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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0509/2022**

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))

**Ulrike Müller, Róza Thun und Hohenstein**  
on behalf of the Renew Group

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

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the statement by the Commission of 23 November 2022 on the protection of livestock and large carnivores in Europe,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas legislative action, such as the EU Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup>, and international treaties, such as the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention), have contributed to the recovery of large carnivores, including the grey wolf, the brown bear, the Eurasian lynx and the wolverine; whereas the number of large carnivores in continental Europe present in 2012<sup>2</sup> amounted to 9 000 Eurasian lynxes, 17 000 brown bears, 1 250 wolverines and 12 000 wolves; whereas the numbers for wolves have increased significantly in the last ten years to 17 000, according to an assessment carried out in 2018<sup>3</sup>, while the numbers for other species remain similar; whereas the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has classified 3 out of 9 wolf populations, 3 out of 10 Brown bear populations and 3 out of 11 Eurasian lynx populations in Europe as least concern; whereas both wolverine populations in Europe remain threatened and the Iberian lynx is still endangered;
- B. whereas most populations of large carnivores in Europe are transboundary; whereas individual populations can cover large geographical ranges across different countries, within and outside of the EU, leading to situations where the same population in one region can be considered as being under favourable conservation status, while in a neighbouring region it can be classified as in need of strict protection; whereas a science-based approach and coordinated monitoring across Member States is needed;
- C. whereas monitoring methods vary between EU Member States, leading to heterogeneous quality and quantity of data on large carnivore population levels<sup>4</sup>, making the comparability and standardisation of data and its interpretation very difficult;
- D. whereas EUR 3.6 million per year on average were spent between 1992 and 2019 on projects focusing on large carnivore damage mitigation measures through the LIFE programme and a further EUR 36 million were granted for ongoing projects providing context-specific guidance on the effectiveness of mitigation measures such as electric

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Chapron, G., et al., ‘Recovery of large carnivores in Europe’s modern human-dominated landscapes’, *Science*, Vol. 346, 2014,

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269709443\\_Recovery\\_of\\_large\\_carnivores\\_in\\_Europe%27s\\_modern\\_human-dominated\\_landscapes](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269709443_Recovery_of_large_carnivores_in_Europe%27s_modern_human-dominated_landscapes)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/3746/144226239#assessment-information>

<sup>4</sup> For example, <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/pdf/144226239/attachment>

fences, active shepherding and the use of livestock guarding dogs in many different regions of the EU; whereas the standards of measuring and reporting effectiveness were, however, in general relatively low, making an evaluation of their success difficult<sup>5</sup>; whereas there is a need for additional projects in regions and on large carnivore species that have not yet been addressed;

- E. whereas domesticated animals, notably those in pasture and open grazing systems, are put at higher risk of predation (depending on the measures put in place and their effectiveness) by the growing presence of large carnivores, especially in mountainous and sparsely populated regions in which grazing is necessary to conserve these priority habitats; whereas in densely populated areas with few of the natural prey species for large carnivores, there could also be a greater risk for domesticated animals;
- F. whereas public attitudes to large carnivores vary widely across different countries and among various interest groups, in particular in regions where large carnivores have been absent for longer time spans; whereas the fear of attacks and lack of sufficient support from the authorities for avoiding damage might lead to the illegal killing of protected species;
- G. whereas the sheep and goat sectors, which are the most vulnerable to predator attacks from large carnivores, have already been under economic strain owing to wider socio-economic reasons for several decades; whereas this fragile sector can provide environmental added value through extensive grazing, by contributing to the maintenance of biodiversity in open landscapes in many areas with natural constraints or low fertility, such as alpine pastures, and by helping to combat phenomena such as erosion and forest fires;
- H. whereas traditional alpine pastures and meadow grazing systems are increasingly being abandoned as a result of environmental, agricultural and socio-economic challenges; whereas the challenges linked to farming in close proximity to large carnivores may lead to a conflict of objectives in terms of protecting large carnivore species on the one hand and, on the other hand, protecting the biodiversity of pastures;
- I. whereas prevention measures to avoid conflicts of coexistence have been reported by LIFE projects in some EU regions as successful methods for reducing damage by large carnivores; whereas the effectiveness of these measures could, however, be affected by geographical circumstances and local conditions; whereas these measures may lead to increased labour and disproportionate costs for farmers, especially in regions where large carnivores are returning or expanding, and they may also have a significant impact on the landscape; whereas compensation payments, which are regulated at national level, differ within the EU and do not always achieve full compensation of the damage suffered;
- J. whereas the loss of, and injuries to, domesticated animals due to large carnivore attacks not only cause economic damage to farmers and breeders, but also have considerable emotional consequences for their owners;
- K. whereas traditional livestock farming practices with high protection of livestock against predators such as the use of shepherds, livestock guarding dogs and night-time recovery

