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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Proposal to amend Appendices II and III of the Bern Convention of
the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats by
moving the wolf (*Canis lupus*) from Appendix II to Appendix III**

Proposal by the European Union

*Document prepared by
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention*



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Subject: Submission, on behalf of the European Union, of a proposal for amending Appendices II and III of the Bern Convention with respect of the wolf (*Canis lupus*)

Dear Mr Poutiers,

In accordance with Article 17 of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, any amendment to its appendices proposed by a Contracting Party shall be communicated to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and forwarded by him at least two months before the meeting of the Standing Committee to the Member States of the Council of Europe, to any signatory, to any Contracting Party, to any State invited to sign the Convention in accordance with the provisions of Article 19 and to any State invited to accede to it in accordance with the provisions of Article 20.

In line with Council Decision 13769/24 + ADD 1-2 13258/24 ENV (as per 13577/24 PTS A 71), I would hereby like to submit, on behalf of the European Union, a proposal for the amendment of Appendices II and III to the Convention, in view of the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention.

The amendment proposal consists of lowering the level of protection of the wolf (*Canis lupus*) by moving it from Appendix II (strictly protected fauna species) to Appendix III (protected fauna species). The justifications for the proposal are presented in an Annex to this letter.

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I would be grateful that in line with the provisions of Article 17 of the Convention, you transmit the proposal to all Contracting Parties, so it is considered at the upcoming 44th meeting of the Standing Committee (2-6 December 2024).

Yours sincerely,

Florika FINK-HOODIER

Enclosure: **Annex – Proposal to amend Appendices II and III of the Bern Convention with respect of the wolf (English and French non-official translation)**

c.c.: **H. Delgado-Rosa, A. Vettori, P. Migliorini, I. Obretenova, M. Cipriani**

Proposal to amend Appendices II and III of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats by moving the wolf (*Canis lupus*) from Appendix II to Appendix III

Proposal by the European Union

I. General considerations

1. The initial listing of animal species in Appendix II or III of the Convention was based on the available scientific data at the time of negotiation of the Convention in 1979 and on the lists of mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles threatened in Europe, drawn up by the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources under the Council of Europe. Article 1(2) of the Convention provides that “*particular emphasis is given to endangered and vulnerable species*”.
2. The wolf (*Canis lupus*) species has been listed in Appendix II of the Convention (strictly protected species) since its entry into force in 1982.
3. The Bern Convention does not set out explicitly which criteria govern the listing in Appendix II or III. Recommendation No. 56 (1997) of the Bern Convention Standing Committee sets guidelines to be taken into account while making proposals for amendment of Appendices I and II of the Convention and while adopting amendments to these Appendices. According to the Recommendation, relevant considerations for listing species in the Appendices to the Bern Convention include ecological and scientific factors, such as conservation status, population trends and threats.
4. Article 2 of the Bern Convention sets out the objective of achieving a population level of wild flora and fauna which corresponds in particular to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking account of economic and recreational requirements, and sets the broader context for measures taken by the Contracting Parties.

II. Reasons justifying the proposal

5. Two recent reports have assessed the situation of the wolf in Europe. The first one is the “Assessment of the conservation status of the Wolf (*Canis lupus*) in Europe” developed by the Large Carnivores Initiative for Europe for the Bern Convention in 2022ⁱ and the second one is “The situation of the wolf (*Canis lupus*) in the European Union – an In-depth Analysis” developed for the European Commission’s DG Environment from 2023ⁱⁱ.
6. These two reports confirm that 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, with a significant expansion of its range. A comparison between the distribution maps of the species from 2000, 2005 and 2016 testifies of the considerable expansion of the range reached by the nine mainly trans-boundary wolf sub-populations in Europe. Today, the species is present in all mainland European countries, some hosting large populations of over 1 000 individuals.
7. In September 2022, the LCIE study for the Bern Convention showed the total number of wolves in the EU was likely to be in the order of 19 000 (compared to about 14 300 in 2016)

