



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT
Implementation & Support to Member States
Mainstreaming & Environmental Assessments

Brussels
ENV.E.1/PL/at

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Dear Ms Martinsen and Ms Vels,

Thank you for your letter of April 7th 2021 to Commissioner Sinkevičius, who asked me to reply on his behalf.

We very much appreciate the detailed information that you provided us on the Swedish license hunt of wolves for population control in winter 2021. The information concerning Swedish administrative and court decisions on the license hunt in winter 2021, the analysis that you have made on the compliance of the decisions on license hunt with the Habitats Directive, as well as your comments on the favourable conservation status of the Swedish wolf population are very valuable to our services.

The wolf is listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and as such, it is a strictly protected species for which regular hunting is prohibited in Sweden. Derogations from this strict protection are only allowed for the motives enumerated under Article 16 of the Directive and with the conditions that there is no satisfactory alternative and that the derogation is not detrimental to the maintenance of the wolf populations concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. As you pointed out, the Court has already clarified the scope of the above provisions, including in its ruling of 10 October 2019 (case C-674/17, Tapiola).

In our regular bilateral exchanges with the Swedish authorities, we have been consistently conveying our concerns about their practise concerning the license hunt of wolves. In particular, we regularly insist on the fact that the low population threshold that Sweden has defined as a favourable reference population for the wolf appears to be based more on the concept of minimal viable population. Thus, it is unlikely to match the requirements on favourable conservation status. We have also conveyed our views on the conditions that each derogation from the strict protection is required to meet fully, along the lines of the judgment in the Tapiola case.

We are currently assessing the most recent replies of the Swedish authorities and the latest decisions by the Swedish authorities and courts in this context, together with additional legal and scientific elements relevant for upcoming proceedings in the on-going infringement. Please rest assured that the information that you share with me features among these elements and receives the appropriate attention by my services.

Yours faithfully,

(Electronically signed)

Sabine BOURDY
Head of Unit