



Strasbourg, 7 November 2025

T-PVS/Report(2025)18

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

45th meeting

Strasbourg, 8 – 12 December 2025

**Joint Meeting of the Groups of Experts
on Amphibians and Reptiles and on Invasive Alien Species**

9h30-11h, 7 October 2025, online

- Meeting Report -

Document prepared by the Secretariat

1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair of the Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species, Mr Pawel Wasowicz, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants of both groups.

The Chair of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles, Ms Eliška Rolfova, welcomed the opportunity to hold this joint meeting and recalled that the proposal had first been made in 2023 during a meeting of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles. Members had recognised the benefits of closer cooperation between the two groups on issues of common interest, notably the management of alien pathogens affecting herpetofauna, including those spread by invasive alien species. The initiative had received the support of the Standing Committee, and both groups had discussed it further during their respective meetings in Spring 2025, identifying possible areas for joint work. Ms Rolfova underlined that this first joint meeting aimed to define shared priorities and develop proposals to be submitted to the Standing Committee, in particular potential areas for cooperation, and the exchange of national experiences and legislation.

2. Introductory round

All the participants briefly presented themselves (see Appendix II).

3. Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting agenda was adopted with no amendments (see Appendix I).

4. International research on Bsal

Participants were informed of the state of play research on *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bsal).

Mr Charles Duchatel, PhD Candidate in disease ecology at Ghent University, presented ongoing research on chytrid fungi (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* – Bd and *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* – Bsal) in the Netherlands and Belgium, conducted under a project funded by the Dutch Government (2023–2028). The research is carried out in partnership with the University of Kent, the Institute for Nature and Forest Research (INBO, Flanders), and Quantico (Australia). Mr Duchatel reported that Bd is widespread across the Netherlands, while Bsal remains more localised, with outbreaks primarily in the southern province of Limburg and more recently in the central province of Gelderland. The project aims to improve understanding of Bsal dynamics, particularly in new populations, through several complementary research lines. These include studying Bsal prevalence and its impact on the survival of the northern crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*), assessing how amphibian community composition influences infection levels and outcomes, analysing the effects of local and landscape environmental factors, especially temperature, on infection dynamics, and investigating co-infections with Bd, which so far show distinct seasonal patterns without confirmed simultaneous infections at the studied sites. Preliminary results indicate that Bsal infection significantly reduces apparent survival in *Triturus cristatus* populations, and that temperature strongly influences infection and clearance cycles. He concluded by noting that further analyses are ongoing and acknowledged the contributions of all partner institutions. The slides from Mr Duchatel's presentation are accessible via this [link](#).

Mr Riccardo Scalera, Independent consultant and member of the IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group, presented an overview of [Recommendation No. 215 \(2022\)](#), recalling that it was developed to provide Parties with an understanding of alien pathogens and those spread by invasive alien species, to identify gaps in science, policy and legislation, and to support future conservation action under the Bern Convention. The scope of the document is limited to pathogens affecting wildlife, in line with the Convention's objectives. Mr Scalera noted that invasive species may act as vectors, reservoirs or facilitators of pathogens, increasing risks for native species. Despite their significance, these issues remain insufficiently addressed in existing frameworks. The case of *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bsal) illustrated both the role of the Bern Convention and the challenges posed by

slow and fragmented responses. He underlined that [Recommendation No. 215 \(2022\)](#) calls for enhanced cooperation among actors, improved knowledge and research, analysis of policy gaps, integration of wildlife pathogens into risk assessments, and greater awareness among decision-makers and the public. Mr Scalera suggested that future steps could include establishing a horizontal expert group on wildlife pathogens, organising dedicated workshops, and circulating a questionnaire to Parties to identify needs and priorities. He also highlighted the growing international recognition of the need for a “One Health” approach, integrating invasive species management into wider health and environmental strategies. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of coordinated action and cross-sectoral cooperation under the Bern Convention to strengthen responses to emerging wildlife diseases. The slides from Mr Scalera’s presentation are accessible via this [link](#).

The participants welcomed both presentations and expressed appreciation for the integration of the One Health perspective, stressing its potential to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration and political support. It was agreed that greater awareness of the interlinkages between invasive alien species, pathogens, and ecosystem health could help mobilise action at national and European levels. Several participants underlined that while the regulatory framework at EU level is comprehensive, including the Animal Health Law and previous directives, implementation remains uneven. Wildlife diseases are often not prioritised by veterinary authorities, leading to insufficient surveillance.

