

Wolves in Europe: status and challenges 2025

Luigi Boitani

IUCN - Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe

University of Rome Sapienza



LCIE, an IUCN/SSC group on the European Large Carnivores



- **Bear**
- **Wolf**
- **Eurasian lynx**
- **Wolverine**
- **Iberian lynx**
- **Jackal**

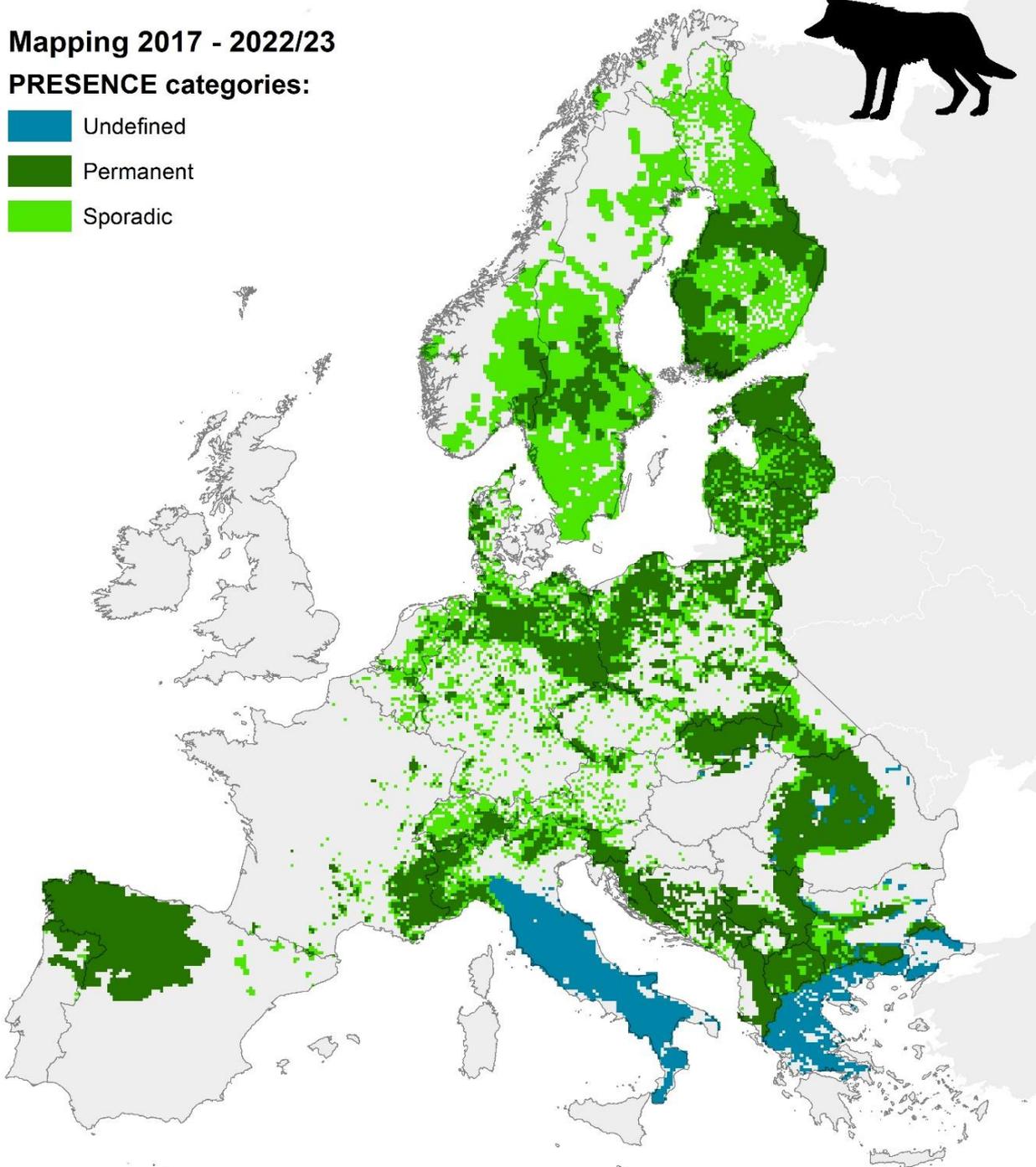


- www.lcie.org

Mapping 2017 - 2022/23

PRESENCE categories:

