

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000196/26
to the Commission**

Li Andersson (The Left), Merja Kyllönen (The Left), Ville Niinistö (Verts/ALE), Maria Ohisalo (Verts/ALE), Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE), Jussi Saramo (The Left)
(19 January 2026)

Subject: Compatibility of the Finnish Hunting Act with EU legal protection requirements and the Habitats Directive

Finland has amended its Hunting Act (615/1993) to allow the hunting of wolves, bears, lynx and otters. The change implies a shift from individual special permits to general quota hunting, and administrative decisions taken in that area cannot be appealed against.

In Finland, the wolf is classified as an endangered species according to the IUCN Red List. In its judgment in Case C-436/22, the Court of Justice of the European Union held that, under Article 14 of the Habitats Directive, species with unfavourable conservation status cannot be designated as huntable. Despite this, Finland has done away with year-round protection of the wolf and set a hunting season for it.

In principle, the killing of lynx, bears and otters is prohibited under Article 12 of the Habitats Directive. Under Article 16, derogations may only be given if there is no satisfactory alternative, if the level of protection is not compromised, and if the objective of the derogation is one permitted under the directive.

Effective legal protection is required under Article 19 TEU, Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Article 9 of the Aarhus Convention. The quota hunting system prevents the legality of hunting under EU legislation from being assessed by the courts and thus also prevents compliance with the directive from being monitored.

1. Does the Commission take the view that the Finnish Hunting Act, which prevents the courts from assessing whether hunting is compatible with EU legislation, complies with Article 19 TEU, Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the requirements laid down in the Aarhus Convention?
2. Does the Commission intend to launch infringement proceedings if the effective possibility of lodging an appeal before the courts, as required by the EU, is found to be inadequate?
3. Does the Commission take the view that quota hunting of the endangered wolf is consistent with Article 14 of the Habitats Directive and that quota hunting of lynx, bears and otters is consistent with Articles 12 and 16?

Submitted: 19.1.2026

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(17 March 2026)

The Commission monitors the application of the Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾ in the Member States — including hunting and the reported conservation status of species in Annex IV and V of the directive — through, among others, expert groups and the Member States' reports under Articles 16 and 17 of the Habitats Directive.

Article 17 reports concern, in particular, the conservation status of species which has implications for the Member States' obligations regarding Annex IV species (Article 12 of the directive) and Annex V species (Article 14 of the directive). Article 16 lays down some exceptions to Articles 12 and 14, upon certain conditions.

The Member States delivered their Article 17 reports in 2025. The assessment of these reports is ongoing. It is carried out in cooperation with the European Environment Agency ⁽²⁾ and will lead to a public consultation in spring 2026.

The conservation status of the species in question is relevant when assessing whether the Member States meet their obligations under the Habitats Directive with regard to Annex IV species like bears, lynxes, and otters (subject to a higher level of protection); and Annex V species, like wolves ⁽³⁾.

As part of that assessment, in relation to Finland, the Commission will also analyse the matters raised by the Honourable Members, notably hunting quotas and access to justice, and decide on the need for any further action.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7-50.

⁽²⁾ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en>.

⁽³⁾ Directive (EU) 2025/1237 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2025 amending Council Directive 92/43/EEC as regards the protection status of the wolf (*Canis lupus*), OJ L, 2025/1237, 24.6.2025.