



Strasbourg, 26 June 2026

T-PVS(2026)05

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee
46th meeting
7-11 December 2026

Extraordinary Bureau meeting

6 May 2026
(online)

- MEETING REPORT -

Document prepared by the Secretariat

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING & ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1.1. Adoption of the agenda

[T-PVS/Agenda(2026)05_rev]

The Chair of the Bureau opened the meeting with acknowledgement of the new staff members of the Secretariat. The Chair presented the agenda to the extraordinary Bureau meeting for its adoption.

Decision: The Bureau welcomed new staff members. The meeting agenda was adopted.

2. FINANCING AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE BERN CONVENTION

2.1 Ways ahead with the Bern Convention complaint system

*[T-PVS/Inf(2026)06_rev – Secretariat
reflection on further enhancements
within the case-file system of the Bern Convention]*

During the Bureau meeting held on 7-9 April 2026, the Bureau decided to hold a follow-up online meeting to further discuss enhancing the efficiency of the Bern Convention case-file system (see T-PVS/Inf(2026)06 *Reflection on further enhancements within the case-file system of the Bern Convention*).

The Secretariat introduced modifications to the paper on possible further improvements of the case-file system prompted by request of several Contracting Parties and Observers during 45th Standing Committee meeting in December 2025 to enhance clarity in the procedures, and in order to increase efficiency of the system, especially considering the raising number of complains. The Secretariat proposed ways to review the *Case-file system Guide of Procedures* ([T-PVS/Inf\(2022\)27](#)) adopted by the Standing Committee in 2022 and serving as the basis of the ongoing work, and to adjust the way of handling of the complaints and case-files by the Secretariat.

The Bureau reviewed the proposed further changes to the document (see T-PVS/Inf(2026)06, Appendix II), especially focusing on definitions of different categories of complaints and the scheme outlining the steps in processing of complaints and case-files. The Bureau:

- emphasised the importance of clear distinction between “possible” and “open” case-files;
- concluded that the duration for which files may remain “possible” should not be limited;
- discussed the importance of the admissibility criteria for accepting complaints by the Secretariat

- reconfirmed the division of responsibilities in accordance with existing procedures and as further defined in the scheme;
- discussed the idea of a so-called "Green List" and "Blacklist" of case-files that may serve respectively as examples of good and bad practice in addressing the challenges they concern; agreed that further discussion is necessary and advised to use different terms;
- decided that to increase transparency, draft decisions may be shared with the Standing Committee in advance and at the Standing Committee meeting individual draft decisions should be displayed, discussed and agreed without delay;
- agreed that further work on possible amendments would continue at the next Bureau meeting to prepare amended *Case-file system Guide of Procedures* to be submitted to the Standing Committee as per Rule 6 of [Rules of Procedure of The Standing Committee](#).

Decision: The Bureau welcomed the revised reflection document further clarifying definitions and processes and proposing ways to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the case-file system. The Bureau decided to pursue the reflection on revised *Case-file system Guide of Procedures*, including a complaint form, for their consideration by the Standing Committee.

3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Secretariat updated the Bureau about finalisation of the questionnaire on the Strategic Plan of Bern Convention, meant to assess the efforts and progress of Contracting Parties in its implementation. The Strategic Plan refers to improving the case-file system through its indicators.

Decision: The Bureau took note of the improvements to the questionnaire and requested that the Secretariat circulates it among Contracting Parties.

Appendix I – List of participants

CHAIR

Mr Carl AMIRGULASHVILI, Head of Biodiversity and Forestry Policy Department, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Georgia

VICE-CHAIR

Mr Claude ORIGER, Policy Adviser, Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development, Luxembourg

BUREAU MEMBERS

Mr Charles-Henri de BARSAC, International and European Wildlife Agreements Officer, Sub-Directorate for the Protection and Restoration of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Ministry for Ecological and Solidarity Transition, France

Ms Merike LINNAMÄGI, Advisor, Biodiversity Conservation Department, Ministry of the Climate, Estonia

Mr Burak TATAR, Senior Specialist, Directorate General of Nature Conservation and National Parks, Department of Wildlife Management, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Türkiye

