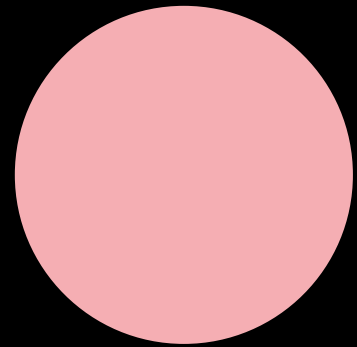
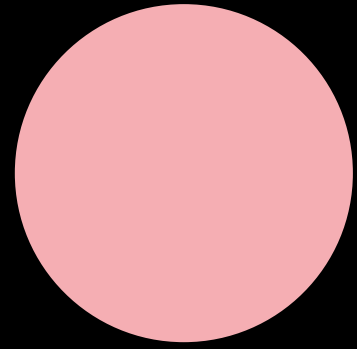


24 March 2020

Wolf Protection Research for Eurogroup for Animals



Classified: Private

European report,
March 2020

**EUROGROUP
FOR ANIMALS**

Introduction

Currently, under the EU Habitats Directive, the wolf is a strictly protected or protected species in all EU member states, with hunting permits only to be granted under exceptional circumstances¹. However, due to loopholes in the system, the hunting and poaching of wolves remains common practice in some countries. This appears to be particularly the case in Finland, where the Finnish Government has not long ago decided to allow wolf hunting to be lawful. While a recent EU Court of Justice (EUCJ) judgement has confirmed the strict protection of wolves in Finland under EU law, it is unclear whether this will be effective in stopping the killing of some populations of wolves in Finland².

Eurogroup for Animals has commissioned Savanta ComRes to conduct an opinion poll among six EU member states (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland and Finland) in order to better understand public perceptions and attitudes towards wolf protection across Europe. Findings from this research will support Eurogroup for Animals' communications with EU decision-makers at a crucial time, when wolves are slowly recovering in several European countries after years in which the species has been on the brink of extinction³.

While the EUCJ case sets a precedent for the EU's commitment to the protection of wolves, Finnish views and attitudes remain notably different from other European countries surveyed. For example, fewer than three in five (56%) Finnish adults say that wolves should be strictly protected. A similar proportion say that farmers and people living in rural areas should coexist with wolves and other wild animals without harming them (60%).

Meanwhile, adults from other surveyed EU countries tend to show an overall high level of support for wolf protection, particularly in Poland, Spain and Italy. There is also a great level of awareness of the benefits of wolves to their local ecosystem in most surveyed countries. Furthermore, adults from most countries oppose the killing of wolves in all of the tested circumstances, including when they have attacked farm animals, and support the idea of the EU and national governments providing funding and tools for farmers to protect farm animals from wolf attacks.

¹ <https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/european-union-court-of-justice-questions-wolf-hunting-permits-granted-in-finland>

² <https://www.euronews.com/2019/10/10/eu-s-top-court-upholds-the-protection-of-finnish-wolves>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/conservation_status.htm

Methodology

Savanta ComRes conducted an online quantitative survey in which respondents were interviewed about their current views and understanding of wolf protection. We interviewed 6,137 adults in six European countries (France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland and Finland) aged 18+ online between 11th and 17th February 2020. Data were weighted to be representative of adults aged 18+ by age, gender and region in each of the six countries.

While the combined results cannot guarantee to be representative of the EU as a whole, these countries were chosen with an aim that they would be a good representation of the range of countries within the European Union (EU) in terms of geography, political history and culture.

Guidelines for the public use of survey results

Savanta ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council⁴ and abides by its rules. This commits us to the highest standards of transparency.

The BPC's rules state that all data and research findings made on the basis of surveys conducted by member organisations that enter the public domain must include reference to the following:

- The company conducting the research (Savanta ComRes)
- The client commissioning the survey
- Dates of interviewing
- Method of obtaining the interviews (e.g. in-person, post, telephone, internet)
- The universe effectively represented (all adults, voters etc.)
- The percentages upon which conclusions are based
- Size of the sample and geographic coverage.

