

Wolf's protection: Adaptation or emission from the Berne Convention

Press release

On 16 November 2011 the Swiss Federal Council approved the draft for an alteration of the Berne convention, which would allow Switzerland to express reservations with regard to the wolf. The change corresponds to a request the parliament, which accepted the respective motion by State Councillor René-Fournier. Switzerland will now present its suggestion to the Berne convention.

The change concerns article 22 of the agreement about the preservation of the European wild-life plants and animals and their natural living spaces (Berne convention). The alteration intends that the states, when joining the agreement, can express reservations concerning single species, protected by the convention. The Motion Fournier that was accepted by parliament in 2010 requests that this article is revised from the point of view that a signatory's state can express reservations at any time, "in case the situation which prevailed when the ratification took place has obviously changed". Switzerland had expressed no reservations at the time of her accession to the Berne convention in September, 1980. At that time wolves did not live in Switzerland.

On 16 November 2011 the Swiss Federal Council passed the draft for the new paragraph added to article 22 of the convention which concretizes the decision of the parliament. The Confederate Department for Environment, Traffic, Energy and Communication (UVEK) is now going to present the draft to the Berne convention.

In order to let the change come into force, it must be accepted by the constant committee of the convention with a two-thirds majority and be recommended by the minister's committee. Afterwards, it must be favoured by every single national parliament. For the further procedures the convention is responsible. If the alteration of article 22 of the convention is accepted, the Swiss Federal Council must attach a reservation after which the wolf may be hunted in Switzerland, as the Motion Fournier, accepted by parliament, recommended. In case the alteration will be rejected, the Motion of the Federal Council demands to resign from the convention and to formulate suitable reservations on the occasion of a renewed entry.