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351989421003656>

to ensure the direct and continuous surveillance of grazing livestock have been used for centuries in Europe but have been gradually abandoned due to far fewer predator attacks; whereas owing to land use change with a more multifunctional approach in agricultural areas, the increased importance of tourism and the current socio-economic pressure that EU farming is facing, with large decreases in farmers' numbers and below-average wages, it may prove difficult to fully return to these old practices on a large scale in some regions, especially without public support; stresses that innovative solutions will need to be found to accustom modern farming to the presence of wolves;

- L. whereas constructive coexistence between large carnivores and livestock farming is needed, whereby on the one hand, the conservation status of large carnivores could continue to develop favourably, while farmers would be given the tools and sufficient financing to address and prevent attacks on farm animals; whereas further discussions will be needed between stakeholders and farmers in areas where large carnivores have been absent for decades, and further efforts will be needed in terms of the sharing of best practices to support the uptake of preventive measures and obtain access to financing; whereas the increased presence of large carnivores can have positive effects on ecosystem functioning and resilience, the conservation of biodiversity and ecological processes, contributing, inter alia, to regulating populations of wild ungulates; highlights also that, especially in national parks, the presence of large carnivores contributes to forests' recreational value and ever-increasing nature-based tourism<sup>6</sup>;
1. Stresses that a balanced development of all species and ecosystems in some cases may require management; welcomes the positive results of biodiversity policies with regard to the restoration of large carnivore species in the EU; highlights the need to recognise that such changes in the population levels of certain species can lead to several environmental, agricultural and socio-economic challenges as well as opportunities; recognises that Article 2(3) of the Habitats Directive already contains the flexibility to effectively address these synergies and trade-offs and is considered fit for purpose;
  2. Calls on the Commission to regularly assess progress in achieving favourable conservation status for species at the levels of biogeographical regions and of EU-wide populations, in order to assess the expansion of large carnivores on the basis of scientific evidence, by taking into account the high cross-border mobility of species; recognises that the conservation status of different populations of the same species can vary across regions, and that the conservation status of a population can be impacted by the status of neighbouring populations; calls on the Commission and the Member States to further intensify 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, for example under Horizon Europe, 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, where relevant;
  3. Stresses that good monitoring is a basic prerequisite for successful large carnivore management and this should include not only the monitoring of the area occupied by large

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[https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/case\\_studies.htm#Innovative%20Financing](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/case_studies.htm#Innovative%20Financing))

carnivores and their abundance, but also of the trends in damage occurrence, the spatial hotspots and the effectiveness of the damage-mitigation programmes (including compensation and prevention); calls on the Commission to ensure that Member States use appropriate monitoring methods for each of the different large carnivore species and the associated damage that will allow the compilation of high-quality, comparable and standardised data for an effective assessment of population levels and damage mitigation policies; stresses that options should be explored to better take into account the movement across borders of large carnivores, including across borders with non-EU countries, in the monitoring procedures for these populations; highlights that data collection and analysis should be carried out by a single EU body; calls for the results of the monitoring and the methodology used to be made available to the public in a timely and transparent manner;

4. Stresses the importance of improving wildlife health surveillance, recognising the positive effects wolves can have on the health of the whole ecosystem; calls for a standardised policy for identifying hybrids and a transparent approach, including the generalised cross-border exchange of wolf DNA samples between research institutions;
5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to assist regions facing rising coexistence conflicts to clarify how to make appropriate and responsible use of the flexibility that already exists under Article 16(1) of the Habitats Directive; 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; at the same time, encourages Member States to better use the existing guidelines and act in an effective way to prevent, mitigate and compensate the damage caused by large carnivores; points out that this should consider the diversity across the European Union and should be developed in close collaboration with Member States, regions and stakeholders to ensure a management approach at the level of biogeographical regions and at the level of populations across Member States;
6. Calls on the Member States to make sure that the use of derogations for controlling large carnivores, including bears, is clearly separated from hunting activity; stresses that a derogation system cannot be compared to a hunting quota-based system where no clear objectives are set with the allocation of intervention numbers, particularly if alternative solutions and preventive measures have not been exhausted, and if the effects of its implementation cannot be established;
7. Calls on the Commission, the Member States, the regional and local authorities and all relevant stakeholders to promote ways and means to minimise and, whenever possible, find solutions to conflicts between human interests and the presence of large carnivore species by exchanging knowledge and by working together in an open-ended, constructive and mutually respectful way;
8. In response to the concerns of farmers and citizens, calls on the Commission and the Member States to conduct clear awareness-raising campaigns and improve transboundary cooperation and knowledge on human coexistence with large carnivores in Europe;
9. Calls on the Commission to conduct an assessment of the impact of the growing presence of large carnivores in Europe on the viability of livestock farming, biodiversity, rural

