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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

CASE-FILE SYSTEM:
Proposals for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness
of the case-file system going forward

Document prepared by
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention

1. INTRODUCTION

This document comprises various proposals to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the case-file system going forward. It comes following a Bureau and Secretariat-driven reflection process during 2021 whereby the multiple aspects and issues which relate to the case-file system were addressed. The Secretariat memorandum, entitled “Case-File System: Reflections and possible restructuring in the framework of the Bern Convention Vision and Strategic Plan for the period to 2030, can be found here: [T-PVS/Inf\(2021\)30](#). The 41st Standing Committee in December 2021 decided to mandate a wider consultation of the reflection including all interested Contracting Parties and Observers of the Convention.

The reflection and following consultation in early 2022 resulted in two outcomes: a summary of general procedures for the processing of complaints throughout their lifecycle ([T-PVS/Inf\(2022\)27](#)), and the below proposals for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the case-file system going forward. Both documents shall be submitted to the 42nd Standing Committee.

The 42nd Standing Committee in December 2022 took note of the Proposals document, noting that it was a living document which could be updated regularly, and invited the Bureau to guide the Secretariat in the implementation of proposed actions, subject to availability of adequate financial and human resources.

2. CASE-FILE SYSTEM: LOOKING AHEAD - POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

A. Clustering similar cases, customised assessments

1. A comprehensive study on past and current case-files could be undertaken by an external expert, with the aim of assembling all relevant case-file information in one place, and establishing a compendium of best practices for improved and coherent decision-making.
2. Case-files could be clustered by topic, country/region or another aspect to ensure a more accurate and coherent follow-up during their assessment at different levels, i.e. Bureau, Standing Committee, independent experts. Files could also be assessed at technical detail at the relevant Group of Experts meeting on a case-by-case basis.
3. A third annual Bureau meeting dedicated to case-files could be scheduled to tackle the rising number of files, and ensure that at the two usual ordinary meetings, other important issues of the Convention are not side-tracked.
4. Independent experts could be mandated more regularly to conduct on-the-spot appraisals (OSAs) or online desk research, including after a Recommendation has been adopted, to ensure a monitoring of its implementation and follow-up.

B. Cooperation with international organisations

5. Cooperation with fellow MEAs and other relevant international organisations should be enhanced; when dealing with the same case, efforts should be made to work collectively and where possible to not duplicate activities or have contradictory positions.
6. Cooperation in particular with the European Commission should be enhanced. If the Commission is taking legal proceedings against a case, it should be considered to freeze or close that case on the Bern Convention’s agenda if no more added-value is evident, and taking into account the differing procedures and unique approach of the Bern Convention.

7. It could be considered to hold on a semi-regular basis coordinated joint-meetings of the secretariats and/or executive bodies (e.g. bureaux) of the MEAs working on similar issues to ensure better synergies as well as pool logistics and resources where possible.
8. Synergy should be sought within the Council of Europe and its sectors, many of which are beginning to work on environmental issues.

C. Digitalisation

9. The administrative procedures of the case-file system should move towards a more digitalised format, in order to reduce the work burden for the Secretariat as well as that of concerned stakeholders, streamline the various processes, and improve accessibility of information and visibility of the system.
10. A case-file dashboard should be developed without delay to include comprehensive data on past and current case-files, and become the centralised space where the lifecycle of a case-file is traced and updated.
11. Reporting templates or an online reporting system (such as the ORS) could be elaborated to increase efficiency both for the Secretariat and case-file parties, and to allow harmonisation of reports received; a scoring system (as done for the EDPA) could also be implemented to encourage greater reporting rates.

D. Improving the visibility of the case-file system

12. A communication campaign on the case-file system targeted at the Contracting Parties and Bern Convention stakeholders could be elaborated to highlight the pioneering approach and success stories of this system. Such a campaign should be carefully elaborated in order to avoid a subsequent mass increase in the number of complaints received.
13. An annual case-file report could be produced and could act a useful political tool for Contracting Parties and other stakeholders, and facilitate more streamlined and sustainable case-file information.