivore Association
274. The Wolf Action Group
275. The Wolf Conservation Association
276. Ulvetid
277. Umanotera, The Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development
278. Umweltdachverband
279. Ursia
280. VETERINAIRES POUR LA BIODIVERSITE

281. Vogelbescherming Nederland
282. Vogelbescherming Vlaanderen
283. VŠĮ "Žiedinė ekonomika"
284. Waldexkursionen
285. WeHowl
286. Werkgroep wolf
287. Wild Europe
288. Wild Heritage
289. Wild Poland Foundation
290. WildChoices
291. Wilderness Foundation Global
292. Wildlife for All
293. Wildlife Network for Disease Surveillance
294. Wildtierschutz Schweiz
295. Wolfs-Hirten
296. Workshop for All Beings (Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot)
297. World Animal Protection Denmark
298. World Animal Protection Netherlands

- 299. World Animal Protection Sweden
- 300. WWF European Policy Office (on behalf of the EU WWF Network)
- 301. Youth and Environment Europe
- 302. Zürcher Tierschutz
- 303. ÖKOBÜRO-Allianz der Umweltbewegung
- 304. Δράση για την άγρια ζωή/Action for wildlife