- Undefined
- Permanent
- Sporadic



Wolf distribution 2023

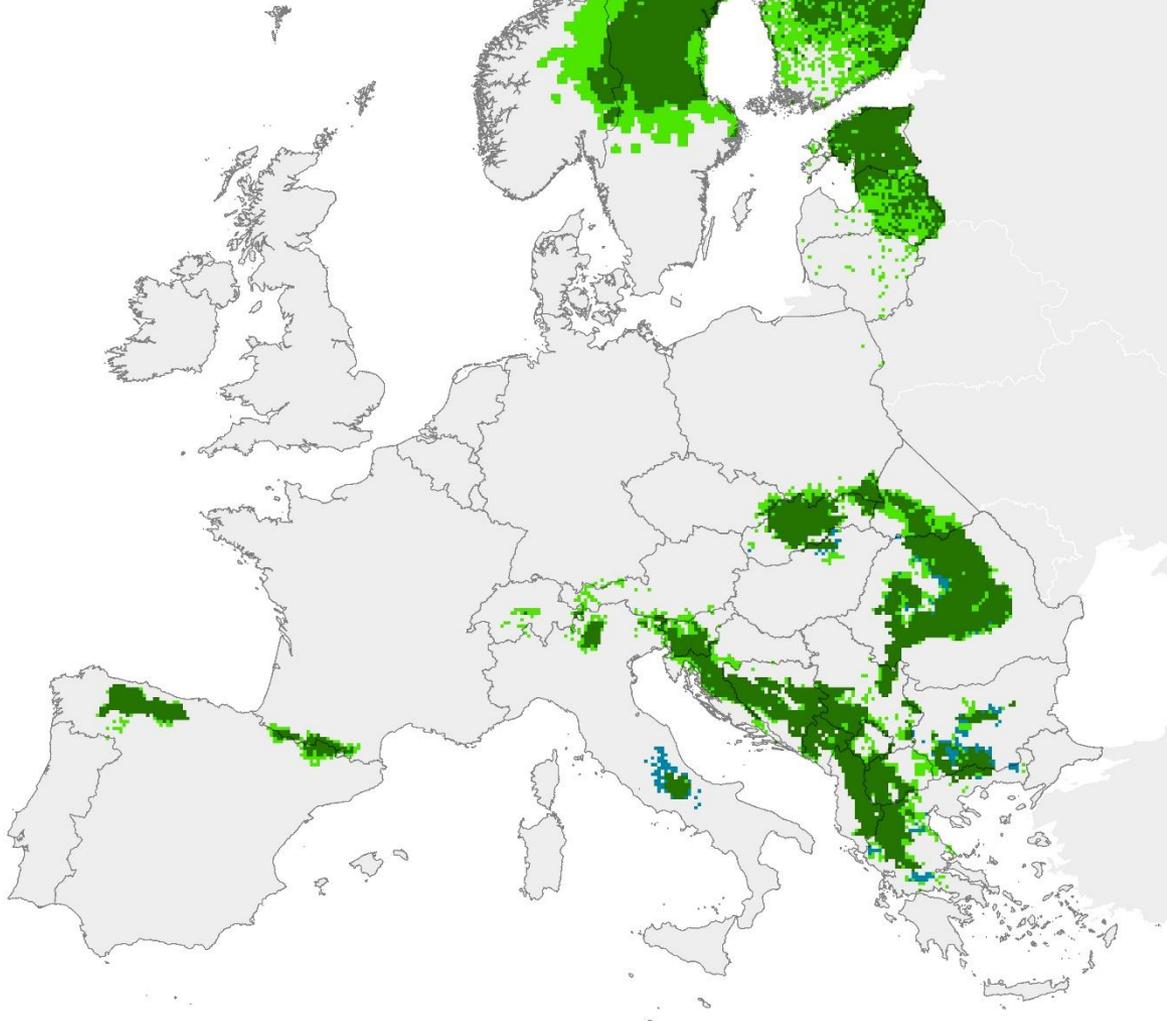
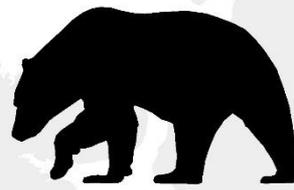
22 MIO Km²

