



Plenary sitting

B9-0504/2022

21.11.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the protection of livestock farming and large carnivores in Europe
(2022/2952(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

**European Parliament resolution on the protection of livestock farming and large carnivores in Europe
(2022/2952(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas there are many complex factors with detrimental effects on the trophic chains which determine the migration of wild animals (climate change, high protection status, rising population numbers) that lead to conflicts of coexistence between domestic and wild species;
- B. whereas legislative action, such as the Habitats Directive¹ and international coordination efforts, including the Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), have contributed to the recovery of large carnivores, including wolf populations; whereas the number of large carnivores has increased significantly in continental Europe, and rose between 2012 and 2016 to 8 000-9 000 Eurasian lynxes, 15 000-16 000 brown bears and 17 000 wolves; whereas these figures are already more than five years old; whereas the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classified the wolf as a species of least concern at EU level already in 2018 owing to the sharp increase in its numbers;
- C. whereas large carnivores show high mobility and single populations can spread over large geographical areas across different countries, within and outside of the EU, leading to situations where the same population with a favourable conservation status may be subject to management measures in one region, while still being classified as in need of strict protection in the neighbouring region, despite having the same conservation status; calls for a science-based approach, taking into account the population as a whole across Member States;
- D. whereas domesticated animals, notably such as those in pasture and open-grazing systems, are put at risk by the growing presence of large carnivores, especially in both mountainous and sparsely populated regions, in which grazing is necessary to conserve these priority habitats, and in more densely inhabited rural areas, where the presence of wolves can have negative impacts on the sustainable development of, and the quality of life in, rural areas, both in terms of traditional agriculture and tourism; whereas in densely populated and urbanised areas with few large nature reserves, there is a greater risk for domesticated animals;
- E. whereas traditional alpine pastures and meadow grazing systems are increasingly being abandoned owing to the environmental, agricultural and socio-economic challenges associated with farming in close proximity to a large predator species, which inevitably

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

leads to a conflict of objectives in terms of nature conservation; whereas 50 % of all sheep in continental Europe live near at least one large predator species;

- F. whereas prevention measures to avoid conflicts of coexistence have been shown not to be sufficiently effective, while leading to increased labour and disproportionate costs for farmers and having a significant impact on the landscape; whereas compensation payments regulated at national level differ within the EU and often do not consider the entirety of the damage suffered, in addition to the irreparable loss of the genetic heritage of many indigenous breeds;
1. Stresses that the EU must focus on adequately managing biodiversity to allow for the balanced development of all species and ecosystems; points out that, while biodiversity policies have had positive results with regard to the restoration of large carnivore species in the EU, it should be recognised that growing population levels are leading to several environmental, agricultural and socio-economic challenges, and that more action should be taken, based on a more regionalised approach in line with Article 2(3) of the Habitats Directive, to effectively address these trade-offs;
 2. Stresses the importance of improving wildlife health surveillance, which is relevant in the particular case of wolves owing to hybridisation with dogs; calls for a standardised policy for identifying hybrids and a transparent approach, including the cross-border exchange of wolf DNA samples between research institutions; calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider the impact that attacks by large carnivores have on animal welfare, including injuries, abortion, reduced fertility, loss of animals or entire herds, and the deaths of guard dogs, as well as on the well-being of humans, including loss of income and higher labour and material costs, as well as potential injury or risk to life;
 3. Welcomes the fact that the item ‘Proposal for amendment: Downlisting of the wolf (*Canis lupus*) from Appendix II to Appendix III of the Convention’ has been included in the agenda for the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention; emphasises that the conservation status of the wolf at pan-European level justifies a mitigation of the protection status and consequently the adoption of the proposed amendment;

Measures

4. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to recognise that the current measures, including fences and guard dogs, are not producing the results to adequately prevent attacks and enable harmonious coexistence; calls for the nature of the terrain and other prevailing factors, such as tourism, which are essential for the areas concerned, to be taken into account when implementing preventive measures and when considering derogations; calls on the Commission and the Member States to recognise, in cases where populations of large carnivores are expanding, the importance of developing and applying supervised control measures in line with the Habitats Directive, based on scientific evidence;