Published references (such as a press release) should also show a web address where full data tables may be viewed, and they should also show the complete wording of questions upon which any data that has entered the public domain are based.

All press releases or other publications must be checked with Savanta ComRes before use. Savanta ComRes requires 48 hours to check a press release unless otherwise agreed.

⁴ www.britishpollingcouncil.org

Findings in detail

Overall, adults across the six surveyed countries agree that wolves have a right to exist and should be accepted in their respective countries and are in favour of their protection. This is particularly true for Italian, Spanish and Polish adults, while adults from Finland, Germany and France seem to be the less favourable towards wolves.

Over nine in ten (93%) adults agree that wolves have a right to exist in the wild, while just 5% disagree. Similarly, nine in ten (89%) agree that wolves belong to our natural environment just like foxes, deer or hares and a similar proportion (86%) agree that wolves should be accepted to live in their respective countries.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

NET % who Agree	Total	France	Germany	Spain	Italy	Poland	Finland
Wolves have a right to exist in the wild	93%	92%	92%	94%	97%	94%	90%
Wolves belong to our natural environment just like foxes, deer or hares	89%	85%	80%	92%	94%	96%	88%
Wolves should be accepted to live in the country	86%	78%	82%	87%	88%	91%	87%
Wolves should be strictly protected	81%	84%	76%	90%	92%	84%	56%
The return of wolves is beneficial for the natural environment and biodiversity of the country	79%	74%	73%	88%	86%	84%	66%
Wolves should be allowed to roam freely without human intervention	63%	54%	68%	80%	53%	77%	47%
I would know how to behave if I were to encounter a wolf	39%	29%	40%	21%	23%	41%	85%
Wolves pose a risk to people	38%	33%	32%	39%	40%	43%	43%

Base: All respondents (n=6,137), All respondents in France (n=1,037), in Germany (n=1,008), in Spain (n=1,031), in Italy (n=1,007), in Poland (n=1,049), in Finland (n=1,005)
Bolded % = most frequently selected option in each country

NET % who Disagree	Total	France	Germany	Spain	Italy	Poland	Finland
Wolves have a right to exist in the wild	5%	6%	6%	4%	2%	4%	9%
Wolves belong to our natural environment just like foxes, deer or hares	9%	12%	17%	6%	4%	4%	11%
Wolves should be accepted to live in the country	11%	16%	14%	10%	7%	5%	12%
Wolves should be strictly protected	15%	11%	19%	7%	5%	11%	36%
The return of wolves is beneficial for the natural environment and biodiversity of the country	13%	17%	20%	7%	6%	8%	20%
Wolves should be allowed to roam freely without human intervention	31%	37%	27%	16%	40%	18%	49%
I would know how to behave if I were to encounter a wolf	47%	59%	53%	56%	63%	44%	10%
Wolves pose a risk to people	55%	58%	62%	53%	52%	52%	52%

Base: All respondents (n=6,137), All respondents in France (n=1,037), in Germany (n=1,008), in Spain (n=1,031), in Italy (n=1,007), in Poland (n=1,049), in Finland (n=1,005)
Bolded % = most frequently selected option in each country

- While at least nine in ten adults in each surveyed country agree that **wolves have a right to exist in the wild**, **Italian** adults are significantly more likely to agree with

this statement than adults in any other country (97% Italy vs. Poland and Spain 94% each, France and Germany 92% each). **Finland** is the least likely country to agree with this statement (90%).

- **Italian** adults, along with **Spanish** adults, are also significantly more likely than adults in any other countries to agree that **wolves should be strictly protected** (92% Italy and 90% Spain). In comparison, less than three in five (56%) adults in **Finland** agree with this statement.
 - Across the countries surveyed, **adults aged 18-34** (83%) and **35-54** (82%) are significantly more likely than those aged **55+** (78%) to agree that **wolves should be strictly protected**.
 - Again, across all countries surveyed, **those who follow a diet with a reduced intake of animal products** are significantly more likely than **those who eat meat, fish, dairy and/or other animal products** to say that **wolves should be strictly protected** (85% vs. 80%).
- Adults in **Finland** are significantly less likely than adults in all other countries surveyed to agree that **the return of wolves is beneficial for the natural environment and biodiversity of their country** (66%) or that **wolves should be allowed to roam freely without human intervention** (47%). In comparison, **Spanish** adults are the most likely to agree with both statements (88% and 80% respectively).
- **Polish** adults are the most likely to agree (96%) that **wolves belong to our natural environment just like foxes, deer or hares**. Over nine in ten **Italian** (94%) and **Spanish** (92%) adults also agree with this statement. Adults in **Germany** are the least likely to agree with this statement (80%).
- Nine in ten (91%) **Polish** adults agree that **wolves should be accepted to live in their country**. Approaching nine in ten adults also agree with this statement in **Italy** (88%), **Spain** (87%) and **Finland** (87%). In comparison, of the countries tested, **France** is the least likely to agree (78%) with this statement, followed by **Germany** (82%).
- Around two in five (39%) adults across the countries surveyed, agree that **they would know how to behave if they were to encounter a wolf**.
 - Adults in **Finland** seem to be the most prepared for encountering a wolf, with over four in five (85%) agreeing that **they would know how to behave** in this situation. In comparison, just one in five **Italian** (23%) and **Spanish** (21%) adults say the same.
- Furthermore, around two in five (38%) adults across all countries surveyed, agree that **wolves pose a risk to people**.
 - **Finish** adults, along with **Polish** adults, are also the most likely to agree that **wolves pose a risk to people** (43% each), while **French** (33%) and **German** (32%) adults are the least likely to agree with this statement.

The vast majority of adults across all surveyed countries agree that their national government and the European Union should fund and equip farmers with the tools to protect farm animals from wolf attacks (86%) or that humans should find a way to coexist with wolves (85%). While adults in each country are more likely to agree than disagree with each statement on wolf protection tested, agreement with these statements is higher in Poland, Italy and Spain, while it is lower in Finland.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

NET % who Agree	Total	France	Germany	Spain	Italy	Poland	Finland
The Government and European Union should fund and equip farmers with the tools to protect farm animals from wolf attacks	86%	85%	86%	86%	90%	91%	77%
Humans should find a way to coexist with wolves	85%	82%	85%	85%	85%	88%	82%
Farmers and people living in rural areas should use non-lethal methods to keep wolves away	84%	78%	84%	89%	92%	92%	68%
Farmers and people living in rural areas should coexist with wolves and other wild animals without harming them	78%	74%	80%	80%	85%	87%	60%
Farmers and people living in rural areas should accept the presence of wolves and other wild animals	77%	70%	79%	80%	84%	85%	66%
Only authorities should have the authority to permit the killing of wolves to protect farm animals when necessary	75%	71%	77%	72%	76%	88%	65%

Base: All respondents (n=6,137), All respondents in France (n=1,037), in Germany (n=1,008), in Spain (n=1,031), in Italy (n=1,007), in Poland (n=1,049), in Finland (n=1,005)
Bolded % = most frequently selected option in each country

NET % who Disagree	Total	France	Germany	Spain	Italy	Poland	Finland
The Government and European Union should fund and equip farmers with the tools to protect farm animals from wolf attacks	9%	9%	8%	10%	5%	5%	15%
Humans should find a way to coexist with wolves	11%	12%	10%	11%	9%	8%	14%
Farmers and people living in rural areas should use non-lethal methods to keep wolves away	11%	12%	12%	8%	5%	5%	24%
Farmers and people living in rural areas should coexist with wolves and other wild animals without harming them	16%	17%	14%	14%	10%	9%	31%
Farmers and people living in rural areas should accept the presence of wolves and other wild animals	16%	20%	15%	15%	11%	10%	28%
Only authorities should have the authority to permit the killing of wolves to protect farm animals when necessary	19%	20%	17%	22%	18%	8%	29%