SECRETARIAT

Ms Grazia Alessandra SIINO, Secretary of the Bern Convention

Ms Marta MĘDLIŃSKA, Project Manager

Ms Salome NOZADZE, Policy Officer

Mr Ozkan HAMARAT, Administrative Assistant

Appendix II – Adopted Agenda

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING & ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1.1. Adoption of the agenda

2. FINANCING AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE BERN CONVENTION

2.2 Ways ahead with the Bern Convention complaint system

*[T-PVS/Inf(2026)06 –
Secretariat reflection on further enhancement within the case-file system of the
Bern Convention_rev]*

3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Appendix III - Secretariat reflection on further enhancements within the case-file system of the Bern Convention (TPVS/Inf(2026)06e)

BACKGROUND

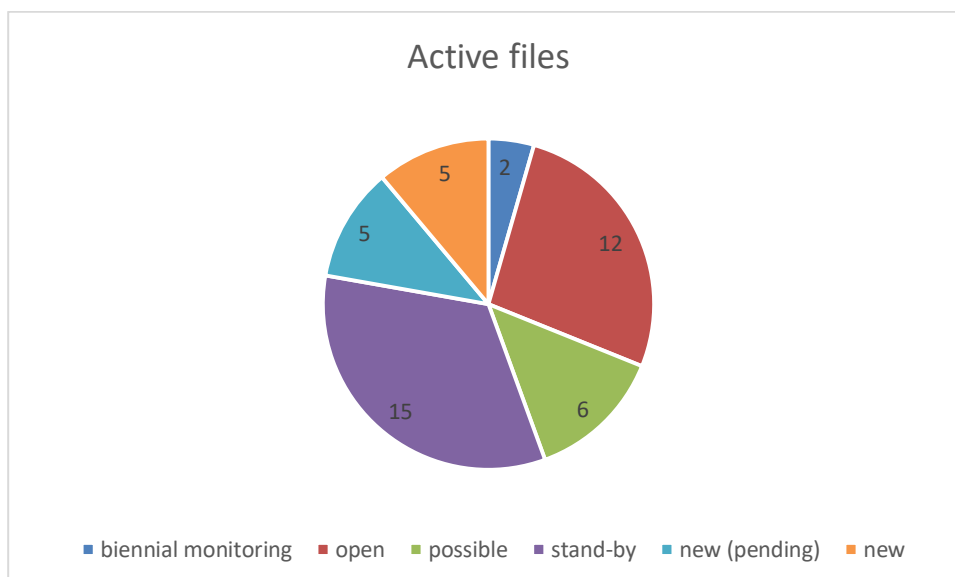
In 2021/2022 a reform of the case-file system took place. As a result, the Standing Committee:

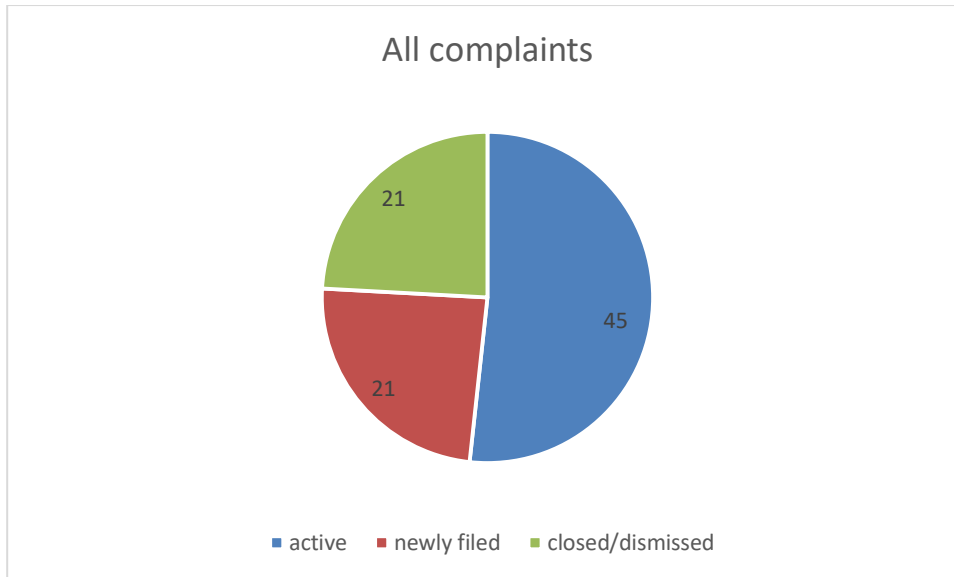
1. supported the Guide of Procedures ([T-PVS/Inf\(2022\)27](#)) as a reference handbook;
2. took note of the document “Case-file system: Proposals for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the system” ([T-PVS/Inf\(2022\)28](#)), as a living document which could be updated regularly, and invited the Bureau to guide the Secretariat in the implementation of proposed actions, subject to availability of adequate financial and human resources;
3. welcomed the case-file dashboard to enhance visibility and access.