Assessment of conservation status and transboundary management plans

5. Calls on the Commission to regularly assess progress in achieving the conservation

status for species at the level of biogeographical regions and/or EU-wide populations, in order to assess the expansion of wild animals on the basis of scientific evidence and based on the exchange of individuals and gene flows between subpopulations, by taking into account the high cross-border mobility of species, and proceed to an adaptation of the protection status as soon as the desired conservation status has been reached; calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate cross-border collaboration and the development of transboundary management plans which coincide with the biogeographical regions and/or the level of populations; calls on the Commission to earmark funds for biodiversity studies aimed at updating the distribution and density maps of large carnivores; considers that, in order to produce accurate estimates, these studies should be carried out across Europe, given the high mobility of those species; believes that the conservation status of large carnivores is favourable in several biogeographical regions where it is still classified as in need of strict protection; calls for the close monitoring of EU policy on large carnivores with a view to a satisfactory resolution of the favourable conservation status issue, based on realistic data which reveals different densities of large carnivores in different parts of Europe; calls on the Commission to develop an assessment procedure without delay to enable the protection status of populations in particular regions to be amended as soon as the desired conservation status has been reached, in accordance with Article 19 of the Habitats Directive;

Exemptions

6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to actively assist regions facing rising coexistence conflicts, bearing in mind that both wildlife and livestock suffer significant damage, in order to enable them to make use of the flexibility that already exists under Article 16(1) of the Habitats Directive; calls for an interpretation and application of this article that considers the diversity across the European Union and in close collaboration with Member States, regions and stakeholders to ensure a management approach at the level of larger geographical regions and/or at the level of populations across Member States; calls on the Commission to clarify the existing guidelines on the strict protection of species, as regards the interpretation of the obligations arising from Articles 12 and 16 of the Habitats Directive, in light of the increasing large carnivore populations and rising coexistence conflicts;
7. Stresses that livestock farming must be possible without requiring disproportionately costly and enhanced protective measures that negatively affect the feasibility of farming in rural areas; calls on the Commission to conduct an assessment of the impact of the growing presence of large carnivores in Europe on biodiversity, rural communities and rural tourism, including the renewal of generations in agriculture;

Mountain farms

8. Stresses that climate change, economic crises and the multiplication of predations by large carnivores affect more severely the livestock farms in Alpine areas; points out that holdings in mountainous areas are small and face high additional costs, however they play an important role in the preservation of mountainous landscapes and safeguarding biodiversity in inhospitable regions; where large wild herbivores have disappeared or have not yet been reintroduced, since they are a nature-based cost-effective tool for

preventing and mitigating climatic effects such as wild fires; points out that areas such as species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on silicious substrates in mountain areas and alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands are particularly worthy of conservation under the Habitats Directive; points out that a key factor for the conservation of these areas is extensive grazing; notes that the increasing wolf population, combined with the impracticability of protective measures in extreme topographic locations, such as in mountainous and sparsely populated areas is leading to the gradual abandonment of grazing; calls on the Commission to protect and preserve traditional agricultural practices, such as pastoralism, the model of agricultural grazing, the practice of transhumance recognised by UNESCO and the way of life of pastoral farmers, through decisive action and concrete solutions; recognises that certain of these practices can be covered by the proposed list of potential agriculture practices funded by eco-schemes, which might lead to interference with wildlife habitats; calls on the Commission to create the necessary conditions for grazing protection, where herd protection measures are impossible;

Monitoring

9. Stresses that good monitoring is a basic prerequisite for successful large carnivore management, yet the Member States use different surveying and monitoring methods; calls on the Commission and the Member States to harmonise scientifically proven monitoring methodologies across the Member States and to monitor the large carnivore populations by taking into account the cross-border dimension, with a focus on the biogeographical regions, as well as on the characteristics of each ecosystem; calls for the results of the monitoring to be made available to the public in a timely and transparent manner; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to scientifically identify the best feasible measures to reduce the attacks and damage of the predation of livestock, as well as to conduct an impact assessment on the implementation of active management methods;

Funding

10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to identify adequate and long-term funding possibilities, both within and, in particular, outside of the common agricultural policy, in the framework of the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the Habitats Directive, for appropriate preventive measures and adequate compensation for farmers, in order to ensure the coexistence of large carnivores and sustainable livestock farming practices without limiting the overarching goals of the EU's common agricultural policy; calls on the Commission to recognise that the rising number of attacks by large carnivores means that the resources devoted to protecting domesticated animals and the compensation payouts are also increasing, with the risk that funds from the rural development programmes which are traditionally envisaged to help achieve important objectives under the common agricultural policy, will be spent on species conservation; considers that the compensation paid to livestock breeders after an attack varies from Member State to Member State; believes that this compensation should be included in the block exemption from State aid; asks the Commission to consider abolishing its agricultural guidelines that consider compensation for damage by large predators as State aid, since the losses suffered by producers have no connection with their agricultural activity;

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11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission.