



Strasbourg, 12 December 2025

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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

45th meeting

Strasbourg, 8 - 12 December 2025

**Terms of reference
of the Working Group
on the draft Protocol
amending the Bern Convention**

I. BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention adopted [Resolution No. 9 \(2019\)](#) on the financing of the Bern Convention and on initiating the establishment of a new system for obligatory financial contributions by Parties setting up an Intersessional Working Group on Finances entrusted with the drafting of proposals for amending the Convention and for a Partial Agreement, in order to ensure viable and predictable financial support to the Convention work and activities

After three years of operation, the Intersessional Working Group on Finances assessed the feasibility of establishing an Enlarged Partial Agreement, prepared several financial scenarios in relation to the Enlarged Partial Agreement, drafted an amendment to the Bern Convention in view of Article 16 of the Convention, prepared a financial simulation tool in relation to the draft amendment and reviewed other institutional, legal options.

On 19 October 2022, the Committee of Ministers ([CM/Del/Dec\(2022\)1446/9.1](#)) entrusted the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention to elaborate a protocol amending the Bern Convention as it appeared to be the best available option to secure long-term funding of the Convention. To achieve this task, the Standing Committee decided to set up an *Ad-hoc* Drafting Group of the Amending Protocol which replaced the Intersessional Working Group on Finances.

In 2023, the Ad-hoc Drafting Group prepared a third version of the draft protocol amending the Bern Convention ([T-PVS\(2023\)13](#)). An opinion issued by the Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law (DLAPIL) and the Directorate of Programme and Budget (DPB) indicated that this version did not fully comply with the Council of Europe's internal regulations. A new version of the draft Protocol was therefore prepared in 2024 to bring it into line with the Council of Europe's legal and budgetary frameworks ([T-PVS\(2024\)10](#)).

At its session in May 2024, following the Reykjavík Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (2023), the Committee of Ministers launched the elaboration of a Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment. As part of the exploration of sustainable financing options for related activities and conventions, particularly the Bern Convention, the Committee of Ministers, at its session in May 2025, adopted the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment and considered the establishment of a dedicated Council of Europe Environment Trust Fund (CETF), without taking a decision on this matter.

The Working Group on Exploring Sustainable Financing Options for the Bern Convention met once in September 2025 and discussed four strategic options to secure the long-term financial sustainability of the Bern Convention: the establishment of a Partial Agreement, the creation of a Council of Europe Environment Trust Fund (CETF), the development of a Conference of the Parties (CoP), and the continuation of the Amending Protocol. The Working Group agreed to report on these options to the Standing Committee in 2026.

At its 45th meeting, the Standing Committee agreed that its preferred option is to finalise the Draft Protocol amending the Bern Convention.

II. SCOPE

The Working Group on the draft Protocol amending the Bern Convention is entrusted with the finalisation of the draft Protocol amending the Bern Convention and creating a mechanism of compulsory financial contributions, as well as an explanatory report for both the Protocol and the mechanisms.

III. COMPOSITION

The Working Group on the draft Protocol amending the Bern Convention will comprise relevant representatives of Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention and may invite relevant third parties as deemed necessary.

The Working Group will select one Chair from amongst its members.

IV. WORKING METHODS

The working language will be English.

The Working Group will meet at least once in 2026, before the meeting of the Bureau in September 2026.

The Working Group shall operate by online means.

The Bureau of the Standing Committee will review and evaluate the work of the Working Group at the Bureau's meetings.

The Working Group will report to the 46th Standing Committee to the Bern Committee.

In co-operation with the Chair, the Secretariat will coordinate and assist with the organisation and preparation of the agenda for the meetings of the Working Group and any other support activities deemed necessary.