

## 200 Case-Files: A milestone within the monitoring of the Bern Convention

**Strasbourg / Bratislava, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021: The Bern Convention registered its 200<sup>th</sup> case-file this month.** The case-file system was established in 1984 to provide organisations and private citizens with the opportunity to highlight presumed breaches of the Bern Convention and to appeal to their national governments to take necessary action. These cases may be brought to the attention of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention: a pan-European forum.

**This pioneering system was and still is considered a valuable tool to enable a constructive discussion between local, national and international stakeholders.** The Standing Committee provides a platform for these stakeholders to exchange views and find *common solutions*, while encouraging holistic and collective recommendations over rigid and inflexible sanctions. Furthermore, keeping in mind that natural habitats and species do not tend to respect human-made frontiers, the system is also important as it provides for *complex cross-border issues to be addressed and resolved*.

While the number of complaints received annually over the nearly 40 years has fluctuated, **the last few years have seen an increase in the number of case-files being registered.** This can paint both a positive and negative picture.

On the one hand, more case-files submitted could point to a general lack of environmental protection and adherence to the Bern Convention across its Contracting Parties in Europe and beyond.

On the other hand, the upward trend may point to the increasing visibility of the system, growing awareness of citizens and organisations of the need to protect and preserve our natural environment, and perhaps most importantly, the improving accessibility of these local stakeholders to **democratic tools**, especially in some countries where, some thirty years ago, such a participatory tool may not have been imaginable.

**The case-file system thus remains one of the pillars of the Bern Convention**, and improvements to its efficiency, visibility and long-term sustainability are an important consideration for the Convention and will be included in its work on a Vision and Strategic Plan for the Period to 2030.

Finally, the case-file system will be featured during an **online forum talk of the World Forum for Democracy at the end of April**, where a stakeholder of one of the 200 files will present the positive impact that the tool has had on that specific conservation issue. More information will appear in due course on the websites of the [Bern Convention](#) and [World Forum for Democracy](#).

Jana Durkošová,  
Chair of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention



Further information:

- [Case-file webpage](#)
- [Register of Bern Convention case-files](#)