Participants suggested that the Bern Convention could play an important role in signaling these implementation challenges and fostering improved coordination among competent authorities. The discussion highlighted the significant role of wildlife trade in the introduction and spread of Bsal, particularly through the pet trade of salamanders and newts. Participants suggested that reintroducing or strengthening mandatory testing for traded species could significantly reduce the risk of disease spread, with testing costs borne by traders or buyers. Such targeted measures could complement existing regulations and help address current gaps following the lifting of earlier import restrictions.

Participants also stressed the importance of developing pathway action plans to prevent the introduction of Bsal into unaffected regions, and called for biosecurity measures to be harmonised across Europe. It was noted that biosecurity practices vary between sectors, and that unified guidelines or recommendations would help prevent the spread of both invasive alien species and pathogens. Examples were given of differing national requirements for fieldwork, illustrating the need for a coherent approach. Additionally, attention was drawn to the issue of alien fish and crayfish in amphibian breeding habitats. Participants noted their capacity to spread autonomously and their potential to impact local ecosystems, suggesting that guidance on prevention and eradication of these taxa could be developed as part of future work.

The Chair of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles, Ms Eliška Rolfova, thanked both experts for their comprehensive presentations and the ensuing discussion, which had provided valuable insights into ongoing research and policy developments. She underlined that the work carried out under the Bern Convention had been instrumental in advancing understanding and coordination in this area, and that the current momentum should be maintained to deliver tangible results. Ms Rolfova emphasised that the outcomes of this work could also inform and complement initiatives undertaken by other bodies, including the European Union and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). She further recalled the relevance of the recent [IPBES Assessment Report on Invasive Alien Species and their Control](#), which offers useful guidance for the Convention’s future activities.

5. Areas of collaboration of both Groups of Experts

The experts discussed potential areas of collaboration between both Groups.

Participants identified the development of common biosecurity guidance as a priority and practical area for joint work. It was underlined that harmonised standards across Europe could significantly contribute to limiting the spread of invasive alien species and associated pathogens, while providing a useful tool for signatory Parties.

In addition, participants expressed interest in mapping knowledge gaps, which could inform future activities. This could be achieved through a workshop gathering experts and Party representatives, or

alternatively by circulating a questionnaire, which would offer a more cost-effective approach, albeit with potential limitations in response rates. It was agreed that such an exercise should be as practical and focused as possible, drawing on the expertise of both groups. The relevance of a One Health approach was reiterated, which promotes cross-sectoral cooperation, optimises resources, and acknowledges the interconnectedness of invasive species, pathogens, and ecosystem health.

Participants stressed the importance of avoiding siloed approaches and aligning the Bern Convention's work with broader European and international initiatives. Another proposal concerned assessment of the implementation and enforcement of existing legislation, including the EU Animal Health Law and the Habitats Directive, with a view to identifying regulatory or practical gaps. This could form part of the proposed questionnaire or workshop discussions.

The Chair of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles, Ms Rolfova, summarised the proposals for future collaboration as follows:

- Development of biosecurity guidance or protocols;
- Identification of knowledge and implementation gaps through a workshop or questionnaire;
- Consideration of legislative implementation challenges at national and EU level.

6. Next steps

The Chair of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles highlighted that, given the broad range of issues discussed and the limited opportunities for meetings, it would be appropriate to start by focusing on one specific priority area in order to deliver tangible and practical outcomes.

On the basis of the discussions, there was general support for giving priority to work on invasive alien pathogens, with particular attention to *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bsal) and possibly other pathogens. Future work could include the development of guidance or protocols, notably on pathways management and wildlife trade.

Ms Rolfova further summarised the other proposals made, including the mapping of existing knowledge gaps, which could be pursued through a questionnaire or workshop, and the preparation of biosecurity guidance or common standards applicable across Europe. It was recalled that the implementation of these activities would depend on budgetary considerations and the approval of the Standing Committee.

Ms Rolfova underlined that the conclusions and recommendations from this meeting would be submitted to the Standing Committee for consideration. Subject to its endorsement, work on the identified priorities could start as early as the following year.

Participants took note of the proposed next steps and expressed their willingness to contribute to the follow-up activities.

7. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

8. Closing the joint meeting

The Chairs of both groups thanked the participants for their valuable contributions and reiterated that this meeting represented an important first step in the joint work of the two Groups of Experts under the Bern Convention. The meeting was declared closed.