**+ 40% compared
to 2016**

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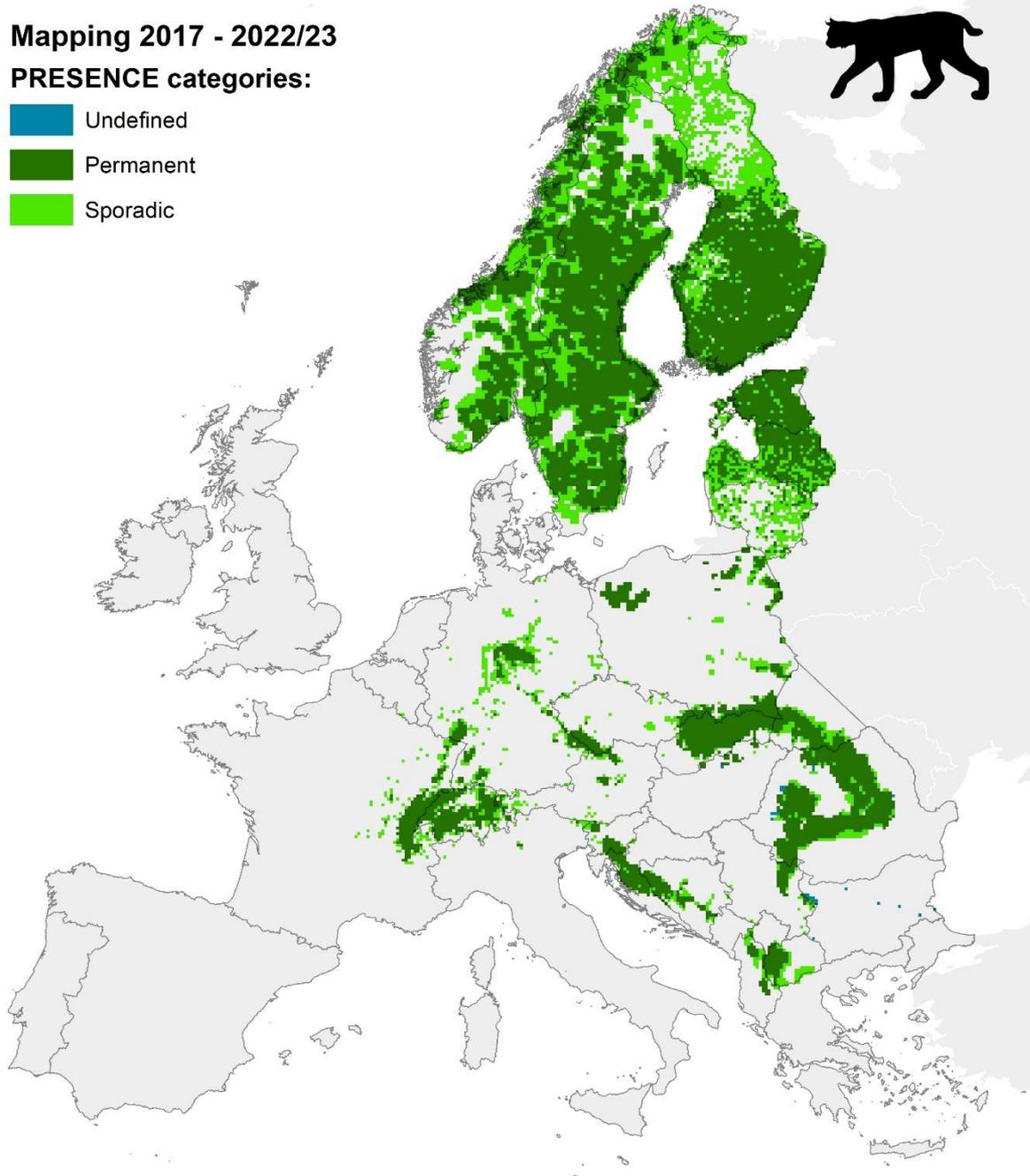
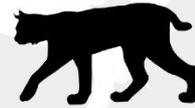


Bear distribution 2023

Mapping 2017 - 2022/23

PRESENCE categories:

- Undefined
- Permanent
- Sporadic

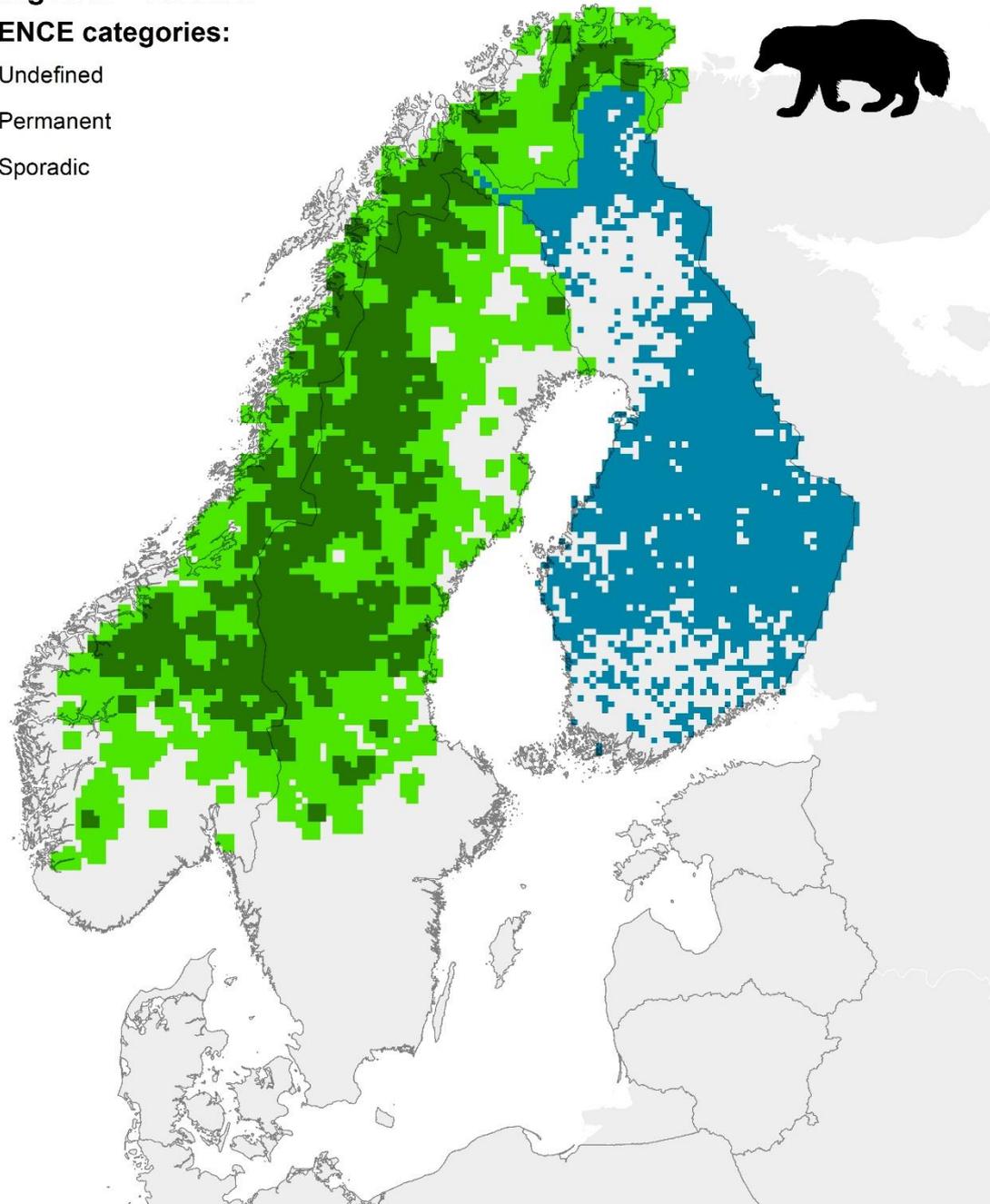


**Lynx
distribution
2023**

Mapping 2017 - 2022/23

PRESENCE categories:

- Undefined
- Permanent
- Sporadic

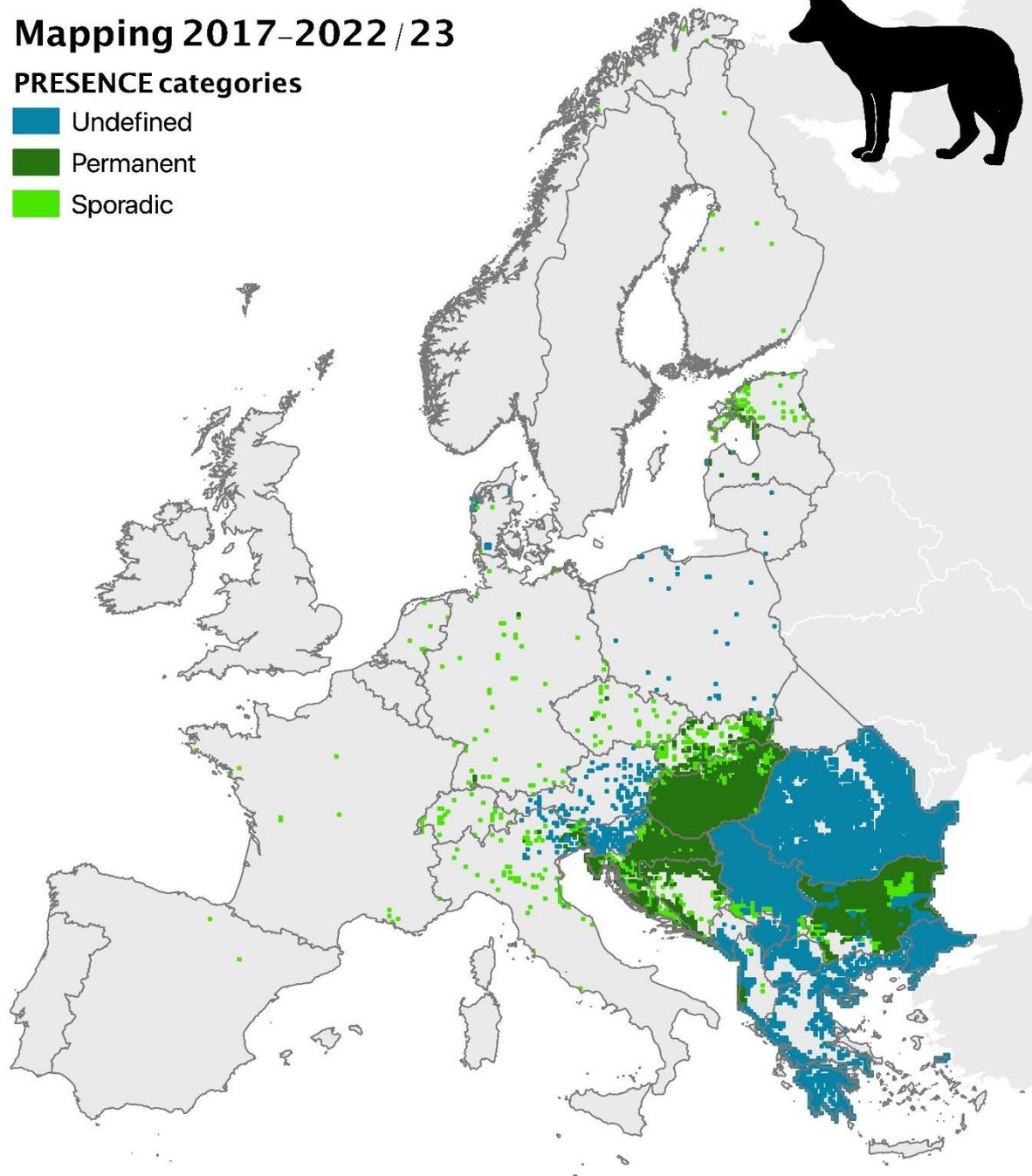


Wolverine distribution 2023

Mapping 2017-2022 / 23

PRESENCE categories

- Undefined
- Permanent
- Sporadic

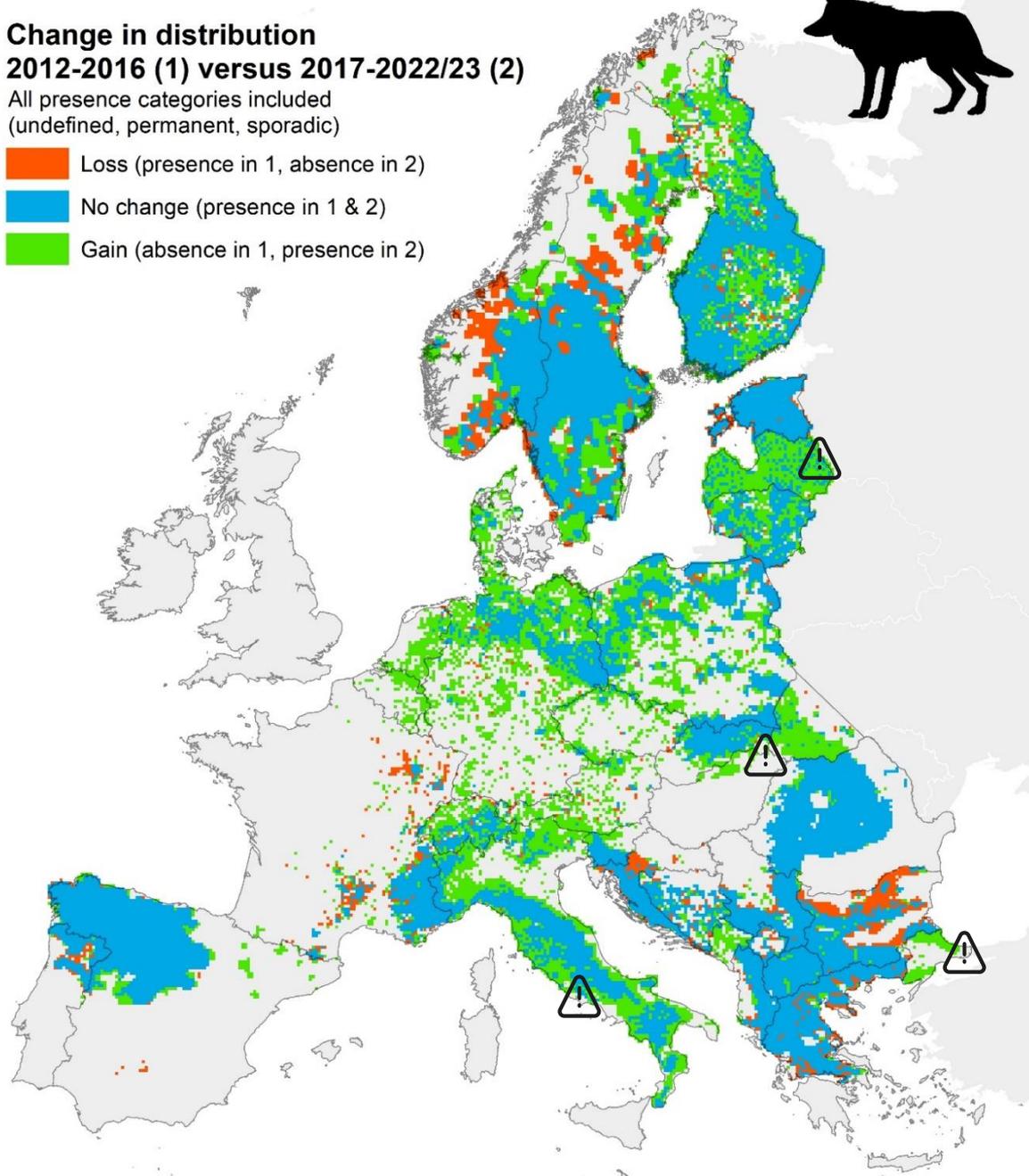


Jackal distribution 2023

Change in distribution 2012-2016 (1) versus 2017-2022/23 (2)

