



Wednesday April 9, 2025

## The Future of Wolf Protection in the EU: Key Takeaways from the European Parliament's Intergroup Event

Brussels, April 9, 2025 — The European Parliament's "Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside" Intergroup hosted an online event titled "Downlisting the Wolf: A Way Forward for the EU", in collaboration with the European Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE) and the European Landowners' Organization (ELO). The event gathered over 250 online participants and key stakeholders to discuss the implications of the European Commission's proposal to adjust the wolf's protection status under the Habitats Directive.



This proposal follows the vote by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, which endorsed the EU's initiative to downlist the wolf from "strictly protected" to "protected" under the Convention. The Intergroup event discussed how this shift can contribute to a more balanced approach to wolf conservation and management across the EU.

**MEP Juan Ignacio Zoido** (EPP, Spain), President of the Intergroup, highlighted the significance of this move, stating: *"This legislative initiative is particularly significant, as it seeks to strike a balance between maintaining Member States' obligations to ensure wolf populations remain in a favourable conservation status and offering them the flexibility needed for effective management"*.

**MEP Herbert Dorfmann** (EPP, Italy), Vice-President of the Intergroup, welcomed the Commission's proposal: *"I welcome the recent proposal by the Commission to downgrade the protection status of the wolf from "strictly protected" to "protected" across Europe. This reflects the success of the conservation efforts. It is now essential to ensure that the legislative proposal is adopted without further amendments and without delay"*.

**Mr. Andrea Vettori**, Head of Unit for Biodiversity at DG Environment, European Commission, clarified the legal scope: *"The Commission's proposal, if adopted by the European Parliament and Council, will give additional flexibility to Member States in managing their local wolf populations. Member States will still have the possibility to maintain a higher level of protection, if deemed necessary under national law. As the wolf will remain a protected species, Member States' conservation and management measures will still need to achieve and maintain favourable conservation status. Thus, investments in appropriate damage prevention measures remain essential to reduce livestock predation"*.

**Dr. John Linnell**, Senior Researcher at the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, noted: *"The downlisting represents a new direction for wolf conservation in Europe. Some countries have operated with Annex V status for years without negative effects. Still, this change places a serious responsibility on national and regional wildlife authorities and hunters to manage the species sustainably. As we move forward into uncharted territory, I really hope that we can document what happens and learn from the diverse experiences that different countries and regions make – learning from our mistakes and successes. Coexistence is a never-ending work in progress, and nobody has all the answers, so we need to constantly monitor and adapt"*.

**Niall Curley**, Senior Policy Advisor at Copa-Cogeca, emphasised the need for national flexibility: *"In light of the increasing wolf population across Europe, Copa-Cogeca stands firm in its call for balanced, science-based policies that ensure the protection of both farmers' livelihoods and the biodiversity we all value. While we recognize the role wolves play in the ecosystem, we must not overlook the profound impact their unchecked presence has on rural communities. Effective measures, including sustainable management strategies and fair compensation for livestock losses, are essential to safeguard the future of agriculture and coexistence with*

wildlife. It is crucial for Member States to have the possibility to take charge of a national issue, and bring forward a national solution based on best practice, but also on legal capabilities”.

**Friedrich Wulf**, International Biodiversity Campaigner for Friends of the Earth Europe, expressed his concern about the downlisting of the wolf. He pointed out that there was a need to achieve favourable conservation status, while most wolf populations in Europe were still in unfavourable conservation status, that there was no scientific evidence to justify the proposal and that unselective killing of wolves could lead to higher livestock predation rates. Even if the Proposal to downlist the wolf got accepted, Member States were free to maintain a stricter level of protection, which should especially be done where the upcoming Art. 17 reports showed need for improvement. He also called on MS to support Protection measures such as wolf proof fences and herding dogs in a sufficient and unbureaucratic way, as part of a collective effort to achieve coexistence.

The event was moderated by **Dr. Jurgen Tack, Secretary General of ELO**, who underscored the importance of dialogue and evidence-based policymaking: *“The need to have a standard definition of Favourable Conservation Status and the way to measure it is crucial to have a scientifically based discussion. Too often, individual interpretations are used in functions of the intended objectives of stakeholder.*

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### **About the European Landowners' Organization (ELO)**

The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) is a leading voice representing the interests of landowners, rural entrepreneurs, and rural land managers in Europe. ELO promotes sustainable land management practices, fosters innovation, and advocates for the recognition of landowners' crucial role in shaping Europe's landscapes and rural areas

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