

Bern Convention: EU will propose changing the conservation status of wolves

Today, the Council adopted a decision to submit, on behalf of the European Union, a proposal to amend the conservation status of the wolf from strictly protected fauna species to **protected fauna species**, with a view to the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention. The Standing Committee is responsible for assessing the conservation status of species and will convene in December 2024.

The proposed amendment will give **more flexibility** in addressing the socio-economic challenges arising from the continued expansion of the wolf's range in Europe, while maintaining a favourable conservation status for all wolf populations in the EU.

Coexistence with human activities: addressing challenges

The wolf species is currently listed as a strictly protected species (appendix II to the Bern Convention). Parties to the convention must have in place measures for its conservation.

The conservation status of the wolf has shown a positive trend over the last few decades. The species has successfully recovered across the European continent, and the estimated population has almost **doubled in 10 years** (from 11,193 in 2012 to 20,300 in 2023).

This continued expansion has led to socio-economic challenges, in particular as regards coexistence with human activities and **damage to livestock**. According to the latest available data from member states, wolves are estimated to kill at least **65,500** heads of livestock each year in the EU.

The proposed amendment aims to list the wolf **as a protected species** (by moving the species to appendix III of the Bern Convention). This means that its protection must be ensured by means of **appropriate and necessary measures**. Any exploitation of the species must keep the wolf population **out of danger** and align with scientific and ecological requirements, among others.

Next steps

The Commission will now submit the proposal to the secretariat of the Bern Convention. Any amendment to the Bern Convention must be adopted by two thirds of its contracting parties. Amendments to the appendices enter into force three months after adoption.

The change to the level of protection would not be immediately applicable in the EU. Once the amendment of the appendices of the Bern Convention enters into force, the EU would be allowed to modify the corresponding annexes of the Habitats directive – the EU law that implements the Bern Convention – in order to adapt the protection level of wolves in its internal legal order.

Background

The Bern Convention, which was adopted in 1979 and entered into force in 1982, is an international treaty under the aegis of the Council of Europe which aims to ensure the conservation and protection of wild plant and animal species and their natural habitats.

To this end, the convention imposes legal obligations on contracting parties, protecting over 500 wild plant species and more than 1,000 wild animal species.

Its decision-making body, the Standing Committee, meets every year in Strasbourg. The EU and its member states are parties to the Bern Convention.

On 20 December, the Commission forwarded to the Council a proposal for a decision to adapt the protection status of the wolf

under the Bern Convention. Changing the protection status of the wolf under the Bern Convention is a prerequisite for any corresponding changes to its status at EU level.

- [Biodiversity: how the EU protects nature \(background information\)](#)

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council of the EU

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press