All presence categories included
(undefined, permanent, sporadic)

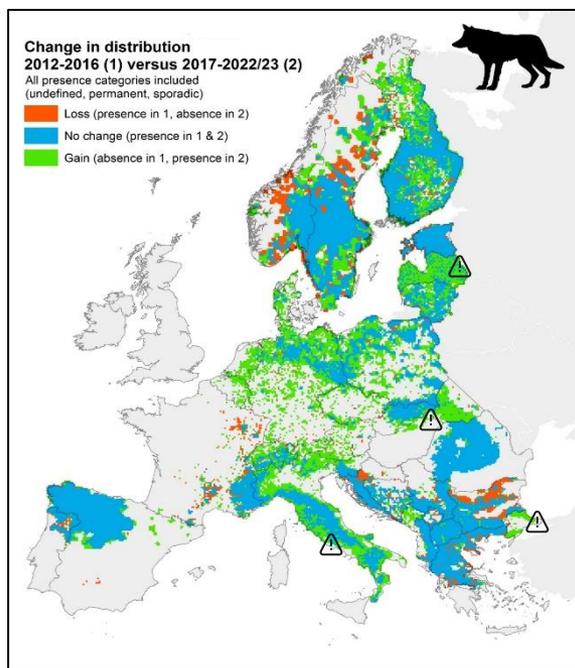
-  Loss (presence in 1, absence in 2)
-  No change (presence in 1 & 2)
-  Gain (absence in 1, presence in 2)



Changes in distribution 2017 -2023



Changes (partly) due to differences in monitoring or other methodological issues!



Expanding ranges:

- Crossed into the Peloponnesus
- Spreading fast in the Netherlands (11 packs)
- In the outskirts of Milan, Bologna, Florence, etc.
- Almost downtown in Roma, Turin
-and more



Wolves are very tolerant of human landuse

Currently, permanent wolf ranges are characterised by an average density of **90 persons/km²**, which reflects a high degree of adaptation to human presence.

How Many ?

The obsession of numbers

- Wolves **2023** ~ 23000

and

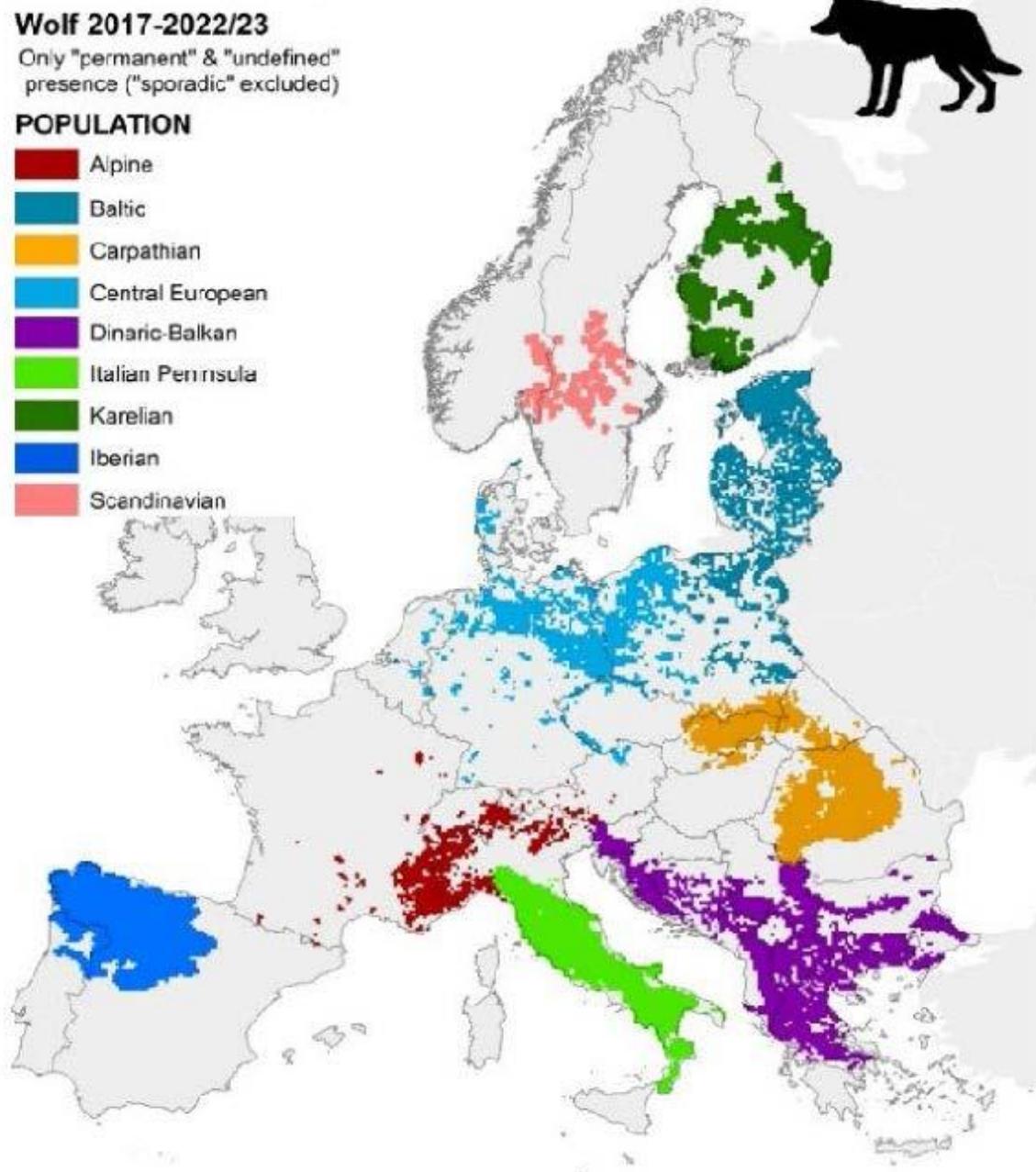
- Bears ~ 20500
- Eurasian Lynx ~ 9000
- Wolverine ~ 1300
- Golden Jackal ~150000

