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RE: Call to withdraw the proposal to kill twenty wolves outside the reindeer herding area this coming winter

Dear Minister Leppä,

Hereby we Members of EP Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals would like to raise our concerns regarding the proposal of your Ministry to kill twenty wolves from 4 packs outside the reindeer herding area this coming winter, with the supposed purpose of *"regulating the growth of the wolf population, prevent damage and promote the acceptability of the wolf"*.

This proposal goes against Finland's legal obligation to prohibit the deliberate killing of wolves as specimens of a strictly protected species listed under the Annex IV(a) of the Habitats Directive. It will also go against the rulings of the CJEU as no derogation from Article 16(1) can be granted if the objective pursued can be achieved by another satisfactory alternative.

The Ministry's aim to *"regulate the growth of the wolf population"*, is not consistent with the wording and the spirit of the Habitats Directive and violates the prohibition for deliberate killing set up in Article 12 of the Directive. The purpose of a derogation from strict protection cannot be having less wolves. The European Commission has stated on several occasions that derogations under Article 16 are not a population management tool and they should be used only as an exception and last resort.

The Court of Justice of the European Union has ratified that: *"the strict species protection pursuant to Art. 12(1)(a) to (c) continues to apply to all Annex IV species irrespective of whether they have achieved favourable conservation status or not."* Additionally, the European Commission has stated in its recently updated Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive that *"There seems to be no solid evidence on the effectiveness of the use of lethal control to reduce livestock predation... and it might actually lead to an increase in livestock predation and conflicts... Competent authorities in the Member States should take all these elements into account when deciding on and implementing their management measures."*

The lethal management of wolves is not only out of step with modern conservation, but it is also not supported by the public as many recent polls show.

It is difficult to understand that your Ministry pays more attention to those who are against the presence of wolves while ignoring the opinion of a majority who wants wolves' lives to be respected.

If the Ministry truly wants to promote the coexistence with wolves, this can be effectively done with other non-lethal tools such as the sharing of relevant information and education, as it's being done in many other European countries.

We therefore call on you to withdraw your Ministry's proposal to kill twenty wolves in Finland this coming winter. This will be a clear sign for Finland's commitment to respect EU legislation and to protect an endangered species that is a common natural heritage.

Looking forward to your reply.

Best regards,

Anja Hazekamp MEP
President

Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP
Honorary President