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2024 – A Decisive Year for Nature Conservation at EU Level

the Consistent Commitment of Mouvement Ecologique

There are repeated setbacks in EU nature conservation policy. Nevertheless, one thing is clear: without the EU, the state of biodiversity — both across Europe and in Luxembourg — would be significantly worse than it is today.

In 2024, several particularly important dossiers were on the agenda at the EU level. This was all the more reason for Mouvement Ecologique to actively engage in the process — and, in parallel, to defend and demand the preservation of existing achievements in EU nature conservation.

MOUVEMENT ECOLOGIQUE FILES COMPLAINT IN BRUSSELS AGAINST LUXEMBOURG FOR VIOLATION OF NATURE PROTECTION LAWS

Reminder: Three years ago, Mouvement Ecologique and natur&ëmwelt jointly filed a complaint with the European Commission against the Luxembourg government. In blatant violation of EU law, hundreds of hectares of "species-rich lowland hay meadows" have been destroyed in recent years, and populations of the grey partridge — a species that enjoys strict protection under EU law — have sharply declined. Luxembourg is thus in breach of European community law. The government accepted significant losses of these protected meadows and bird species without taking appropriate enforcement measures or implementing effective countermeasures.

Mouvement Ecologique pursued this legal complaint because it is one of the few available means to pressure Luxembourg into fulfilling its nature protection obligations. These two complaints also represent broader structural issues within Luxembourg's nature conservation policies.

As a result of the complaint, the European Commission submitted follow-up questions in October 2023, requesting concrete examples of destroyed protected meadows. Mouvement Ecologique then requested the relevant data from the Ministry of the Environment — but by September 2024, no response had been received. The Ministry justified the delay by claiming that the monitoring results still needed to be transferred into a database before they could be released. However, this process should have been completed long ago, raising serious concerns about the proper implementation of national conservation laws.

In addition, there is an EU reporting obligation in place. Mouvement Ecologique informed the Commission of this situation and highlighted the lack of cooperation between the Environment and Agriculture Ministries, as well as the counterproductive orientation of agricultural policy in the field of nature conservation. As a result, it was not possible to provide the Commission with concrete case studies. However, according to Mouvement Ecologique, the Ministry itself admitted that there had indeed been loss of habitat.

The long-awaited data finally arrived at the end of November 2024 — albeit not completely. Still, it was sufficient for Mouvement Ecologique to send the European Commission a list of destroyed meadows, including aerial images. What has happened with this information since then, and whether Luxembourg will face consequences for its inconsistent actions regarding habitat protection, remains unknown. Demnach affaire à suivre in 2025…

MR. MINISTER, KEEP YOUR WORD – "SAVE THE WOLF"!

Until September 2024, the wolf enjoyed a very high level of protection at the EU level. But that changed on September 25, 2024, when a majority of EU Member States voted to downgrade its protection status under the Bern Convention. This decision means the wolf can now be more easily declared eligible for culling — despite the fact that its conservation status remains unfavorable.

In fact, the wolf is in an *unfavorable conservation status* in six out of the seven biogeographic regions of the EU.

Mouvement Ecologique and *natur&ëmwelt* had repeatedly urged Environment Minister S. Wilmes in advance to stand firm in the Commission discussions and to maintain Luxembourg's previous position in favor of strict protection for the wolf. Their appeal was backed by a protest in front of the Environment Ministry, several technical position papers, and official letters. Nevertheless, Luxembourg supported the decision to downgrade the protection status — a clear political U-turn from previous policy.

This decision contradicts scientific findings, which show that culling wolves is not an effective solution to conflicts with livestock. What *does* work, and what has been demonstrated time and again, is continuous investment in preventive measures — such as fencing, guard dogs, and other deterrents.

Before the vote, more than 300 NGOs and countless citizens across Europe had called for stronger support of coexistence and preventive strategies. The lowering of the wolf's protection status undermines these ongoing efforts.

Luxembourg now joins those countries that are rolling back the progress, investments, and hard-fought victories made in protecting this once nearly extinct species. The wolf can now be more easily shot — despite its still unfavorable conservation status.

