



European Alliance for Wolf Conservation



European Commission, DG Environment. December 4th 2017 meeting

Request for a consistent wolf management scheme in European Union

The European Alliance for Wolf Conservation (EAWC) is a Platform of NGOs from different European States, advocating on behalf of civil society and of the scientific community who request a more efficient wolf conservation model, and a more rigorous EU Environmental policy enforcement in our respective countries and across Europe, demanding the strict protection of this species declared of “Community Interest”, in accordance with the EU “Habitats Directive”, and within the frame of the “Bern Convention”.

The conservation of the wolf is a key part of a larger goal that includes the need to protect large carnivores and their habitats, since their role in the restoration of ecological processes is widely recognised by scientists. Coexistence between wolves and the rural world is perfectly possible, **through more proactive and innovative prevention measures** vs. the highly politicized and counterproductive lethal controls.

Social conflict supported by local political interest seeking rural vote, and pressure from the livestock breeder and hunting lobbies in a permanent media crusade against the wolf, are excuses for demanding larger lethal control quotas from many Administrations (under Annex V). The use of exceptional derogations (possible under Article 16 of Annex IV), without scientific justification, but only seeking a supposed reduction of social conflict, is **a growing practice of irregular interpretation of the Habitats Directive**.

Please find hereunder our three requests to the EU Commission

A. Get the local administrations to fully comply with the Habitats Directive, annex IV and V when applicable, as specified in the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) whose aim is to contribute towards ensuring a real Favourable Conservation Status.

The use of firearms in wolf control in Annex IV should be restricted to scare away, non lethal shooting by smooth barrel provided that prevention measures have already been applied.

With current politics, wolves are prevented from re-colonising much of their original range due to conflicts with livestock breeders and big game private ranches, resulting in a constant culling of wolves which makes impossible the genetic flow, crucial for the

viability of fragmented populations. Populations should be large enough to accommodate natural fluctuations and avoid inbreeding, common after recent “genetic bottlenecks”. There are small fragmented groups in southern Spain, southern and north-eastern France, on the brink of extinction or already extinct, due to the constant “control exceptions” allowed in France and south of the Duero River (Annex IV), preventing these populations from breaking through that genetic isolation. Moreover, control quotas and poaching north of the Duero River, prevent the Iberian wolf from joining the French population and exchanging genes. While in France the population grows, the new packs form essentially in areas between existing packs rather than expanding to neighboring regions. **The EU should remind these two Administrations that the Habitats Directive calls for favorable conservation status for the wolf in its entire presence area.**

B. Promote DNA analysis to isolate wolf predation from common feral dog predation

In order to help improving the perception of the wolf in rural areas, and promote a positive attitude to stop culling demands, the use of DNA testing in conflictive areas is of utmost importance, due to the very abundant and unknown feral dog predation figures, attributed to wolves. E.g. in the UK, a country with no wolves at all, there is an estimation of more than 40.000 losses of small livestock (sheep and lamb) every year as result of canine predation, potentially attributed to the wolf in our countries. (The population of stray dogs in the UK is very similar to that of most EU countries of a similar population size).

C. Condition fair compensations for wolf predation to the deployment of prevention measures (shepherding, livestock guarding dogs, electrical fences, and alike) by livestock owners.

In areas where the absence of wolves during the last few decades has resulted in extensive overgrazing with minimal or no supervision, and in current conflict situations due to a fragile economic model, the EU shall focus on finding a legal binding compromise from Governments to grant quick and fair compensations, but always conditioned to the deployment of prevention measures. Recent scientific studies are showing that non-lethal proactive prevention methods are much more efficient than random culling of wolves, which causes only the opposite effect.

The EU calls for “United in Diversity” We, the representatives of the EAWC, call for **“United in Biodiversity”**. The wolf, a key species, should be taken as the best symbol of European wildlife heritage.