Base: All respondents (n=6,137), All respondents in France (n=1,037), in Germany (n=1,008), in Spain (n=1,031), in Italy (n=1,007), in Poland (n=1,049), in Finland (n=1,005)
Bolded % = most frequently selected option in each country

- Approaching nine in ten (86%) adults agree that **their respective national government and the EU should fund and equip farmers with the tools to protect farm animals from wolf attacks.**
 - Nine in ten **Italian** (90%) and **Polish** (91%) adults agree with this statement, while just three quarters (77%) of **Finnish** adults say the same.
- **Polish** adults are also the most likely to agree that **humans should find a way to coexist with wolves** (88%), or that **only authorities should have the authority to permit the killing of wolves to protect farm animals when necessary** (88%).
 - In comparison, just two thirds (65%) of **Finnish** adults agree that **only authorities should have the authority to permit the killing of wolves to protect farm animals when necessary.**
- **Italian** and **Polish** adults are the most likely to agree (92% each) that **farmers and people living in rural areas should use non-lethal methods to keep wolves away.**
 - In comparison, **Finnish** adults are the least likely to agree with this statement (68%).
- Approaching nine in ten **Italian** (85%) and **Polish** (87%) adults agree that **farmers and people living in rural areas should coexist with wolves and other wild animals without harming them**, while just three in five (60%) **Finnish** adults say the same.
- Across the countries surveyed, men are significantly more likely than women to agree with most statements on wolf protection tested.
 - For example, four in five (80%) **men** agree **that farmers and people living in rural areas should accept the presence of wolves and other wild animals.** In comparison, just three quarters (74%) of **women** say the same.
- Adults aged 55+ are significantly more likely than adults aged 18-34 to agree with most statements.
 - For instance, while four in five (79%) **55+ year-olds** agree that **only authorities should have the authority to permit the killing of wolves to protect farm animals when necessary**, just over two thirds (68%) of **18-34 year-olds** say the same.

At least half of adults in each country surveyed, except for Finland, say that it rarely or never acceptable to kill wolves in any of the scenarios tested.

Adults from each of the six countries surveyed are the most likely to find it rarely/never acceptable to kill wolves for their fur (92%) or for leisure (93%).

Q. To what extent do you believe each of the following are acceptable?

NET % At least sometimes acceptable	Total	France	Germany	Spain	Italy	Poland	Finland
Killing wolves that have attacked farm animals	40%	35%	42%	24%	28%	38%	76%
Killing wolves to control their population size	39%	37%	45%	26%	25%	37%	66%
Killing wolves to decrease the pressure on populations of other animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares)	32%	31%	37%	23%	28%	30%	41%
Killing wolves for their fur	6%	5%	6%	5%	4%	5%	8%
Killing wolves for leisure	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	8%

Base: All respondents (n=6,137), All respondents in France (n=1,037), in Germany (n=1,008), in Spain (n=1,031), in Italy (n=1,007), in Poland (n=1,049), in Finland (n=1,005)
Bolded % = most frequently selected option in each country

NET % Rarely/never acceptable	Total	France	Germany	Spain	Italy	Poland	Finland
Killing wolves that have attacked farm animals	55%	57%	54%	71%	67%	57%	21%
Killing wolves to control their population size	55%	55%	50%	69%	68%	57%	30%
Killing wolves to decrease the pressure on populations of other animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares)	59%	57%	55%	69%	64%	60%	47%
Killing wolves for their fur	92%	93%	92%	93%	94%	92%	89%
Killing wolves for leisure	93%	93%	94%	94%	95%	93%	90%

Base: All respondents (n=6,137), All respondents in France (n=1,037), in Germany (n=1,008), in Spain (n=1,031), in Italy (n=1,007), in Poland (n=1,049), in Finland (n=1,005)
Bolded % = most frequently selected option in each country