With this politically motivated decision, both the EU and Luxembourg have shot themselves in the foot. The credibility of their nature conservation commitments is in question. And now there is a real concern: will the wolf be just the first species to lose protection? Are bears and lynxes next?

The EU must be a union of shared values, not limited to economic and financial interests. Without a doubt, this includes the preservation of our natural foundations of life. Mouvement Ecologique will continue to be consistently engaged in this issue in the future.

Här Minister Wilmes: Bleift bei Ärem Wuert!

De Wollef schützen - Biodiversitéit erhalen

mouvement écologique

natur&ëmwelt

HISTORIC SUCCESS FOR NATURE IN THE EU – THE "NATURE RESTORATION LAW" HAS BEEN ADOPTED

On June 17, 2024, the EU Environment Council officially adopted the Nature Restoration Law (NRL). This groundbreaking legislation requires Member States to implement measures to restore damaged ecosystems, in an effort to halt biodiversity loss and combat climate change.

With this vote, the EU has taken the final step to turn this long-anticipated proposal into law. The result marks a major victory for nature, climate protection, citizens, and the future of Europe.

Mouvement Ecologique and *natur&ëmwelt* have long advocated for this law with great dedication. They therefore welcome the decision as a significant milestone for nature conservation in Europe.

Together, as part of the Europe-wide #RestoreNature coalition, the two organizations held a symbolic action on June 17 in front of the European Convention Center, delivering a strong final appeal to environment ministers to vote in favor of the NRL — with success.

The organizations are now calling for active support in implementing the law in Luxembourg and urge everyone to stand up for the protection and restoration of nature.

SETBACK FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE:

CSV AND DP MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT VOTE FOR FURTHER DETERIORATION IN EU AGRICULTURAL POLICY

On Wednesday, April 24, 2024, the European Parliament voted on a proposal from the European Commission aimed at significantly weakening environmental requirements for agricultural practices — particularly those in place to protect biodiversity and water resources. This move, made under the pretext of providing "greater flexibility" for farmers, comes at a time when recent analyses indicate that, in large part due to misguided agricultural policies, around 2 million species worldwide are at risk of extinction.

Mouvement Ecologique supported protests and campaigns from European environmental and conservation organizations, and urged Members of the European Parliament in an open letter to reject these rollbacks from a biodiversity standpoint. The title of the statement was: *"The Commission's attack on the environmental rules of the CAP is undemocratic, scandalous, and undermines its legitimacy."*

Unfortunately, Luxembourg's CSV and DP Members of Parliament voted in favor of the rollbacks. Several environmental standards were effectively suspended — a major setback for the hard-won ecological progress achieved in recent reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Nevertheless, Mouvement Ecologique remains committed to this issue and will continue its advocacy for sustainable, biodiversity-friendly agriculture

UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE:

LUXEMBOURG MUST FINALLY TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROTECTING OUR NATURAL LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS!

In October 2024, the 16th UN Biodiversity Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Cali, Colombia. Ahead of the summit, Mouvement Ecologique submitted its input and issued a press release calling on the Luxembourg government — and especially Minister for the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity Serge Wilmes — to take real responsibility for preserving biodiversity within Luxembourg.

For Mouvement Ecologique, it was deeply troubling that just one month before this major global biodiversity conference, EU Member States voted to downgrade the protection status of the wolf — with Luxembourg among the supporters of this measure. It seems almost schizophrenic, then, to hear calls at the global level urging countries of the Global South to step up their efforts to protect large predators, while countries like Luxembourg are rolling back their own protections at home.

It appears easier to preach water while drinking wine: wealthy Luxembourg has consistently failed to meet its biodiversity targets — the same targets it now expects other nations to take seriously. By October, there was no sign that Minister Wilmes was taking responsibility domestically. Instead of pushing for stronger action on nature conservation, he even supported the weakening of Luxembourg's nature protection laws as part of the government's "Build Faster and Faster" project (see separate section for more on this).

Mouvement Ecologique's conclusion: conferences like the UN Biodiversity Summit are undoubtedly important. But true political credibility — and real progress in protecting biodiversity — comes above all through concrete action at home. It is now time for Minister Wilmes, together with the Ministry of Agriculture, to take consistent and meaningful steps forward.