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Brussels, 15 March 2023

**Subject: Request to the European Commission to re-open the infringement proceedings against Sweden regarding its wolf management policies and investigate the legality of its lynx management policies.**

Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

On behalf of the undersigned environmental and animal protection organisations, we are writing to call upon the European Commission to re-open the infringement procedure against Sweden regarding its wolf (*Canis lupus*) population management policies and bring the case to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) as soon as possible, and investigate the legality of its lynx (*Lynx lynx*) management policies.

At the beginning of the year, Swedish authorities issued wolf hunting licences as a population management tool under Article 16 of the Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup>. However, this species is protected by this Directive and the Bern Convention<sup>2</sup>.

Sweden's wolf population has not achieved the Favourable Conservation Status that could justify population management, as described in the European Commission's Guidelines for Population Level Management Plans for Large Carnivores<sup>3</sup>, in order to achieve it the country needs a much larger population as well as regular genetic inflow from other populations<sup>4</sup>. Since the Swedish Ministry allowed the decrease of the population to 170-270 individuals, this cannot allow the achievement of

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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 fauna and flora. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31992L0043>

<sup>2</sup> The wolf is protected under the Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention. For the protection status under the Bern Convention see: <https://rm.coe.int/168078e2ff>

<sup>3</sup> Linnell J., V. Salvatori & L. Boitani (2008). Guidelines for population level management plans for large carnivores in Europe. A Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe report prepared for the European Commission (contract 070501/2005/424162/MAR/B2). Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/guidelines\\_for\\_population\\_level\\_management.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/guidelines_for_population_level_management.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> As explained in Laikre et al. (2022). Planned cull endangers Swedish wolf population. *Science*, 377(6602), 162. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.add5299>

FCS<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, a recent Bern Convention committee report acknowledged that Sweden's population is classified as endangered due to the severe lack of genetic diversity<sup>6</sup>. Culling is, therefore, inappropriate and could dramatically threaten the survival of the Swedish wolf population, impacting European wildlife and biodiversity.

As additional pressure on the lynx population, licences to kill 200 individuals were issued in March, more than double the number compared to recent years<sup>7</sup> although this species is protected by the Habitats Directive and Bern Convention<sup>8</sup>. The Swedish hunters association, Svenska Jägareförbundet, admitted that this hunt was not justified to prevent potential risks to public safety or livestock depredation. Instead, the hunt is carried out for "the excitement and skins"<sup>9</sup>. This hunt does not seem to comply with EU legal requirements and must be stopped.

In the light of the current biodiversity crisis, Sweden must comply with EU law that strictly protects wolves as part of our common natural heritage. Moreover, action by the Commission will prevent other Member States from breaching EU law and continue to successfully manage and protect wolf populations. The lack of legal action from the European Commission in taking this case to the CJEU is sending a signal to all other Member States on the absence of repercussions for not following the European Union's environmental legislation. However, countries such as Spain, Germany or Poland have shown good practices of coexistence with this species and should continue on this path.

Emphasised by the recent support from twelve Environment Ministers<sup>10</sup>, the legal protection of wolves must remain strict to allow this species to fulfil its ecological role that benefits European ecosystems.

Therefore, we call upon the European Commission to urgently re-open the infringement procedure against Sweden for its wolf management policies, and investigate the legality of its lynx management policies, as these practices do not comply with EU legislation. We call for the European Commission to continue to take a responsible approach to the protection of these iconic species and ensure that the Habitats Directive is enforced effectively in Sweden.

Yours Sincerely,

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<sup>5</sup> Stockholm University. (2022). "Researchers warn in Science of reducing the Swedish wolf population". <https://www.su.se/english/news/researchers-warn-in-science-of-reducing-the-swedish-wolf-population-1.620435>

<sup>6</sup> Online report available at:

<https://rm.coe.int/inf45e-2022-wolf-assessment-bern-convention-2791-5979-4182-1-2/1680a7fa47>

<sup>7</sup> The Guardian. "Hundreds of lynx to be hunted in Sweden following biggest ever wolf cull". Accessed on March 2 (2023). Available at:

[https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/02/hundreds-of-lynx-to-be-hunted-in-sweden-following-g-biggest-ever-wolf-cull?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/02/hundreds-of-lynx-to-be-hunted-in-sweden-following-g-biggest-ever-wolf-cull?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

<sup>8</sup> The Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) is protected under the Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive and Appendix III of the Bern Convention. For the protection status under the Bern Convention see: <https://rm.coe.int/168097eb57>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* 6.

<sup>10</sup> Available at:

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/pack-of-eu-ministers-urge-commission-to-uphold-wolves-protection-status/>

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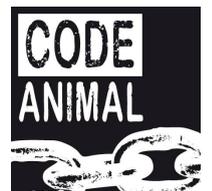
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