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Green and animal protection organisations submit appeal before European Court of Justice (ECJ) against EU's downlisting of wolf protection.

Brussels, 17 December 2024 - Five environmental and animal protection organisations including [Green Impact](#) (Italy), [Earth](#) (Italy), [One Voice](#) (France), [LNDC Animal Protection](#) (Italy) and [Great Lakes and Wetlands](#) (Hungary) have filed an Appeal before the European Court of Justice (ECJ) concerning the 26 September 2024 EU Council Decision setting the EU Proposal to downlist the wolf (*Canis lupus*) protection status at the Standing Committee meeting of the Bern Convention on 2-6 December.

The European Commission, on behalf of the EU – 27, did not wait for the standard suspension time of 60 days - deadline within which interested parties can file an annulment appeal - but went straight to the Bern Convention at the Council of Europe to push through a vote a proposal to downlist wolf protection, knowing it would pass since the EU has the majority of votes within the Convention, counting for 27, and could force their own proposal through.

Gaia Angelini, president of Green Impact, said: *“The EU proposal for the downlisting of the European wolf lacks science back – up and sets a dangerous precedent, this is why we appealed against it. The institutional happenings also revealed that the Bern Convention does not apply a prior internal scientific scrutiny of Parties’ proposals before putting them through a vote. Equally worrying is the lack of democratic processes within the Bern Convention and the predominance of the EU – 27: the EU has the majority of votes in the Bern Convention, so it pushed its own ‘wolf downlisting’ proposal through, dismissing all other Parties’ views. When Bosnia proposed to postpone the vote for one year to give more time to discuss it further, the European Commission, on behalf of the EU-27, voted against the postponement, silencing all concerns from other members of the Convention. Several letters signed by hundreds of NGOs against wolf downlisting and addressed to the European Commission, EU States and the Bern Convention have been systematically ignored by all these institutions’.*

Over [700 scientists and academics](#) – responding to the initiative of a small group of expert supported by Green Impact - as well as the [Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe](#) / IUCN Specialist Group recommended the Bern Convention not to allow a vote on the EU wolves Proposal or to vote against it, as the EU proposal does not have adequate scientific back-up.(4) The EU proposal at Bern Convention relied on a [non- peer-reviewed report](#) produced by a consultancy, commissioned and paid by the European Commission, and scientific evidence produced by the Scientific Community counters the Commission and EU Council's claims that a downlisting is necessary.(5) (6)

If the appeal filed by the environmental organisations is upheld, it could result in the annulment of the acts based on [Decision 2024/2669/EU](#), including the EU proposal

presented at the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention.(7) The appeal has been presented just after the exposure of malfunctioning (*lack of scientific back-up, lack of scientific scrutiny process, lack of democratic process by ignoring NGOs and citizens asks, over predominance of the EU will*) of the EU and Bern Convention processes affecting wolves. Seventeen Parties of the Bern Convention (EU and non –EU States) have now the opportunity to rectify the situation by asking to annul the decision taken at the Standing Committee Meeting of the Bern Convention by 3 months from the decision taken on 3 December 2024. **ENDS**

Notes to Editors:

- The legal work to file this crucial appeal before the European Court of Justice was made possible thanks to the kind support of the [Gallifrey Foundation](#), which donated to Green Impact the funding for the legal expenses, and to the work of the [law firm Luca d'Agostino](#).
- The European Commission's proposal to weaken the legal protection of wolves was mostly driven by [Ursula Von der Leyen](#) and the European People's Party (EPP), and supported by the right and far-right groups in the previously elected European Parliament.
- During the negotiation of the Commission's proposal to downlist wolf's protection at the EU Council - Spain and Ireland voted against, while Belgium, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus abstained. Other EU countries such as Germany and Poland were unsure till before the vote. The Belgium EU Presidency postponed twice the vote, raising doubts about the lack of scientific groundings of the Commission proposal.
- The Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats is a binding international legal instrument in the field of nature conservation, covering most of the natural heritage of the European continent and extending to some States of Africa. It is the only regional Convention of its kind worldwide, and aims to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, as well as to promote European co-operation in this field. Link: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention>
- Following the initiative of a small group of experts supported by Green Impact, **700+ signatures from scientists and academics** have been collected on two scientific declarations addressing the topic of wolf conservation and the role of wolves within ecosystems. The two scientific declarations recommend *not to* support the wolf downlisting and are available [here](#) and [here](#).
- The Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe/ IUCN Specialist Group issued a Scientific Statement and a press release highlighting *the current downlisting proposal, however, appears to be premature and faulty, for the reasons outlined above, and the LCIE does not recommend its adoption*. [See details](#).
- "*Conservation is a result of decision-making that should rely on credible scientific evidence for guidance. In the case of European wolves, the available data do not justify changing their protection status under the Bern Convention*", said Luigi

Boitani, head of LCIE / IUCN. link: <https://iucn.org/news/202412/concerns-over-eus-wolf-downlisting-proposal>

- For more information about what Green Impact, experts and other organizations have done on this topic, please visit [our website](#).

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