

TO: EU Environment Ministers
CC: EU Agriculture Ministers and EU Nature Directors

17th December 2025

213 organisations call on Member States not to lower the protection status of the wolf

Dear Minister,

In December 2024, about a year ago, the protection status of wolves under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) was lowered based on a proposal by the EU. This move has damaged the EU's reputation as a global champion for conservation. Indeed, this politically motivated and unscientific U-turn on wolf protection was widely criticised by scientists, conservation experts and environmental organisations alike.

The science, however, is clear: while wolf populations have been recovering in some EU countries largely due to their strict protection, the **species still has an unfavourable conservation status in six out of seven EU biogeographical regions** (data from the HD Art. 17 reporting period 2013-2018). The Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe had [raised serious concerns](#) about the proposal to downlist the wolf under the Bern Convention as it "does not appear warranted" and as decisions on the conservation and management of wildlife should be "based on sound science, not (just) on political reasons".

Despite this situation, the EU has amended its flagship Habitats Directive by moving the wolf from Annex IV (strictly protected) to Annex V (protected). EU Member States have until 15th January 2027 to transpose this targeted amendment into national law, but can also decide not to lower the protection status of the species on their territory. We would also like to draw your attention to two ongoing court cases regarding the decision on the wolf's protection status¹, and emphasise that an informed decision could only be made based on their outcomes.

With this letter, the undersigned civil society organisations call on you and your government to not lower the protection status of the wolf in your national territory and to intensify efforts to achieve coexistence between wolves and rural communities.

Despite the recent change in EU legislation, the Commission [confirmed](#) the **possibility for Member States to maintain a higher protection status of the wolf**, provided that this is signalled at the time of the notification of their transposition measures. In addition, the amendment to the Habitats Directive **does not affect Member States' obligation to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status** of the species. Indeed, it is essential that each country takes the necessary steps to fulfil this requirement.

On 12th June 2025, the European Court of Justice [reaffirmed](#) that the conservation status of a protected species must be assessed and achieved in each individual country rather than across larger, cross-border regions. In addition, economic, social and cultural requirements as well as regional and local

¹ Member States should take notice of two ongoing court cases that have been brought before the European Court of Justice and are currently awaiting a decision: [Case T-634/24](#) (Green Impact and Others v Council and Commission) from 6 December 2024 seeks to annul the 2024 EU Council Decision on the EU's submission of a proposal for the downgrade of the wolf protection status under the Bern Convention. [Case T-563/25](#) (Green Impact and Others v Parliament and Others) from 15 August 2025 seeks to annul Directive (EU) 2025/1237 amending the Habitats Directive by downgrading the protection status of the wolf.

characteristics may be taken into account, but cannot by themselves justify classifying a species' conservation status as favourable.

It is therefore crucial that the **reporting on the conservation status of habitats and species under the Habitats Directive is based solely on proper robust scientific data**, gathered through sound and harmonised methodologies. Most importantly, the data has not yet been analysed by the European Environment Agency to establish the status of populations at regional level. No decision to transpose the downgrade of the protection status and/or actively manage wolf populations should be taken before transparent, updated and science-based population data confirms that such decisions would not threaten the long-term survival of populations. We are committed to contributing to the upcoming public consultation on the data for the new reporting cycle and remain available to provide Member States with adequate support for the proper monitoring of wolf populations.

Further to the above, we have observed that downgrading the protection status of the wolf also **undermines existing efforts to support co-existence between wolves and local communities**, as it fosters the false perception that hunting wolves is a solution to livestock depredation. Decades of acquired knowledge should not be overshadowed by political debates surrounding hunting. [Scientific evidence](#) shows that a comprehensive strategy for coexistence between humans and large carnivores is essential to effectively mitigate conflicts and promote long-term conservation. The proper management of (extensively) farmed animals, and the adoption of preventive measures are the most rational, effective, and socially acceptable method to prevent depredation.

Compensation schemes can enhance tolerance as long as they are conditional on responsible livestock practices, to remain fair and sustainable. Central to this coexistence strategy is the active engagement of stakeholders - particularly farmers - who must have access to reliable information and technical support, provided by public institutions and experienced professionals. Decision-making processes should be transparent and grounded in scientific evidence, ethical principles, and legal obligations.

Ultimately, the protection of large carnivores must evolve toward an innovative model that integrates prevention, conditional compensation, stakeholder involvement, and science-based governance, supported by public awareness and educational initiatives.

Protecting wolves in Europe is not only a matter of ecological significance, but also a reflection of our commitment to biodiversity conservation and the values of coexistence and tolerance. Wolves are an integral part of Europe's natural heritage, playing a vital role in maintaining ecosystem balance and biodiversity, and the return of the wolf to parts of Europe where the species had previously been extirpated is a considerable conservation success that must not be jeopardised.