Appendix I – Agenda

TIME	AGENDA ITEM	<i>RELEVANT DOCUMENTS and EXPECTED RESULTS</i>
9.30	1. OPENING OF THE MEETING Opening remarks by the Chairs of both groups: Ms Eliška Rolfová and Mr Paweł Wasowicz.	Chairs of both Groups welcome the participants and inform them of the objectives of the meeting
9.40	2. INTRODUCTORY ROUND	The participants get to know each other
9.55	3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	<i>Meeting Agenda T-PVS/Agenda(2025)25e</i> ----- The meeting agenda is adopted and the expected outcomes of the meeting are clarified.
10.00	4. INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON BSAL Presentation by Mr Charles Duchatel, RAVON. Presentation by Mr Riccardo Scalera, IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group . Discussion.	The participants hear and discuss about the state of play research on Bsal.
10.15	5. AREAS OF COLLABORATION OF BOTH GROUPS OF EXPERTS Exchange on the areas of common interest to both Groups, including monitoring and controlling the spread of <i>Batrachochytrium Salamandrivorans Chytrid fungus (Bsal) and other pathogens.</i>	<u>Recommendation No. 176 (2015) on the prevention and control of the <i>Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans chytrid fungus</i></u> <u>Recommendation No. 210 (2021) on E-commerce and Invasive Alien Species</u> <u>Recommendation No. 215 (2022) on alien pathogens and pathogens spread by Invasive Alien Species</u> ----- Areas of collaboration of both Groups are identified.
10.45	6. NEXT STEPS	The Groups agree on the next steps in their collaboration, to be proposed to the Standing Committee.
10.55	7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
11.00	8. CLOSING THE JOINT MEETING	

Appendix II – List of Participants

National Representatives and Attendees:

Contracting Party	Attendee
Belgium	<p>Mr Philippe GOFFART Attaché scientifique Observatoire de la Faune, de la Flore et des Habitats (OFFH), Département de l'Étude du Milieu naturel et agricole (DEMna) Service Public de Wallonie (SPW) - DGO3 - Direction de la Nature et de l'Eau</p> <p>Ms Valerie OBSOMER Direction nature et espaces verts - Maladies de la faune sauvage Service Public de Wallonie (SPW)</p> <p>Mr Nicolas PARDON Agency for Nature and Forests (Flemish Government)</p> <p>Mr Nicolas BRACKX Agency for Nature and Forests (Flemish Government)</p> <p>Ms Versteirt VEERLE Agency for Nature and Forests (Flemish Government)</p>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<p>Mr Balint HALPERN Chair of the Conservation Committee Societas Europaea Herpetologica (SEH)</p>
Croatia	<p>Ms Ana KOLARIC Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Energy</p>
Czechia	<p>Ms Eliška ROLFOVÁ Chair of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles Unit of International Conventions Department of Species Protection and Implementation of International Commitments Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic</p> <p>Ms Jana PĚKNICOVÁ Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic</p>
Estonia	<p>Ms Merike LINNAMÄGI Estonian Environment Agency</p>
Finland	<p>Ms Johanna NIEMIVUO-LAHTI (excused) Senior Ministerial Adviser Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry</p>
Germany	<p>Ms Clara FRASCONI WENDT Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN)</p> <p>Ms Annika TIESMEYER Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN)</p>
Iceland	<p>Mr Pawel WASOWICZ Chair of the Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species Department Director – Botany</p>

	Nature Science Institute of Iceland (NATT)
Poland	<p>Mr Tomasz ŁACHNIK General Directorate for Environmental Protection Department of Nature Conservation</p> <p>Mr Wojciech SOLARZ Institute for Nature Conservation Polish Academy of Sciences</p>
Portugal	<p>Clara Patricia ANDRADE LOPES Institute of Nature conservation and forest of Portugal</p> <p>Lurdes PINTO Institute of Nature conservation and forest of Portugal</p> <p>Paulo CARMO Institute of Nature conservation and forest of Portugal</p>
United Kingdom	<p>Catherine WHATLEY Reptile and Amphibian Advisor Nature Scot Government Agency</p>

Independent Experts:

Organisation	Attendee
Ghent University	<p>Frank PASMANS Professor Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Department of Pathology, Bacteriology and Poultry Diseases</p> <p>An MARTEL Professor Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Department of Pathology, Bacteriology and Poultry Diseases</p>
IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group	<p>Riccardo SCALERA Independent consultant, University of Roma</p>
ARC (Amphibians and Reptiles Conservation)	<p>Jim FOSTER Independent Expert</p>
RAVON, the Netherlands	<p>Charles DUCHATEL PhD candidate in disease ecology</p>

Council of Europe Secretariat:

Name	Position
Marta MEḌLIŃSKA	Programme Manager Bern Convention
Lilas HEULLANT	Administrative Assistant Bern Convention