- and the number of wolves in Europe (excluding Belarus and the Russian Federation) was likely to exceed 21 500 (compared to about 17 000 in 2016). According to the study, 19 out of 34 countries reported increasing wolf numbers and only 3 countries reported decreasing numbers, all in the Dinaric/Balkan region. As for the EU, in 17 of the 24 EU Member States with wolves, their populations were increasing, and for the other 7 they were either stable or fluctuating. LCIE therefore considered that wolves were not declining in any EU Member State.
8. The LCIE assessment for the Bern Convention from 2022 also updated the IUCN Red List criteria assessments dating back from 2018. LCIE considered that the wolf qualified as “Least Concern” at both the European and EU 27 levels, similarly to the Red List assessment from 2018. The LCIE 2022 assessment concludes that “the magnitude of the numbers and the changes in the last decades allow the conclusion that wolf numbers in Europe have increased during the last decade and the overall positive trends appears to be stable or increasing. The conservation status at European scale is undeniably positive and the species can be classified as “Least Concern” in the IUCN Red List system when the assessment is made at the continental scale.”
 9. Regarding the nine wolf sub-populations in Europe, LCIE noted that they were increasing everywhere on the continent, except the Iberian sub-population which was stable and the Dinaric/Balkan sub-population for which the trend was unknown. The LCIE 2022 assessment concluded that three sub-populations qualify as “Least Concern”, five belong to the category “Near Threatened” and one – the Scandinavian sub-population – belongs to the category “Vulnerable”. This is a further improvement compared to the 2018 Red List assessment, according to which three sub-populations – Scandinavian, Central European and Western-Central Alps – were assessed as ‘Vulnerable’ due to the limited size of their population.
 10. In 2023, the in-depth analysis of the status of the wolf in the EU reviewed the available scientific data on the species, the data reported by national authorities from EU Member States as well as relevant data gathered from a targeted data collection exercise. The result of this analysis confirms the upward trend in population size as well as the ongoing expansion of the wolf’s range. A total of about 20 300 wolves have been estimated in the EU in 2023. This estimation is higher than the about 19 000 wolves estimated in September 2022 by LCIE and higher than the population estimated at around 11 000-17 000 reported under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive for the period 2013-2018. It is also higher than an earlier estimation from 2012 that concluded on the presence of 11 193 wolves in the EU.
 11. Threats to wolves remain multiple and diverse in nature, but they have evolved with time. The most important threats and pressures reported by Parties are linked to wolf poaching, alongside the impact of linear infrastructure on the species covering both direct mortality and fragmentation of populations. Hunting and interactions with agriculture are also frequently reported pressures. New emerging threats include border fences and wolf-dog hybridisation.
 12. Both the hunting and poaching of wolves are addressed by measures taken in accordance with Article 7 of the Convention, which governs the protection regime of species listed in Appendix III. The main difference between both regimes in relation to the threats to wolves is that the protection regime under Appendix III maintains more flexibility concerning the appropriate measures the Contracting Parties to the Convention shall put in place. While Contracting Parties will have the possibility to decide on the measures to put in place under the Appendix III regime, the overall objective to be achieved would still be to ensure the

protection of the species and keep it out of danger, as prescribed in Article 2 of the Convention.

III. Conclusions and amendment proposal

13. The species' population has reached significant levels across Europe, with estimated population levels nearly doubled in just one decade. The two most recent reports indicate that population levels are continuing to increase across the continent. In spite of remaining threats to the wolf species, the successful recovery of its population and its increased range across the continent in recent decades are evidence of the strong adaptability and resilience of the species.
14. At the same time, the continued expansion of the wolf's range in Europe and its recolonisation of new territories have led to increasing socio-economic challenges with regard to coexistence with human activities. This is due, in particular, to harm to livestock, which has reached significant levels, affecting more and more regions in EU Member States and beyond.
15. Therefore, it is appropriate to adapt the protection level of the wolf species. The wolf, which is currently listed in Appendix II to the Bern Convention, should be subject to the species protection resulting from a listing in Appendix III to the Bern Convention, in view notably of current trends of the population status and the protection level provided by the species protection regime pursuant to Appendix III in connection with Articles 2, 7 and 8 of the Convention.
16. The adaptation of the protection level of the wolf species would add flexibility to address the increasing socio-economic challenges relating to the wolf linked to the continued expansion of the wolf's range in Europe and its recolonisation of new territories. Livestock damage prevention measures would however continue to remain essential for ensuring sustainable human-large carnivores coexistence.
17. The European Union requests that the proposal to amend Appendices II and III of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats by moving the wolf (*Canis lupus*) from Appendix II to Appendix III be considered at the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention.

ⁱ Assessment of the conservation status of the Wolf (*Canis lupus*) in Europe, Council of Europe, 2022, T-PVS/Inf(2022)45 (<https://rm.coe.int/inf45e-2022-wolf-assessment-bern-convention-2791-5979-4192-1-2/1680a7fa47>)

ⁱⁱ Blanco and Sundseth (2023), The situation of the wolf (*Canis lupus*) in the European Union – an In-depth Analysis. A report of The N2K Group for DG Environment, European Commission <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/187513>