RATIONALE

The following elements have further triggered a reflection on the complaint system at the Bureau and Secretariat level:

1. Conflicts concerning nature conservation in the context of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss need increased efforts to lead to effective resolutions.
2. The number of complaints handled continues to increase while only few complaints are closed.





The data in the charts represents the situation since 2020 and does not include 7 case-files on stand-by and 1 new (pending) concerning Ukraine, currently on hold due to the ongoing full-scale aggression.

The second chart seems balanced, but the number of complaints filed per year is increasing – since 2020, so in over 6 years, there were 21 case-files closed/dismissed (including 4 closed successfully – 2 by the Standing Committee and 2 by the Bureau), while the 21 “newly filed” have been submitted between June 2025 and April 2026.

The increasing number of case-files handled by the Secretariat places significant pressure on its limited human resources, risking delays and reduced quality of review.

3. The set of existing rules may appear ambiguous, creating a risk of inconsistency in case handling. Enhancing consistency and improving transparency in decision-making would strengthen the credibility of and trust in the system. This applies to all phases of the process, including the admissibility stage.
4. Some of the work may be organised in a more efficient manner (number of update reports requested per year, formatting them, preparing summaries, keeping track of developments).

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Some of the challenges could be addressed through the following actions:

1. Modifications in the complaint form

Proposed changes:

- a. Clarify the nature and expectations of the complaint in the complaint form introduction.

Explain that the system is not an adjudicative mechanism, but a tool to facilitate negotiation and friendly settlement. The primary responsibility for resolving disputes rests with the parties themselves, while the Standing Committee and Bureau have a facilitative role.

Clarifying the nature of the system would achieve two objectives:

- Discourage the submission of complaints by parties expecting a judicial ruling;
- Encourage all parties to engage proactively in the negotiation process.

b. Ask the complainants to clarify their expectations and their will to be involved in the process

This would help understand what actions the complainants expect from national authorities to adopt and if they are willing to be involved in the process via negotiations.

c. Ask the complainant to identify the Contracting Parties against which the complaint is lodged.

This would prevent situations in which the Secretariat has to infer or guess the respondent.

d. Ask the complainant to indicate the potential impact of the breaches.

The complainant would be asked about the geographical scope, rapidity and seriousness (possibly by extending the question 3.: "What might be the negative effects for the specie/s or habitat/s concerned?"); the Secretariat would prioritise the complaints based on such an initial assessment.

Proposed change:

Change the complaint form to ask for more information as per point 1 b, c, d above.

2. Changes in the Guide of Procedures ([T-PVS/Inf\(2022\)27](#))

2.1 Further clarification of the admissibility criteria – point 2.A of the Guide of Procedures

The complaint should, as per points 2.A.1-4 of T-PVS/Inf(2022)27:

- a) be submitted on a digital complaint form, which states the submission criteria;
- b) not be anonymous;
- c) include a clear explanation of the reason for the potential breach of treaty obligations;
- d) demonstrate efforts to address the matter with local, national, and/or alternative international procedures;
- e) be sufficiently serious to warrant examination at international level, bearing in mind the importance of the habitat, species or population concerned.

