

COCO PROJECT

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PRESS RELEASE

BRIDGING WILD AND RURAL

Slovenian Farmers and Students Lead the Way in Coexistence

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As the conversation on coexistence between people, livestock, and large carnivores gains momentum across Europe, the CoCo project continues to champion collaborative approaches in diverse landscapes. This summer, the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana (BF-UL) has taken the lead in implementing the CoCo project in Slovenia, with the Department of Biology and the Department of Animal Sciences joining forces to deepen understanding of the relationship between pastoralism and wildlife.

Immersion in the Dinaric Region

Throughout the summer, the BF-UL team has been active in the Dinaric region, focusing on the municipalities of Pivka, Postojna and Ilirska Bistrica. Researchers visited 101 local farms, engaging directly with farmers to explore daily practices, challenges and perspectives on coexistence with large carnivores. The open and constructive dialogue with farmers has been instrumental in gathering insights that will shape future solutions.

“Farmers’ knowledge and experience are at the heart of this project. By listening to their stories and concerns, we are building a foundation for practical solutions that will help both rural communities and wildlife,” says Živa Alif, researcher at the Biotechnical Faculty and coordinator of the Slovenian CoCo fieldwork.

Student Involvement and Summer School

A significant highlight of the Slovenian CoCo activities has been the involvement of students. Those participating in the fieldwork also attended a summer school, where they learned about large carnivores and honed their skills in applying social science approaches to nature conservation and agriculture. This hands-on experience enriched the knowledge of 24 students, who also earned academic credits for their engagement.

Strengthening Collaboration

The summer school was organised in collaboration with the University's ULTRA project, as well as the LIFE Varna paša and LIFE Wild Wolf projects. This partnership provided a dynamic platform for students and researchers to share expertise, combine perspectives and strengthen the links between science, practice and local communities.

Looking Ahead

As the field season concludes, the Slovenian CoCo team expresses its gratitude for the warm welcome from local farmers and the enthusiasm of students. The voices and experiences gathered in Pivka, Postojna and Ilirska Bistrica will directly inform the project's broader efforts to co-create sustainable solutions for coexistence between people, livestock and large carnivores across Europe.

For more information, follow our journey at <https://cocoproject.eu/>