

CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

THE EUROPEAN UNION POLICIES COMMITTEE

**DOCUMENT APPROVED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION POLICIES COMMITTEE
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SUBSIDIARITY CHECK REFERRED TO IN
ARTICLE 6 OF PROTOCOL 2 ANNEXED TO THE TREATY OF LISBON:**

PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING
COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 92/43/EEC AS REGARDS THE PROTECTION STATUS OF THE WOLF (*CANIS LUPUS*)
(COM(2025) 106 FINAL).

Approved on 23 April 2025

DOCUMENT APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE

The European Union Policies Committee of Italy's Chamber of Deputies,

Having examined, for the purposes of verifying compliance with the principle of subsidiarity, the proposal for a directive amending the protection status of the wolf (COM(2025) 106 final);

Taking cognisance of the report on the proposed directive issued by the Government under the meaning of Article 6(5) of Law 234 of 24 December 2012;

Taking note of the information and opinions acquired at committee hearings held in connection with consideration of the proposal;

Further noting that on 16 April 2025, in preparation for the start of interinstitutional negotiations on the proposal, the Council of the EU agreed a negotiating mandate that makes no changes to the proposal as currently framed by the Commission;

Whereas on 18 March 2025, the European Parliament approved the use of the "urgent procedure" as per Rule of Procedure 170(6) and will adopt its position at the first reading of the proposal, which is expected to take place at the first plenary session in May 2025;

Concurring in full with the general objective of the proposal, which is to adapt EU law to the Bern Convention by means of an amendment of the Habitats Directive that will move reference to the species *Canis lupus* from Annex IV to Annex V, and thereby downgrade the protection status of the wolf from "strictly protected fauna species" to "protected fauna species;"

Considering also that:

- The proposal under examination seeks to put a stop to the constant increase in the wolf population in the EU and Italy, which is the Member State with the largest number of specimens. The Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA, *Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale*) estimates that the number of wolves in the country in 2021 was 3,500, which is around half the number in the entire United States (excluding Alaska), whose land mass is 26 times larger than Italy's and is less densely populated;
- The increase in the wolf population has led to an increased number of attacks on livestock, which harms the whole livestock sector and directly affects farmers, who must bear not only the direct costs of the attacks but also the indirect costs arising from livestock abortions, missing or injured animals and a drop in productivity caused by the stress suffered by flocks or herds. These indirect costs are not covered by any form of compensation, but even when costs are eligible for compensation, the payment times are too long;
- The livestock sector must also bear the high costs of implementing preventative measures, which are often impracticable in mountainous areas and on large-acre farms;
- Wolf attacks force the closure of livestock farms, which cannot sustain the costs of prevention and the costs of the attacks. In certain areas, notably in mountainous zones, the large presence of wolves discourages tourism which, along with livestock farming, is one of the few sustainable local economic activities. Several representatives of local governments from these areas and a number of associations have warned that pressures such as these lead to the progressive abandonment of rural territories;
- The rapid growth of the species also worries citizens because, as noted in the report transmitted by the Government, the number of attacks on pets and reported sightings of wolves

frequenting residential areas where they pose a threat to humans are rising. Between 2017 to 2024, seven wolves were responsible for 19 attacks, including one on a four-year-old child in a park in a residential area of Rome. During the committee's hearings, public safety concerns were also expressed by representatives of the mountain areas of Trentino-Alto Adige;

- The management of the wolf population through the application of the derogation provided for by Article 16 of the Habitats Directive is inadequate for the purposes of addressing the problems outlined above owing to the complexity and lengthiness of the bureaucratic procedures that the authorities must follow when applying for the derogation;

- Placing the species *Canis lupus* in Annex V of the Directive instead of Annex IV would enable Member States, pursuant to Article 14 of the same Directive, to authorise hunting, subject to their obligation continuously to monitor the wolf population and maintain the protected status of the species. The transposition of the Directive into Italian law will therefore require considering the introduction of forms of selective hunting, to which end some national laws will have to be amended, notably Law No. 157 of 1992, so as to provide for active management of animal populations, including through culls, as already provided for in some EU Member States;

Observing with reference to compliance with the principle of conferral that the legal basis of the proposal has been correctly identified by the European Commission as Article 192(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which lays down the procedures for implementing the objectives of the Union's environmental policy set out in the preceding Article 191;

Whereas the proposal also complies with the principle of subsidiarity in that its purpose is to transpose amendments to the Bern Convention into Union law by amending the Habitats Directive, which is one of the primary instruments by which the EU implements its international obligations under the said Bern Convention;

Considering the proposal to be entirely consistent with the principle of proportionality for the following reasons:

- it limits itself to amending the Habitats Directive only to the extent necessary for the implementation of the decision with which the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention redefined the protected status of the wolf. The proposal gives effect to the foregoing decision and relates to Annexes IV and V only, with particular reference only to wolves, and does not affect the obligation of Member States to ensure the maintenance of the species at a favourable conservation status;

- it allows Member States greater scope of action for the management of their wolf populations, which is a necessary change, for even though in absolute terms wolf attacks cause little damage to the livestock sector, they tend to be concentrated locally, which has created "hotspots" where the presence of wolves and human beings in close proximity is too problematic to be solved by protection and prevention measures alone. The downgrading of the wolf's protected status clears the way for selective species management, which might include culls and controlled containment actions;

- it is necessary for the continued application of the Habitats Directive, which seeks to protect diversity while taking account of economic, social, cultural and regional needs, and contemplates different levels of protection corresponding to the conservation status of a species. As noted by associations from the sector testifying before this committee, conservation status continuously changes, so the corresponding level of protection needs to be regularly reviewed and adjusted. It is therefore appropriate to amend the protection granted in 1992, when the species was almost extinct in many Member States, by introducing a less stringent protection regime that facilitates the adoption of policies to minimise conflict and better

reflects the reality of the current situation, which is that there has been a steep increase in wolf numbers across the EU;

Cognisant that the European Commission has not carried out an impact assessment for the proposal under consideration because the decision to amend the Bern Convention is based on the results of the 2023 analysis of the status of the wolf in the EU;

Being aware that this document must be forwarded to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the European Commission as part of the political dialogue,

CONSIDERS THE PROPOSAL TO COMPLY

With the principle of subsidiarity as defined by Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union.