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**DRAFT MINUTES**

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION  
(Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space))

26 September 2024

### Non-legislative activities

3. The future of European competitiveness, tackling the challenges facing industry and businesses in the single market 13253/24  
*Policy debate*

The Council held a policy debate.

4. The state aid framework and its contribution to EU policy objectives 13272/24  
*Policy debate*

The Council held a policy debate.

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Statements to the non-legislative "A" item set out in doc. 13577/24

Ad "A" item 10:

**Council Decision on submitting proposals for amendment of Appendices II and III of the Convention on the Conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats**

*Adoption*

**STATEMENT BY ESTONIA**

“In the spirit of solidarity with other EU Member States facing consequences of serious damage caused by the wolf to livestock, Estonia supports the adoption of the Council Decision on submitting proposals for amendment of Appendices II and III of the Convention on the Conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats, which presupposes lowering the level of protection of the wolf.

At the same time, Estonia reiterates the importance of consistent and science-based decision making in biodiversity issues and notes in this regard that the most up to date science-based overview on the status of the wolf in the EU will be available by summer 2025. Estonia reiterates that taking the decision at hand shall not pre-empt any future proposals and decisions on the Habitats Directive and, should the decision at hand be supported in the Bern convention, the subsequent changes to the Annexes of the Habitats Directive are strictly limited to the question of the wolf, and only the wolf.

In Estonia, the wolf is a national animal and we have always had a vibrant and strong wolf population. Over the years, we have gained a lot of experience on how to ensure safe coexistence with wild carnivores, and we are happy to share this experience. Despite the fact that Estonia has an exception to regulate the number of wolves, we have managed to increase the number of wolves over the last decades. This possibility has also increased the tolerance towards wolves which is one on the key aspects of wolf conservation and coexistence with nature conservation measures.”

**STATEMENT BY GERMANY**

“The return of the wolf and its repopulation of former areas have exacerbated the conflicts between pasture management and species protection. Sheep and alpine farming in particular faces challenges that have not existed for over 150 years.

These growing challenges need to be addressed and resolved in an intensive manner.

The cohabitation of wolves and pasture management requires a balanced consideration of the needs and interests of both land use and species protection.

Germany stresses that preventive measures are crucial in reducing the loss of grazing animals and in facilitating this cohabitation. Germany therefore calls for the continuation and reinforcement of EU support for dyke, alpine and pasture management.

A focus on the wolf is needed for a targeted and successful way forward and for successful results. In our view, should the wolf be reclassified in the Bern Convention, transposition into EU law must be limited to the wolf in order to ensure that the EU’s biodiversity protection policy remains intact. We therefore welcome the Commission’s commitment to doing this through the statement made in writing today.”

## **STATEMENT BY GREECE**

“Considering recent referenced data on the population of the wolf in the European Continent and indications for raising trends, and taking into account the damages to livestock in many European countries, including on some mountainous husbandry activities in our country, Greece could in principle support the proposal for adapting the protection status of the wolf (*Canis Lupus*) under the Bern Convention as presented in the Draft Council Decision (document 13258/24) regarding the submission of a proposal, on behalf of the European Union, to amend Appendices II and III to the Convention at the 44th meeting of its Standing Committee.

We also note that, on the national level, enough scientific evidence on the actual status of the wolf as well as of other species will be available by the end of 2025, through an assessment being financially supported by the European Union.

Furthermore, the approach and the criteria followed in the EU proposal for the amendment of the status of the wolf should be followed for other species as well in order to ensure consistency and objectivity, always taking into account continuous monitoring data and scientific evidence to ensure the protection of the natural environment and biodiversity of the European Continent.”

## **STATEMENT BY CROATIA**

“The Republic of Croatia, in the spirit of solidarity with European Union Member States facing the consequences of serious damage caused by wolves to livestock, supports the adoption of the Council Decision on submitting proposals for amendment of Appendices II and III of the Convention on the Conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats, which proposes lowering the level of protection provided to wolves.

The Republic of Croatia considers that lowering the level of protection and placing the wolf on the list of species in Appendix III of the Convention, which can be hunted, is neither sufficient nor is it the only way to address the problem of damage to livestock. The Republic of Croatia considers that flexibility in management through management plans and keeping the wolf on the list of strictly protected species in the Habitats Directive or in national legislation, along with increased efforts to protect livestock and appropriate financial and educational support for livestock farmers, is a possible and good way to ensure the long-term coexistence of large carnivores and humans.”

## **STATEMENT BY PORTUGAL**

“Some 20 years after the first national wolf census was carried out in 2002/2003, the census that has now been completed provides new data on the area inhabited by this species and on the estimated number of packs, as well as an analysis of the trend in these parameters.

One of the main factors jeopardising wolf conservation in Portugal is death caused by humans, which in many areas remains responsible for the disappearance of the species and/or of packs.

The results obtained in the census indicate that the area inhabited by wolves in Portugal has contracted in the last two decades, to the Trás-os-Montes region and to the south of the Douro, in the area surrounding the valley of that river. However, the number of packs detected has decreased only slightly at national level, while very different trends have been seen in the four existing population centres.

This reduction, albeit slight, has been countered by optimising processes to reduce the conflict associated with wolves' livestock predation, by improving and streamlining the system of compensation for damage attributed to wolves and by promoting better livestock protection, including by providing livestock farmers with both technical and financial support to implement the most appropriate measures in each context.

Portugal considers that, with regard to its national situation, Article 9 of the Bern Convention provides adequate flexibility to address any problems associated with management of the Iberian wolf population. Portugal's management model has never required implementation of Article 9 of the Berne Convention. According to the conclusions of various legal and scientific studies, the provisions of Article 9 allow Portugal to adopt management measures, including capture, if there is a need to address exceptional situations.

We would highlight the solidarity with which Portugal views the need of countries with situations different to Portugal's, with regard to the wolf's conservation status, to be able to review this status in the light of the specific needs encountered by those countries.

Portugal does not intend to change the conservation policy for the wolf sub-species found in our territory, the Iberian wolf, and intends to maintain it, in particular as regards its compatibility and compensation mechanisms. Portugal even considers that these mechanisms have met the conservation objectives to which Portugal is committed in relation to this species.”

#### **STATEMENT BY THE COMMISSION**

“Should the change of the protection status of the wolf under the Bern Convention be adopted, in order to implement this change internally, the Commission will modify accordingly the regime of the wolf under the EU Habitats Directive. The Commission's proposal to do that will concern the wolf and only the wolf, and hence will be limited to a modification of the protection status of the wolf.”

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