communities and rural tourism, including generational renewal in agriculture, within the context of the socio-economic factors impacting the viability of livestock farming; stresses that compensation payment mechanisms should be designed in such a way that livestock farming and the presence of large carnivores does not mean a loss in profits for farmers; stresses further that protective measures should not be disproportionately costly;

10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to evaluate the impact that attacks by large carnivores may have on animal welfare, including injuries, abortion, reduced fertility, loss of animals, loss of the integrity of the herd, and the deaths of guard dogs and hunting dogs, as well as the impact on farmers' incomes and higher labour and material costs, also taking into account whether or not preventive measures were implemented and how effective they were;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop a solid and comprehensive assessment of all relevant threats and pressures on each species of large carnivore and their habitats at European level and in each Member State, either by natural causes or human-induced factors, such as illegal killing (poaching), incidental capture and killing or the diminishing of the size or quality of their habitats; calls on the Member States and the Commission to also map priority connectivity areas for large carnivore populations and to identify the most important ecological corridors, dispersal barriers, high-mortality road sections and other important landscape features pertaining to the fragmented nature of large carnivore distribution in order to avoid habitat fragmentation;
12. Stresses that livestock farms in the Alpine biogeographical region and other mountainous areas are particularly vulnerable to wolf attacks which are on the rise; points out that holdings in these regions are often small and face high additional costs, while they play an important role in the preservation of mountainous landscapes and in safeguarding biodiversity in some inhospitable regions where large wild herbivores have disappeared or have not yet been reintroduced, as they are a nature-based cost-effective tool for preventing and mitigating phenomena such as erosion, and forest 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, for example by bovines and horses, or guided shepherding; notes that the increasing large carnivore populations, combined with the impracticability of protective measures in extreme topographic locations, such as in mountainous and sparsely populated areas, might lead 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 concrete solutions; recognises that certain of these practices can be covered by the proposed list of potential agriculture practices funded by eco-schemes;
13. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to recognise that the currently available preventive measures, including fences and guard dogs, which are successful in some EU regions, may present additional financial and labour burdens for farmers, are not always supported by EU or national funding and have a varying degree of efficiency and effectiveness depending on the local conditions; in this regard, stresses that financial support for preventive measures should be accompanied by advisory support to livestock

breeders, to ensure their comprehensive and timely implementation; highlights that the nature of the terrain, the geographical circumstances, the history of coexistence with large carnivores and other prevailing factors, such as tourism, which is often essential for the areas concerned, need 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 implementing mitigation strategies proactively in line with the Habitats Directive, based on scientific evidence;

14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to scientifically identify and support the best feasible preventive measures to reduce attacks and the damage of the predation of livestock by large carnivores, taking into account the regional and local characteristics of the Member States and to support farmers to apply for these preventive measures; calls on the Commission to define appropriate requirements for measuring and reporting the effectiveness of the damage mitigation measures investigated in projects funded by the EU, such as through the LIFE programme, giving priority to objective and quantitative assessment methods, while avoiding disproportionate administrative burdens that might deter project applicants; calls, furthermore, for an impact assessment on the implementation of active management methods to be conducted;
15. Calls on the Member States to draw up and implement comprehensive species action plans or conservation and/or management plans, where none are already in place; notes that management planning should take into account human densities, landscape structures, livestock herding, conservation status, other relevant human activities and wild ungulate populations;
16. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to identify adequate and long-term funding opportunities for appropriate preventive measures and adequate compensation for farmers not only for any losses suffered and costs incurred by large carnivore attacks, but also for the mitigation measures implemented, in order to ensure the coexistence of large carnivores and sustainable livestock farming practices; calls on the Commission to recognise that the rising number of attacks by large carnivores means that both the resources devoted to protecting domesticated animals and compensation payouts are also increasing; considers that the compensation paid to livestock breeders after an attack varies from Member State to Member State; calls on the Commission to consider amending its agricultural guidelines that recognise compensation for damage by large predators as State aid, since the losses suffered by producers have no connection with their agricultural activity;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.