

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002935/26
to the Commission
Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (Renew), Michal Wiezik (Renew)
(15 July 2026)**

Subject: Compatibility of Latvia's 2026 wolf hunting season with the Habitats Directive and the scientific evidence on wolf management

Latvia will allow the hunting of 400 wolves (28% of the population) from 15 July 2026 ⁽¹⁾. This coincides with the season during which wolf packs are still raising pups. Meanwhile, Latvian research questions the effectiveness of hunting and concludes that preventive measures remain underused.

1. Can the Commission assess whether Latvia's wolf management regime, specifically its favourable reference values, the 2026 hunting quota and the timing of the hunting season, is accurate and complies with the Habitats Directive, considering the difference between Latvia's wolf population estimate of 1 400 and the Commission's estimate of 650 ⁽²⁾?
2. The Commission's review on wolf management ⁽³⁾ concluded that there is little evidence that the non-targeted culling of wolves effectively reduces livestock depredation and highlighted preventive measures as more effective. A recent Latvian scientific publication ⁽⁴⁾ found that culling did not have the effect of reducing depredation, but rather could be expected to lead to a higher level of depredation. Considering this, how does the Commission assess Latvia's continued reliance on hunting as a primary management tool?
3. What evidence has Latvia provided to demonstrate that its hunting regime contributes to maintaining a favourable conservation status for wolves and does not adversely affect the species' social structure and long-term viability, as required under the Habitats Directive?

Submitted: 15.7.2026

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(27 August 2026)**

Article 14 of the Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾ gives Member States flexibility in the measures they take for species listed in Annex V, provided that their exploitation is compatible with their maintenance at favourable conservation status.

Wolves in Latvia have been listed in Annex V since Latvia's accession to the EU in 2004. Since then, the population has steadily increased. The Latvian wolf population was most recently reported as between 500 and 800, with an overall assessment of 'favourable' conservation status ⁽²⁾.

While there are diverging estimates of the Latvian wolf population due to differing methodologies, there is consensus that the population is increasing and remains favourable ⁽³⁾.

Provided that the population of wolves is in favourable status and stable, and management practices are not jeopardising that status, Member States are in compliance with Article 14.

The study 'Large carnivore distribution maps and population updates 2017-2022/23' reflects the views of the authors only and not those of the Commission.

Though the conservation status of Latvian wolves is favourable, any hunting must be carefully monitored. If their status deteriorates, or hunting is shown to jeopardise this status, measures must be taken to address this. This can include further restrictions on hunting ⁽⁴⁾.

There is no obligation to consult the Commission on measures taken in respect of Annex V species. Nevertheless, the Commission is monitoring the situation and remains in dialogue with Latvia.

¹ <https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/environment/13.07.2026-wolf-and-jackal-hunting-season-starts-this-week-in-latvia.a654924/>.

² Kaczensky, P. et al., 'Large carnivore distribution maps and population updates 2017 — 2022/23', 2024, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387303751>.

³ Blanco, J.C. and Sundseth, K., 'The situation of the wolf (*Canis lupus*) in the European Union — An In-depth Analysis', report of the N2K Group for DG Environment, European Commission, 2023.

⁴ Šuba, J. et al., 'Does Wolf Management in Latvia Decrease Livestock Depredation? An Analysis of Available Data', *Sustainability*, 15(11):8509, 2023.

⁽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⁾ Reporting on the wolf under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive for the period of 2019-2024: <https://nature-art17.eionet.europa.eu/article17/species/summary/?period=6&group=Mammals&subject=Canis+lupus®ion=>.

⁽³⁾ Agrita Žunna, Population status of wolf (*Canis lupus*) after the implementation of the action plan for Conservation of the species in Latvia (2023) and cited reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.

⁽⁴⁾ Case C-436/22, paragraph 69, <https://juris.curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=288835&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=10666426>.

The national authorities and courts are primarily responsible for ensuring compliance with the Habitats Directive and for its implementation.
