

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001637/26
to the Commission
Ignazio Roberto Marino (Verts/ALE)
(22 April 2026)

Subject: Unlawful killing of protected species in Tuscany and the implementation of the Habitats Directive

Press sources report that the headless carcass of a wolf was recently found in Cascina (Tuscany, Italy), where it had been left on display in a public space. This is only the latest in a string of similar incidents that have occurred in the area over the last few days.

The Habitats Directive classifies *Canis lupus* as a strictly protected species, while Article 12 thereof forbids the deliberate capture and killing of specimens in the wild and requires Member States to establish strict protection systems for these animals. In addition, Article 16 of the directive states that derogations to the above can only be issued if certain strictly defined conditions are met.

Member States are also required by Directive 2008/99/EC on the protection of the environment through criminal law to provide for effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties for offenders.

In the light of the above:

1. Is the Commission aware of the incidents described above and has it received reports of similar cases in other Member States?
2. What tools is the Commission using to monitor the implementation of Article 12 and ensure that any infringements thereof are sanctioned accordingly?
3. Does the Commission hold that the national-level implementation and monitoring framework is fit for purpose?

Submitted: 22.4.2026

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(6 July 2026)

The Commission has learnt about these incidents through the press and letters from concerned citizens and understands that these are illegal killings, in violation of national legislation implementing the Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾. The Commission is aware of other such cases in several Member States.

Article 16 of the Habitats Directive requires Member States to report every two years on derogations granted from the species protection requirements, including those under Article 12, which, however, no longer applies to the wolf ⁽²⁾. They are not required to report illegal killings or investigations or sanctions applied.

The Environmental Crime Directive ⁽³⁾ obliges Member States to include the unlawful killing of specimens of species of wild fauna ⁽⁴⁾ in national law as a criminal offence and to introduce dissuasive criminal penalties for these offences.

The Commission considers that the practical implementation of these rules ⁽⁵⁾ requires continuous attention. In this context, the Commission opened a pre-infringement dialogue with Italian authorities on the alleged failure by Italy to comply with EU law on hunting, including poaching, and is exchanging information with the authorities and assessing the next step.

The Commission relies on national reports ⁽⁶⁾ and on data from academia, civil society and law enforcement to assess compliance. The data shows that the status of most species threatened by persecution has improved since the entry into force of the Nature Directives. Nevertheless, while some Member States have established robust systems ⁽⁷⁾, others face challenges in ensuring deterrent penalties and timely judicial proceedings.

⁽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⁾ This is due to a recent amendment of the Habitats Directive: 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*). The wolf is now listed in Annex V of the directive and subject to the provisions of Article 14 instead.

⁽³⁾ Directive (EU) 2024/1203 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on the protection of the environment through criminal law and replacing Directives 2008/99/EC and 2009/123/EC, OJ L, 2024/1203, 30.4.2024, to be transposed into national legislation by 21 May 2026.

⁽⁴⁾ Protected by the Habitats Directive and listed in the directive's Annexes IV and V.

⁽⁵⁾ Including monitoring, investigating and penalising illegal killings of protected species.

⁽⁶⁾ Under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.

⁽⁷⁾ Including for example specialised environmental police units or real-time monitoring.