



Strasbourg, 06 November 2025

T-PVS/Report(2025)19

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

45th meeting

Strasbourg, 8 – 12 December 2025

**Follow-up Meeting of the Group of Experts
on Invasive Alien Species**

11h15-13h, 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, welcomed the participants (see Appendix II) and informed them about the objectives of the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda

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

3. Preparing election of the new Chair/President and Terms of Reference of the Group

The Chair of the Group, fulfilling this function for over 5 years, expressed his preference for the term “Chair” rather than “President” and suggested it was time for someone else to take over, in particular in view of his increased responsibilities as the Director of the Department of Botany at the Nature Science Institute of Iceland.

The Vice-Chair of the Group, Ms Merike Linnamägi, offered to step in. It was suggested that her election as president/chair takes place at the next meeting of the Group. The participants broadly supported this proposal.

The Group decided to discuss the draft Terms of Reference at its next meeting, as issues related to membership and nominations still require clarification.

4. Prioritising areas of further work of the Group of Experts

The Chair, Mr Pawel Wasowicz, presented the outcomes of the online vote on future priorities, noting the Group’s focus on:

1. the increasing problem of trade in exotic pet species and their conversion into IAS (already addressed by the Group);
2. the issue of biocontrol agents as a potential source of new IAS;
3. the problem of biomass and waste material as a pathway for the spread of IAS;
4. the need to give greater attention to the marine biome and freshwater environments in relation to IAS.

Other identified priorities, of a more horizontal nature, included holding biannual meetings, updating existing guidance, engaging non-EU countries, extending the group’s membership, and enhancing cooperation with other expert groups.

The President noted that the joint meeting with the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles represented a positive first step towards enhanced collaboration. He suggested that biosecurity issues related to amphibians and reptiles, discussed at the joint meeting with the dedicated Group of Experts, should also be considered in future work. He invited participants to share their views on the prioritisation of the areas of the Group’s work for the coming months.

The Vice-Chair, Ms Merike Linnamägi, welcomed the inclusion of biosecurity among the potential new areas of work, noting its strong relevance to the activities of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles. She observed that, while this topic had been discussed within that Group, many of its members do not work directly on invasive alien species and may therefore lack the necessary expertise. Given the interest expressed during the joint meeting, she supported including this topic among the Group’s priorities. She proposed that dedicated meetings or a targeted questionnaire, followed by further analysis, could help ensure that this cooperation leads to concrete outputs.

Regarding the other priority topics identified through the online vote, the Vice-President expressed her support for all four. She noted, however, that addressing marine and freshwater environments remained particularly complex. Concerning the trade in exotic species, she suggested that the existing guidance document could be updated to reflect recent developments, including the entry into force of the EU Regulation and the listing of additional species. She also underlined the importance of continuing work on biocontrol agents and on biomass and waste material, both of which represent growing challenges.

Drawing on recent national experience, she reported that in Estonia, the attempted import of large quantities of nematodes for pest control, without prior risk assessment, had raised serious biosecurity concerns. Similarly, waste management practices were identified as an important vector for the spread of IAS. She concluded by reiterating her support for the priorities established and for maintaining momentum in the Group's work.

Participants supported these observations and further developed the discussion. They underlined the importance of maintaining cooperation with other groups of experts under the Convention. Exploring the regulatory implications of using positive (white) and negative (black) lists to manage trade in alien species was also suggested. Drawing on national experiences, it was noted that while negative lists can effectively restrict certain species, trade frequently shifts toward unlisted species, underlining the need for a broader and more precautionary approach. Participants highlighted the importance of ensuring that imports and introductions into the wild are subject to risk assessment procedures, in line with the precautionary principle. The complexity of addressing marine and freshwater invasions was also emphasised, with participants noting that although progress has been achieved in freshwater environments through ongoing projects, marine invasions remain particularly difficult to manage. Participants expressed support for holding biannual online meetings to maintain regular contact and exchange between members.

Participants also stressed the need to ensure that the Group is well informed about ongoing activities carried out under the European Union framework, particularly those implemented by the European Commission in relation to the Regulation on Invasive Alien Species. It was recalled that over the past decade several studies and reports have been produced, many in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, and other institutions, covering a wide range of aspects related to IAS management. Participants considered it useful for the Group to receive an overview of these documents, and an offer was made to prepare a presentation at a future meeting. Reference was also made to a major EU project currently assessing the advantages and disadvantages of white and black lists, and to previous workshops focusing on the management of marine invasive species. The Group noted that such ongoing EU efforts could serve as a solid basis for further work under the Bern Convention, ensuring complementarity and coherence.