For the reasons outlined above, the undersigned organisations strongly urge you not to lower the protection status of the wolf on your territory and to ensure that measures are put in place to foster co-existence.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick ten Brink, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau, on behalf of the undersigned organisations (see full list below)



euRONATUR FOUNDATION



LIBERA!
ASSOCIAÇÃO ANIMALISTA
WWW.LIBERAOS.ORG



UMANOTERA
The Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development

Deutsche Umwelthilfe



PPNEA
PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF NATURE ENVIRONMENT IN AEGEAN



Natuurmonumenten



ifaw



Hellenic Animal Welfare Federation



EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS



the european nature trust



RSPCA.



ClientEarth



WILD CHOICES



Centre4 NI

The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy
ACHIEVING BETTER TREATMENT FOR ANIMALS



ANIMAL PROTECTION DENMARK



Associazione "Vivere in Valdisieve"

WeHow!

ecoflix



Levegő Munkacsoport



SER EUROPE SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION



Danmarks Naturfrednings forening





1. AAP Animal Advocacy and Protection
2. Acción Océanos
3. Aegean Wildlife Hospital
4. Agent Green
5. ANIMA
6. Animal Protection Denmark
7. ARCHELON The Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece
8. ARION-CETACEAN RESCUE AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH CENTER
9. Asociación Animalista LIBERA!
10. ASPAS - Association pour la protection des animaux sauvages
11. Association Carduelis
12. Association Milvus Group
13. Association Ulvetid
14. Associazione "Vivere in Valdisieve"
15. Associazione CERM Centro Rapaci Minacciati ODV
16. Atto Primo Salute Ambiente Cultura ODV
17. Averti Ecologie BV
18. AVES FRANCE
19. Biofuelwatch
20. Biologiforbundet
21. BirdLife Cyprus
22. BirdLife Finland
23. Born Free Foundation
24. BUND
25. CALLISTO, Wildlife and Nature Conservation Society
26. Canopea
27. CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society
28. CEEWeb for Biodiversity
29. Center for Environment
30. Centre4NI
31. CHWOLF Association
32. Clean Air Action Group
33. ClientEarth
34. Coalizione TESS Transizione Energetica Senza Speculazione
35. Code animal
36. Comitato Crinali Liberi Londa
37. Komite Schone Lucht
38. Conservation Collective
39. Cosmofauna aps
40. CPN BRABANT
41. Danish Society for Nature Conservation
42. Dansk Botanisk Forening
43. David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation
44. DEPANA
45. Děti Země (Children of the Earth)
46. Deutsche Juristische Gesellschaft für Tierschutzrecht e.V. (DJGT)
47. Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V.
48. Deutscher Tierschutzbund e.V.

49. Dier&Recht
50. Djurskyddet Sverige
51. DOF BirdLife
52. Društvo Dinaricum
53. Earth Ethics, Inc.
54. Ecoflix Foundation
55. Ecological Alliance
56. ECOLOGICAL RECYCLING SOCIETY
57. Ecologistes en Acció de Catalunya
58. ECO-TIRAS
59. Education Ethique Animale
60. ENPA Odv
61. Environment East Gippsland inc
62. Environmental Pillar
63. Eurogroup for Animals
64. EuroNatur
65. European Environmental Bureau
66. FAADA
67. Faia Brava - Associação de Conservação da Natureza
68. Fauna4Life
69. Federazione Nazionale Pro Natura
70. FERUS
71. Focale pour le sauvage
72. Focus Association for Sustainable Development
73. Fondation Brigitte Bardot
74. Fondation Franz Weber
75. Fondation Miaou & Co.
76. Fondation pour la recherche sur la biodiversité
77. Fondazione Capellino
78. Fondo Para la Protección del Lobo Ibérico
79. Forest of the World
80. Forests Now
81. France Nature Environnement
82. French chapter of the global youth biodiversity network, le réseau mondial des jeunes pour la biodiversité
83. French Mammalogy Society (SFEPM)
84. Freundeskreis freilebender Wölfe e.V.
85. Friends of the Earth Europe
86. Fundacja Psubraty
87. Fundația Eco-Civica
88. Gaia Animal & Ambiente OdV
89. Gallifrey Foundation
90. Geological Society of Denmark
91. Gordon Wildlife Alliance
92. Green Impact
93. Gruppo d'Intervento Giuridico (GrIG)
94. GYBN Europe
95. Hellenic Animal Welfare Federation