Wolf 2017-2022/23

Only "permanent" & "undefined"
presence ("sporadic" excluded)

POPULATION

- Alpine
- Baltic
- Carpathian
- Central European
- Dinaric-Balkan
- Italian Peninsula
- Karelian
- Iberian
- Scandinavian



Wolf populations in Europe

WOLF POPULATIONS OF EUROPE

Population	2011	2016-7	2023	Trend	IUCN RedList Assess.
Iberian	2200-2500	2500	2400	Stable/incr	NT
Western Central Alps	280	420-550	2000	incr	NT
Italian peninsula	600-800	1100-2400	2557	incr	NT
Dinaric – Balkan	c. 3900	c. 4000	4700	Unknown	LC
Carpathian	3000	3460-3840	4000	incr	LC
Baltic	870-1400	1713–2240	3000	incr	LC
Karelian	150-165	c. 200	310	incr	NT
Scandinavian	260-330	c. 430	520	incr	Vu.
Central European	36 packs + 5 pairs	780-1030	3000	incr	NT
Europe		17,000	c. 23,000	Increase	LC
EU27		14,300	c. 19,000	Increase	

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Baltic	500	500	5000	incr	LC
Karelian	200	200	310	incr	NT
Scandinavian	550	c. 430	520	incr	Vu.
Central European	56 packs + 5 pairs	780-1030	3000	incr	NT
Europe		17,000	c. 23,000	Increase	LC
EU28		14,300	c. 19,000	Increase	

GREAT DIVERSITY OF METHODS TO ESTIMATE NUMBERS AND RANGES

Main Causes of Wolf Increase

Disentangling the relative weight of each factor in quantitative and objective way is impossible

- Changes in land use patterns
- Increase in wild prey
- Natural recovery (high r and long dispersal)
- Legislation (EU and national)

- Changes in human attitudes (?!)
- Protected areas? NO



An old and never fully solved problem...



About **62,000 heads/year (0,02% of all EU livestock)** with a few countries suffering disproportionately such as France, Croatia, Italy, Greece, Lithuania, Romania.

But local damage can be substantial



Direct losses caused by wolves:

European Union **2022:** 65.500 heads, about Euro 18.7 MIO
(Blanco & Sundseth 2023, Marsden et al 2023)

European Union **2025:** 82.000 heads (by all carnivores)
(LCIE 2025) 62.000 sheep «

All Europe **2025:** 79.000 sheep «

All Europe **2025:** 110.000 all victims by all carnivores
(including reindeer)

All Europe **2025**, all compensations: about Euro 20 MIO (+ about 9 MIO for reindeer)

Direct losses caused by wolves:

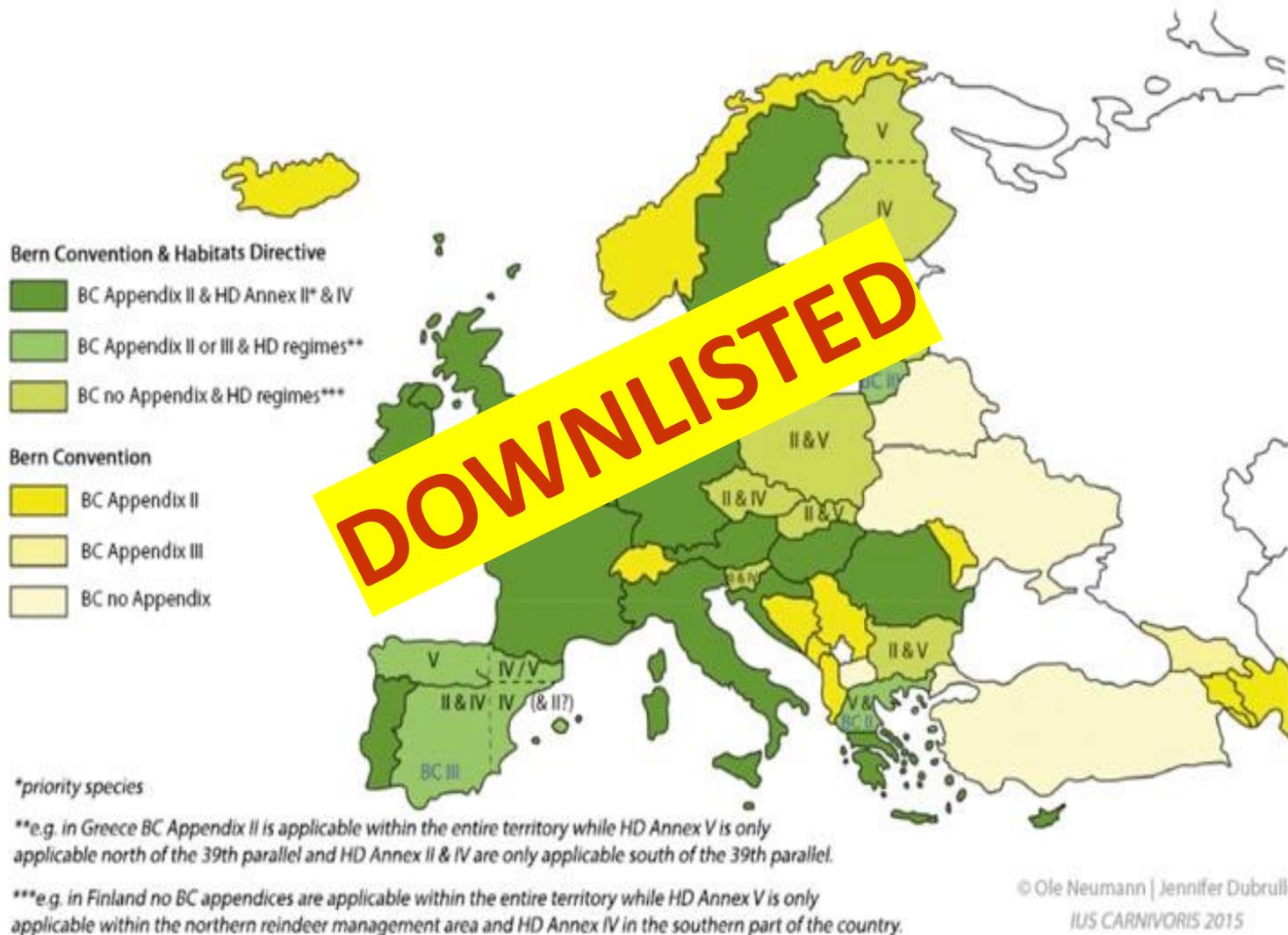


Data are extremely heterogeneous for several reasons:

- Compensations are paid with a variety of rules (e.g. documented losses, missing animals, conditional to the use of prevention methods, etc.)
- Data refer to diverse years (2019-2024) as countries make the data available with a variety of delays
- Data are partially missing for several countries (for all or only certain species and certain sub-national administrations)
- Local administrations of the same State often use different rules for compensation and different time frames for their yearly reports.
- Data from local administration are often difficult or impossible to obtain on simple request

Habitats Directive and Bern Convention

Wolf *Canis lupus* - Bern Convention & Habitats Directive





Downlisted: a negative scenario

- A rush to kill
- National plans revised with a focus on culling
- Lower emphasis on prevention methods
- Increased social confrontations
- Populations' connectivity jeopardized
- Overall increase of livestock losses ?
- **Biased and wrong use of the FCS concept**
-



Linnell & Boitani, (2025). Developing methodology for setting Favourable Reference Values for large carnivores in Europe.

Report to the European Commission, 88pp

and, almost ready: The status of coexistence with large carnivores in Europe



Downlisted: an opportunity?

- Culling within an experimental design
- Better monitoring schemes
- Wider acceptance of prevention measures
- More comprehensive management plans
- Easier social confrontations
- Effective population-scale approaches
- Advances in applying the FCS/FRVs
-advances in a more nuanced concept of coexistence