

(English version)

Question for written answer E-004891/25
to the Commission
Maria Ohisalo (Verts/ALE), Ville Niinistö (Verts/ALE)
(10 December 2025)

Subject: Wolf hunting at unfavourable conservation status in Finland and Sweden

With the amendment of the EU Habitats Directive, the protection status of the wolf was changed from Annex IV (strictly protected species) to Annex V (species subject to regulated hunting) ⁽¹⁾.

According to the Commission's guidelines, a favourable reference population value should be established in line with the precautionary principle and using the best available scientific data. Furthermore, the amendment of the Habitats Directive does not remove the Member States' obligation to ensure favourable conservation status, carry out impact assessments or provide scientific evidence, nor does it remove judicial review or the right to appeal.

In Finland, an amendment to the Hunting Act is being prepared that is completely at odds with the above. The Finnish Council of Regulatory Impact Analysis has issued a statement ⁽²⁾ to the effect that the grounds for the Act were weak and that the effects of wolf hunting for population management purposes had not been adequately assessed on the basis of the research data. In addition, the reference value for wolves notified by Sweden does not meet the biological or legal criteria laid down in the Habitats Directive ⁽³⁾.

This situation poses a risk to both the uniform application of EU law and the protection of the wolf.

1. Is the Commission prepared to launch infringement proceedings against Member States if they allow wolf hunting for population management purposes while the conservation status of the species is unfavourable?
2. Can the Commission state publicly that the amendment of the Habitats Directive does not authorise politically motivated wolf hunting?

Submitted: 10.12.2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(29 January 2026)

Pursuant to Article 14 of the Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾, Member States have to take measures to ensure that the taking in the wild of specimens of species listed in Annex V, as well as their exploitation is compatible with their being maintained at a favourable conservation status.

This has been confirmed by the Court of Justice of the EU ⁽²⁾, which has also ruled that, if there remains uncertainty as to whether the exploitation of the species is compatible with the maintenance of that species at a favourable conservation status, the precautionary principle applies, and the Member State must refrain from authorising such exploitation.

The obligation to ensure compliance with EU law lies primarily with the administrative and judicial authorities of the Member States which have the power to issue injunctions or to order the annulment of acts of other national or local authorities.

The Commission regularly discusses with Member States the management of protected habitats and species and may decide to take legal action in case of non-compliance.

After the change of the protection status of the wolf from 'strictly protected' to 'protected' under the Habitats Directive, Member States are still required to achieve and maintain its favourable conservation status.

As confirmed by the Court ⁽³⁾, the assessment of the conservation status and of the appropriateness of measures must be based on the best available scientific data obtained through the surveillance to be carried out by Member States under Article 11 of the Habitats Directive.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:01992L0043-20250714>

² <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/arviointineuvosto-metsastyslaista-sudenmetsastyksen-vaikutukset-arvioimatta>

³ <https://www.brusselstimes.com/1814623/sweden-pays-to-reduce-the-wolf-population-amid-pending-eu-court-case>

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 92/43/EC, of 21 May 1992, on the protection of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992.

⁽²⁾ Case C-629/23, paragraph 36-42, <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/documents.jsf?num=C-629/23>.

⁽³⁾ Case C-629/23, paragraph 42.