- Adults from **Finland** are the most likely to say that it is at least sometimes acceptable to kill wolves for each of the reasons tested, while **Spanish** and **Italian** adults are the least likely for most reasons tested.
 - For example, three quarters (76%) of **Finnish** adults say that it **is at least sometimes acceptable to kill wolves that have attacked farm animals** compared to just a quarter (24%) of **Spanish** and almost three in ten (28%) **Italian** adults who say the same.
 - Similarly, while two thirds (66%) of **Finnish** adults say that it is **at least sometimes acceptable to kill wolves to control their population size**, just a quarter of **Spanish** (26%) and **Italian** (25%) adults say the same.
- In turn, Spanish and Italian adults are the most likely to say that it is never/rarely acceptable to kill wolves for most of the reasons tested.
 - Around seven in ten **Italians** and **Spaniards** say that it is **never/rarely acceptable to kill wolves to control their population size** (68% and 69% respectively) or **to kill wolves that have attacked farm animals** (67% and 71% respectively).

- Seven in ten (69%) **Spanish** adults also say that it is **rarely/never acceptable to kill wolves to decrease the pressure on populations of other animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares)**, while approaching two thirds (64%) of **Italians** say the same. In comparison, less than three in five **French** and **German** adults (57% and 55% respectively) and less than half (47%) of **Finnish** adults say the same.
- Across the countries surveyed, **men** are more likely than **women** to say that it is **at least sometimes acceptable** to kill wolves for each of the reasons tested.
- Approaching half (47%) of adults across the countries surveyed **aged 55+** say that it is **at least sometimes acceptable to kill wolves that have attacked farm animals** compared to less than two in five **18-34 year-olds** (35%) and **35-54 year-olds** (37%) who say the same.
 - Similarly, **55+ year-olds** are also significantly more likely than their younger counterparts to say that it is **at least sometimes acceptable to kill wolves to control their population size** (45% 55+ vs. 36% 35-54 and 34% 18-34).
 - Interestingly, those aged **55+** are also significantly more likely than their younger counterparts aged **18-34** to say that it is **rarely/never acceptable to kill wolves for leisure** (96% vs. 88%) or **for their fur** (95% vs. 88%).
- **Those who follow a diet with a reduced intake of animal products** are significantly more likely than **those who eat meat, fish, dairy and/or other animal products** to say that it is **never/rarely acceptable to kill wolves to decrease the pressure on populations of other animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares)** (63% vs. 58% respectively), **to control their population size** (62% vs. 54% respectively) or **to kill wolves that have attacked farm animals** (60% vs. 54% respectively).

Overall, there is a high level of agreement across all six surveyed countries as to the benefits of wolves to the ecosystem and populations of animals lower down the food chain.

Four in five (81%) adults agree that wolves are beneficial to the ecosystem in which they live, while around seven in ten agree that wolves help to control populations of animals lower down the food chain (72%) or that wolves improve the overall health of populations of animals lower down the food chain by killing off those that are diseased, weak or old (69%).

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

NET % Agree	Total	France	Germany	Spain	Italy	Poland	Finland
Wolves are beneficial to the ecosystem in which they live	81%	76%	72%	85%	85%	86%	79%
Wolves help to control populations of animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares)	72%	65%	67%	77%	71%	80%	71%
Wolves improve the overall health of populations of animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares) by killing off those that are diseased, weak or old	69%	64%	69%	68%	65%	77%	73%
Wolves help to improve the genetic diversity of animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares)	65%	63%	58%	73%	70%	72%	53%
Wolves in the wild are an opportunity for tourism in rural and natural areas	49%	50%	37%	56%	55%	55%	43%

Base: All respondents (n=6,137), All respondents in France (n=1,037), in Germany (n=1,008), in Spain (n=1,031), in Italy (n=1,007), in Poland (n=1,049), in Finland (n=1,005)
Bolded % = most frequently selected option in each country