Participants reiterated the importance of strengthening cooperation with non-EU member States, as already reflected in the Group's list of priority actions. From the perspective of eastern European member States, it was underlined that greater efforts are needed to convey the Group's messages and activities beyond EU borders. Participants encouraged maintaining and revitalising contacts with countries such as Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova, which had previously been active in the Group, in addition to partners such as Switzerland and Norway. They also inquired whether steps had been taken to involve new nominees from non-EU countries or other conventions, noting that participation in the Group remains relatively limited.

The Secretariat informed the Group that proactive efforts to broaden membership had not yet been undertaken, in view of currently reviewing working methods and overall functioning of the thematic Groups of experts. It was considered more appropriate to clarify these aspects before extending participation and widely promoting the Group's activities. The Secretariat noted that the first four priority topics identified by the Group are thematic in nature, while the remaining four relate to its working methods or *modus operandi*. These two dimensions, substantive work and operational arrangements, would continue to be developed in parallel.

In the continuation of the discussion on regulatory approaches to species trade, participants highlighted national experiences indicating that blacklists provide a clearer legal framework by explicitly identifying prohibited species and the reasons for their prohibition. It was also noted that the adoption of a whitelist system could raise legal uncertainties, as the absence of a species from such a list does not necessarily imply its safety. Participants observed that, although no official decision has been made, the European Commission appears to be considering a whitelist approach, following examples from Belgium and other countries.

Participants proposed that additional topics be considered in future work, particularly the issue of domestic animals that have become feral. While recognising that previous Bern Convention documents

have addressed pets, it was noted that feral domestic animals raise distinct challenges, including a lack of data on their distribution and management. The Secretariat highlighted that similar issues are already being examined in the context of other groups of experts, such as the Group of Experts on the Conservation of Birds. The Group also recalled the Bern Convention's cooperation with organisations such as Eurogroup for Animals, which could lead to developing guidance on IASs.

5. Next steps

The Chair proposed to prepare, in cooperation with the Vice-Chair and the Secretariat, a draft set of proposals to be submitted to the 45th meeting of the Standing Committee in December 2025.

The Group agreed with the approach.

6. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

7. Closing the meeting

The Chair thanked the members of the Group of Experts for the productive exchange and looked forward to the next meeting of the Group. The meeting was declared closed.

Appendix I – Agenda of the meeting

TIME	AGENDA ITEM	<i>RELEVANT DOCUMENTS and EXPECTED RESULTS</i>
11.15	<p>1. OPENING OF THE MEETING</p> <p>Opening remarks by the President of the Group, Mr Paweł Wasowicz.</p>	<p>President of the Group welcomes the participants and informs them of the objectives of the meeting.</p>
11.20	<p>2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Meeting Agenda T-PVS/Agenda(2025)26e</i></p> <p>-----</p> <p>The meeting agenda is adopted and the expected outcomes of the meeting are clarified.</p>
11.25	<p>3. PREPARING ELECTION OF THE NEW PRESIDENT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE GROUP</p>	<p><u>T-PVS/Inf(2025)28</u> <i>Terms of reference of the Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species</i></p> <p>-----</p> <p>The participants are informed of the need to elect a new President and to prepare new Terms of Reference of the Group.</p>
11.45	<p>4. PRIORITISING AREAS OF FURTHER WORK OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS</p> <p>Exchange on the areas of further work of the Group.</p>	<p>Prioritised areas of the further work of the Group are identified, to be included in the Terms of Reference.</p>
12.45	<p>5. NEXT STEPS</p>	<p>The Group agrees on the proposal to be made to the Standing Committee.</p>
12.55	<p>6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p>	
13.00	<p>7. CLOSING THE MEETING</p>	

Appendix II – List of Participants

National Representatives and Attendees:

Contracting Parties	Attendee
Croatia	Ms Ana KOLARIC Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Energy
Czechia	Ms Jana PĚKNICOVÁ Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic
Estonia	Ms Merike LINNAMÄGI Ministry of Climate of Estonia
Finland	Ms Johanna NIEMIVUO-LAHTI (excused) Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland
Germany	Ms Annika TIESMEYER Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) Germany
Iceland	Mr Pawel WASOWICZ Chair of the Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species Department of Botany Nature Science Institute of Iceland (NATT)
Italy	Mr Riccardo SCALERA Independent consultant, University of Roma IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group
Poland	Mr Tomasz ŁACHNIK General Directorate for Environmental Protection Department of Nature Conservation Mr Wojciech SOLARZ Institute for Nature Conservation Polish Academy of Sciences
Portugal	Clara Patricia ANDRADE LOPES Institute of Nature conservation and forest of Portugal Lurdes PINTO Institute of Nature conservation and forest of Portugal Paulo CARMO Institute of Nature conservation and forest of Portugal

Council of Europe Secretariat:

Name	Position
Ms Marta MĘDLIŃSKA	Programme Manager Bern Convention
Ms Lilas HEULLANT	Administrative Assistant Bern Convention