Furthermore, the Bern Convention's involvement in the case must demonstrate an added value, if another international agreement/body treats it.

Observation: The assessment of admissibility criteria is not always straightforward for the Secretariat. Under the current framework, the Secretariat is only able to conduct a

prima facie assessment. Also, the possibility is given to request further information from the complainant if need be. This means that the complainant has the opportunity to address any gaps identified in the initial submission.

Proposed change:

Take stringent decisions at the Bureau meeting on dismissing new case-files that are not serious enough for the Bern Convention to follow-up on.

2.2 Further definition of the complaint classifications – point 2.B of the Guide of Procedures

Case-file system Guide of Procedures ([T-PVS/Inf\(2022\)27](#)) explains what categories exist to indicate the level of seriousness and scale of the impact of the alleged harmful activities/developments. In brief, there exist:

“New complaint” à see the Guide 2.B.9 p.3:

it has been received, processed and registered by the Secretariat, presented to the Bureau and discussed to decide on its follow-up;
if further information or clarification is required from the Contracting Party and/or the complainant, the complaint may remain “new” (or “New (pending)”) for up to one year.

“Complaint on stand-by” à see the Guide 2.B.10 p.3:

the complaint is deemed sufficiently serious to warrant continued monitoring by the Bureau but not urgent enough to be brought to the attention of the Standing Committee

“Possible File” à see the Guide 2.B.11 p.3:

if the complaint is deemed sufficiently serious and urgent to necessitate Standing Committee’s attention

“Open File” à see the Guide 2.B.12 p.3:

If the Standing Committee agrees by consensus or 2/3 majority that the complaint pertains to a violation of some aspect of the Convention

The **Open file** category is the only one formally defined as such. The other categories are defined based on whether a case needs to be escalated from the Bureau level to the attention of the Standing Committee.

Proposed change:

Adopt and consistently use the following definitions:

Status	Definition
Open File	The Standing Committee agrees by consensus or 2/3 majority that the complaint pertains to a violation of some aspect of the Convention.
Possible File	The complaint is deemed sufficiently serious and urgent to necessitate Standing Committee attention, as there may be a breach of the Convention.
File on Stand-by	The Bureau considers that the case requires monitoring in view of alleged breach/es of the Convention.

New case-file	The complaint is admissible and requires Bureau's opinion. May remain pending if the Bureau requires further information to assess the status.
Closed File	The former Open, Possible Files and Stand-by case files, which the Standing Committee or its Bureau decided to close in view of either reaching a satisfactory solution or bringing to the point where no further positive developments seem plausible (bad practice).
Dismissed complaint	Complaints dismissed by the Bureau as insufficiently serious to warrant examination at international level, so former New or New pending case-files.
Inadmissible complaint	Complaints found inadmissible by the Secretariat for not meeting the admissibility criteria.

2.3 Closing of longstanding case files

There are several long-standing case-files, where developments have not justified their closure, despite the monitoring by the Committee and its Bureau. This raises the question of effectiveness of the mechanism and contributes to an increased workload for the Secretariat, while the reasons may lay elsewhere. Besides increased mediation efforts, additional incentives may be introduced. If successful, closing case files will be reflected in the Strategic Plan of the Bern Convention [Indicator 1.5 \(b\): Status of Case File numbers](#).

Proposed change:

Recognise a case-file as a good practice or a bad practice.

Case-files closed upon resolving issues at the origin of the complaints may be given visibility as examples of good practice.

Other, especially longstanding case files, displaying no potential of positive developments, may also be closed. If the damages are irreversible, no satisfactory mitigation nor compensation measures are envisaged and no good will is demonstrated by the Contracting Party concerned, the case-file may be considered an example of bad practice.

3. Further clarification of the process

The following tables are not suggestions to modify the Guide of Procedures (see point 2 of the Guide), but to clarify the procedure in place (see columns "Body deciding..." and "Body examining..."), or a suggestion of optimising the process (the column "Rhythm of processing").

3.1 Processing complaints

Processing complaints, facilitated by the Secretariat, depends on their status/category.