96. Hellenic Ornithological Society
97. Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (HSPN)
98. Highlands & Islands Environment Foundation (HIEF)
99. Himalayan Wolves Project
100. Hnutí DUHA Šelmy
101. Humane World for Animals
102. IG WILD BEIM WILD
103. In Defense of Animals
104. Initiative für die Natur e.V.
105. Institute of Circular Economy (INCIEN)
106. INTERCIDS Operadores jurídicos por los animales
107. International Fund for Animal Welfare (Ifaw)
108. Intimate With Nature Society
109. iSea
110. Kemer National Park Fund
111. Komitee gegen den Vogelmord e.V. (CABS)
112. LAV - Lega Anti Vivisezione
113. Law of the Wild
114. Leal Lega Antivivisezionista
115. Legambiente
116. Lesoochránárske zoskupenie VLK/ WOLF Forest Protection Movement
117. Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux / BirdLife France
118. Lipensko pro život, z.s.
119. Luchs- und Wolfsschutz Bayerischer Wald
120. Luontoliiton susiryhmä / The Wolf Action Group
121. Mammal Research Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences
122. MEDASSET
123. MedINA (Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos)
124. Menorca Preservation
125. Merman Conservation Expeditions Ltd
126. MOm
127. Morigenos – Slovenian Marine Mammal Society
128. Mouvement Ecologique - Friends of the Earth Luxembourg
129. NABU
130. NABU Berlin
131. NABU Germany
132. NABU Heidekreis e.V.
133. NABU Landesverband Hessen
134. Nadace na ochranu zvířat
135. Nagy Tavak és Vizes Élőhelyek Szövetsége
136. Natagora
137. natur&emwelt a.s.b.l.
138. Natura 2000 Coalition
139. Naturefriends Greece
140. Natuurmonumenten
141. Naturschutzinitiative
142. Naturschutzbund Österreich/Austrian league for nature conservation
143. Natuurpunt

144. Naxos Wildlife Protection
145. NESEHNUTÍ
146. OBRAZ - Obránci zvířat
147. OIPA
148. ONDA Organismo Nazionale Difesa Alberi
149. One Voice
150. OneKind
151. Palombar - Conservação da Natureza e do Património Rural
152. Panhellenic Animal Welfare and Environment Federation
153. Parents for Future - gruppo locale Melegnano
154. Parents for Future Milano
155. Peter Jeffs Holistic
156. PIC - Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment
157. Pôle Grands Prédateurs
158. Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP)
159. Pro Natura Firenze ETS
160. Pro Natura Friends of the Earth Switzerland
161. Pro Wildlife
162. Protect ▪ Natur-, Arten- und Landschaftsschutz e.V.
163. Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania
164. Puse Latvijas
165. reLife Earth
166. Rewilding Academy
167. Rewilding Europe
168. Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation (Fundatia pentru Parteneriat)
169. RSPCA
170. Salviamo gli Orsi della Luna APS
171. Salviamo le Apuane
172. SAVE WILD
173. SEPANSO Aquitaine
174. Slovene dragonfly society
175. Slovenian Alliance of non-government organisations for the protection of animals
176. Società Cooperativa Sociale Eliante Onlus
177. Société nationale de protection de la nature (France)
178. Society for Ecological Restoration Europe
179. Society for the Protection of Biodiversity of Thrace
180. Society for the Protection of Prespa
181. SOSNA
182. SPEA - Portugal
183. Společnost pro zvířata/Society for Animals, CZ
184. Spolek Ametyst
185. Stowarzyszenie Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot
186. Suomen Luonnonsuojeluliitto
187. Svoboda zvířat
188. Terra Cypria- The Cyprus Conservation Foundation
189. The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy
190. The European Nature Trust
191. The Lifescape Project

192. The Swedish Association for the Protection of Animals
193. The Wolf Conservation Association
194. Tierschutz Austria (Wiener Tierschutzverein)
195. Tutela Fauna Toscana
196. Umanotera
197. Un euro per salvare i nostri boschi
198. Ursia o.z.
199. Ústecké šrouby, z. s.
200. Varkens in Nood
201. Vilda Djurens Skydd
202. Vogelbescherming Vlaanderen vzw
203. VšĮ "Žiedinė ekonomika"
204. WeHowl
205. Werkgroep Wolf Nederland
206. WildChoices
207. Wildlife for All
208. Wildtierschutz Deutschland e.V.
209. Wolfs-Hirten
210. WWF European Policy Office, on behalf of the European WWF network
211. Yoga i det grønne
212. Youth and Environment Europe (YEE)
213. ΝΕΟΙ ΠΡΑΣΙΝΟΙ - ΝΕΟΙ PRASINOI