

PRESS RELEASE

COCO PROJECT

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Across Continents, Pastoralists Share A Common Language

New comparisons shed light on how herders navigate predators worldwide

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When a group of CoCo partners travelled through the green mountains of Asturias and Cantabria this month, they expected to learn about local pastoral traditions and the challenges related to the presence of wolves. What they didn't expect was how conversations in northern Spain would mirror the stories they knew from East Africa.

In farm after farm, from the valleys of Onís to the cheese houses tucked between mountain passes, a theme kept emerging: **pastoralism connects people across continents through a shared way of seeing the land, livestock and life itself.**

One moment captured this perfectly. While visiting local farmers, the group noticed a traditional wooden stick leaning against a stone wall. It looked remarkably familiar. *"That's the same stick pastoralists in Tanzania use"* one partner recalled. The same tool, shaped by centuries of herding practice, appears in both places, even though the cultures developed independently.

For Ana Grau Valenciano, from [CITA](#), who spent more than ten years working with pastoralist communities in Tanzania in managing life alongside lions, the resemblance runs deeper than tools. ***"Pastoralists in Spain and East Africa share a worldview."*** she said. ***"It's a relationship with animals, landscapes and movement. Even when the contexts differ, the identity feels familiar."*** Although the contexts differ –in Tanzania predators pose risks both to livestock and, at times, to people, while in Spain conflicts with wolves affect livestock only– the underlying pastoral worldview remains remarkably similar.

That identity resonated during a visit with Sara and Rubén of [Quesería Enrique Remis](#), who graze their livestock in areas where wolves roam. As the group walked through their mountain pastures, Ana shared stories about her work with communities coexisting with lions in Tanzania.

Sara reflected on the similarities she heard. **“Listening to Ana talk about lions, I realised that many of the feelings and challenges are similar,”** she said. **“Even though the wildlife is different, the conversations around concerns, adaptation and connection to the land felt very close to home.”**

While predators differ, some underlying challenges –maintaining extensive grazing, protecting livestock and sustaining cultural traditions– transcend geography. Lions or wolves, mountains or savannahs, the rhythm of pastoral life echoes across continents.

The trip left the team with a renewed understanding: **their work goes beyond wildlife management and speaks about shared heritage.** And sometimes, all it takes is a simple wooden stick to reveal how connected these worlds truly are.

Follow the project’s progress and stay informed about new findings at <https://cocoproject.eu/>.

About the CoCo Project

CoCo (Cocreating Coexistence) is a Horizon Europe-funded research project working to develop sustainable solutions for human-wildlife coexistence across European pastoral landscapes. The project brings together diverse stakeholders to co-create knowledge and tools that support both thriving pastoral communities and healthy carnivore populations.