Case-file status		Body deciding on attributing the status	Body examining and deciding on further steps if this status	Rhythm of processing if this status (adjusted as needed)
Inactive	<i>Closed</i>	Standing Committee for Open and Possible files, Bureau for Stand-by files	na	na
	<i>Dismissed</i>	Bureau for New or New (pending) case-files	na	na
	<i>Closed, with biennial monitoring</i>	Committee, as it concerns case-files with Recommendations formally adopted by the Committee	Committee, following preparation by the Bureau	Biennial (every 2 years, in principle)
Active	<i>Open</i>	Standing Committee	Committee – at its annual meetings and Bureau – in between, as preparation for the Committee	Yearly (at the Committee meeting and the Bureau dedicated to its preparation)
	<i>Possible</i>	Bureau – when raising the status to “Possible”; otherwise – Committee (maintaining or lowering the status)		
	<i>Stand-by</i>	Bureau, unless in case of lowering the status from Possible or Open - by the Committee	Bureau; in exceptional cases – Committee	Yearly (at the remaining Bureau meetings)
	<i>New pending*</i>	Bureau – when information provided by the parties is insufficient to assess the status	Bureau	
	<i>New (2.B.9)</i>	Secretariat – by deciding a newly filed complaint is admissible	Bureau	

* not necessary, if the information available allows attributing a status (stand-by or possible file) to a new complaint

3.2 Improvement in formulating the decisions on case-files

The decisions of the Bureau may be relatively detailed and specific, to effectively guide the Contracting Parties.

The decisions of the Standing Committee should be concise to give a strategic impulse and clearly request the Parties concerned to act in a specific manner; the decisions may refer to earlier, more detailed decisions of the Bureau.

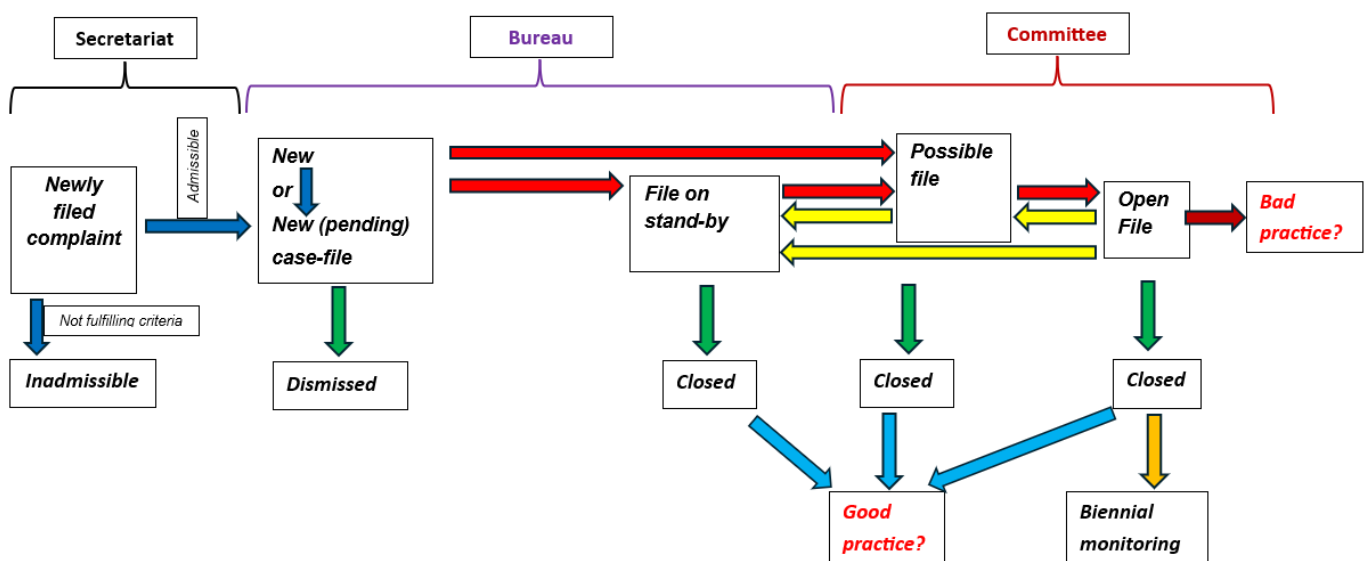
Proposed change:

Share the draft decisions ahead of the Standing Committee meeting

At its meeting dedicated to preparing the Standing Committee, the Bureau could formulate draft decisions concerning Open and Possible files. Those draft decisions could be shared with the Standing Committee and the parties involved in specific case-files, to allow time for clarifications and negotiations ahead of and during the Committee meeting, which would bring everyone together to finalise the process.

3.3 Changing the status of a case-file

Changes of the case-file status would happen according to the following scheme:



Proposed change:

Adopt the scheme to further clarify and optimise the process.

3.4 Communicating more effectively

Explaining the functioning of the case-file system clearly to the stakeholders involved and to the public would also contribute to fluidity and efficiency of the processes.

Proposed change:

Prepare and publish (in a brochure and online) an user-friendly presentation explaining:

- the assessment of the complaint admissibility criteria,**
- the differences between the status types,**
- the process of handling a case-file, including changing its status (point 3.3 above).**

4. Improvements in the reporting system

Currently:

Complainants and Respondents are notified in writing about the decisions of the Standing Committee or its Bureau and invited to submit further update reports. The deadlines are set so that the Secretariat has time to prepare the reports for further consideration by the Standing Committee or its Bureau. The reports should stress new developments, be concise, focused on the points raised in the decisions and contain summaries to facilitate their processing.

The reports are made public and populate the dashboard of case-files providing the relevant information on the latter. The summaries of the update reports are internal to the Bureau.

Proposed changes:

- a. **Provide information on the relevant decisions of the Standing Committee and its Bureau in the dashboard, to further increase transparency.**
- b. **Introduce a standard report template for Parties to provide updates on the status of implementation of the recommendations** relating to case-files that involve their country (see Appendix V – indicator 1.5 (a) of the Strategic Plan for the Bern Convention for the period to 2030: Status of implementation of Case File recommendations).

- c. **Develop an online system for submitting the update reports to streamline the process and facilitate the work of the Secretariat.**

The parties would submit their reports directly online and receive an automatic confirmation of submission and/or pre-programmed reminders, possibly also the decisions. Such a tool could also serve as a repository of the reports (replacing, or being connected to the online dashboard), from which the Secretariat could extract the data as needed. The same approach could be applied to the submission of new complaints.

- d. **Limit the number of reports** to be processed per year, as per the table in 3.1.

5. Changes in the Standing Committee agenda

Open and Possible files, only exceptionally other complaints, are considered by the Standing Committee at its annual meetings, in the second part of the agenda.

Proposed change:

Schedule the presentations and discussion on case-files earlier on during the Standing Committee week

This would leave more time to the parties to discuss and finalise draft decisions, before they are adopted at the end of the meeting.

6. Apply mediation

Mediation is one of the procedures foreseen in the Guide of Procedures. It is rarely used and formal, possibly not distinct enough from the On-the-Spot Appraisal.

Proposed change:

The above-mentioned exchanges during the Standing Committee meetings (see point 5 above) and mediation could be used more frequently to help the Complainants and

the Respondents exchange and cooperate towards finding common ground and concrete solutions. The form of online exchanges or on-the-spot workshops/round tables could be applied in addition to the more formal mediation visits described in the Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee Appendix II.

7. Making use of external expertise

More regular use of external expertise to better understand the situation on the ground, propose best solutions and mediate among the parties is needed, in view of the Secretariat's limited resources and the heavy workload of the Bureau.

Proposed change:

Involve more frequently experts – in the framework of OSAs, mediation, screening process and to check progress in between the meetings where the case is processed, to advise a willing Contracting Party on best solutions and/or act as a mediator between the parties involved in the complaint, where feasible; related costs could be split with the CP.

Regularly cooperate with other MEAs.

Consult expert organisations (i.e. IUCN, BirdLife, etc).