NET % who Disagree	Total	France	Germany	Spain	Italy	Poland	Finland
Wolves are beneficial to the ecosystem in which they live	10%	13%	15%	7%	7%	7%	13%
Wolves help to control populations of animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares)	15%	18%	20%	12%	13%	11%	17%
Wolves improve the overall health of populations of animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares) by killing off those that are diseased, weak or old	16%	16%	18%	14%	17%	13%	15%
Wolves help to improve the genetic diversity of animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares)	16%	16%	23%	11%	14%	14%	21%
Wolves in the wild are an opportunity for tourism in rural and natural areas	37%	31%	51%	31%	33%	33%	44%

Base: All respondents (n=6,137), All respondents in France (n=1,037), in Germany (n=1,008), in Spain (n=1,031), in Italy (n=1,007), in Poland (n=1,049), in Finland (n=1,005)
Bolded % = most frequently selected option in each country

- **Polish** (86%), **Spanish** (85%) and **Italian** (85%) adults are significantly more likely than **Finnish** (79%), **French** (76%) and **German** (72%) adults to agree that **wolves are beneficial to the ecosystem in which they live.**
- Similarly, **Poles** (72%), **Spaniards** (73%) and **Italians** (70%) are also significantly more likely than **Finnish** (53%), **French** (63%) and **German** (58%) adults to agree that **wolves help to improve the genetic diversity of animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares).**

- While over half of **Polish** (55%), **Spanish** (56%) and **Italian** (55%) adults say that **wolves in the wild are an opportunity for tourism in rural and natural areas**, less than two in five (37%) **Germans** say the same.
 - In turn, half (51%) of **German** adults disagree with this statement. Disagreement is also relatively high among **Finnish** adults at 44%.
- **Polish** (80%) and **Spanish** (77%) adults are also significantly more likely than adults from all other surveyed countries to agree that **wolves help to control populations of animals lower down the food chain (e.g. deer or hares)**. **French** and **German** adults are the least likely to agree with this statement (65% and 67% respectively).
- Across the countries surveyed, **men** are significantly more likely than **women** to agree with each statement tested.
- Adults aged **55+** and **35-54** across the countries surveyed are significantly more likely than those aged **18-34** to agree with most statements.
 - The only exception is seeing **wolves in the wild as an opportunity for tourism in rural and natural areas**, with half (50%) of **18-34 year-olds** agreeing with this statement compared to less than half (46%) of **55+ year-olds**.

Conclusions & recommendations

Conclusions

- The majority of adults across the six surveyed countries agree that wolves have a right to exist in nature and are in favour of their strict protection. This is particularly true for Italian, Spanish and Polish adults.
- There also seem to be a high level of awareness of the benefits of wolves to the local ecosystem and most adults are against the use of lethal methods to keep wolves away and oppose the killing of wolves in all scenarios tested.
- In line with that, adults seem to be supportive of the EU having a greater role in wolf protection measures and are in favour of the idea of national and EU funding and the provision of tools for farmers to protect farm animals from wolf attacks.
- Of the countries surveyed, Finland seems to be an outlier in its views, with significantly less support for each wolf protection measure tested and lower level of opposition against the killing of wolves in most tested scenarios.

Recommendations

- Use research findings to demonstrate overall high level of support for strict wolf protection and opposition for killing of wolves in any circumstances among EU citizens in this study.
- These findings can serve as empirical evidence that most countries' views differ from the views of farmers who form the key opposition to wolf protection measures. We recommend particularly focusing on communicating findings such as:
 - Overall half (55%) of adults surveyed say that it is never/rarely acceptable to kill wolves that attacked farm animals.
 - At least three quarters of adults agree that only authorities should have the authority to permit the killing of wolves to protect farm animals when necessary (75%) or that farmers and people living in rural areas should coexist with wolves and other wild animals without harming them (78%).
 - Over four in five (84%) adults agree that farmers and people living in rural areas should use non-lethal methods to keep wolves away.
- Consider targeted communications with decision-makers and build alliances with national or local wolf-protection and/or animal welfare support groups in Finland in order to encourage a shift in public perceptions of wolf protection and the killing of wolves.

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