

©Antonello Falcone - Unsplash

# INTRODUCING COCO

We're excited to bring you the first edition of the CoCo newsletter, a biannual update on our work to start building synergies and reconciling the tensions between pastoralism and wildlife conservation across Europe.

The CoCo research project is funded by the EU Horizon Europe Programme. The project is a collaborative effort bringing together scientists, policymakers, pastoralists, hunters, environmentalists and other stakeholders from 12 European countries. Our goal is summarized in the projects acronym! The first "Co" is for "co-creating", the second "Co" is for "Coexistence".

Co-creation reflects a desire to work together with diverse stakeholders so that the knowledge we generate in the project can be viewed as a joint production. This ensures that stakeholder perspectives are incorporated into both the knowledge and especially in how we identify the policy relevance of this knowledge. In other words, this is not research conducted by distant and theoretical scientists working in isolation. Our ambition is to get out there and build knowledge and insights in the field, studying, talking to and discussing with the people who are sharing their landscapes with large carnivores.

Coexistence is a somewhat new concept in conservation, which is often both poorly defined and controversial. At its core is the straightforward idea that wildlife conservation is being conducted in shared landscapes. This is an essential precondition in Europe because we lack wilderness areas without human presence. However, the devil is in the details of how this conservation is conducted in terms of how wildlife is managed and how and how human activities are adapted or modified to the presence of wildlife. There is no pre-defined or off-the-shelf facet for how coexistence is operationalized in different contexts. A large part of the CoCo focus is to give stakeholders the possibility to articulate how they might imagine a state of sustainable coexistence.

Overall, by combining co-generation and coexistence we hope to use the next three years to create new policy relevant knowledge and solution strategies that support sustainable landscapes where pastoralism and wildlife can thrive together.

In the issues of this newsletter, we'll share key findings, case studies, interviews, and opportunities to get involved—whether you're a researcher, a practitioner, or simply passionate about biodiversity and rural livelihoods.

Stay with us as we explore the complex realities of human-wildlife interactions and work toward practical, science-based management strategies. Let's co-create!

John Linnell, Project Coordinator.

# PROJECT UPDATES

The project is made up of eight interrelated work packages as described on the project website. Here we provide a short update on ongoing activities.

## Setting the case study sites

As part of the CoCo project, we are conducting case studies across 12 European countries to explore the complex dynamics between pastoralism and wildlife management. The project spans France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. In each of these countries, we gather insights from pastoralists, hunters, and landowners through interviews and field visits. By examining these real-life settings and integrating scientific knowledge with traditional practices and personal experience, we aim to find practical solutions that harmonise wildlife and pastoral management.

[» more](#)



© CoCo Project

## Knowledge Consolidation: Mapping the Pastoralism-Wildlife Policy Landscape

To better understand how policies shape pastoralism-wildlife interactions, CoCo researchers have launched a series of workshops [mapping the policy landscape](#) across 12 European countries. In a recent online workshop, experts from Umeå University and adelphi led discussions on how policies from multiple sectors interact—sometimes complementing each other, sometimes creating conflicts. By analyzing existing policies, gathering insights from pastoralists and stakeholders, and comparing approaches across countries, CoCo aims to identify gaps, improve coherence, and provide policy recommendations at both the EU and national levels. Stay tuned for findings that will help shape a more sustainable future for pastoralism and wildlife!



© John Linnell

## Diversity of livestock protection strategies: the pastoralists' survey

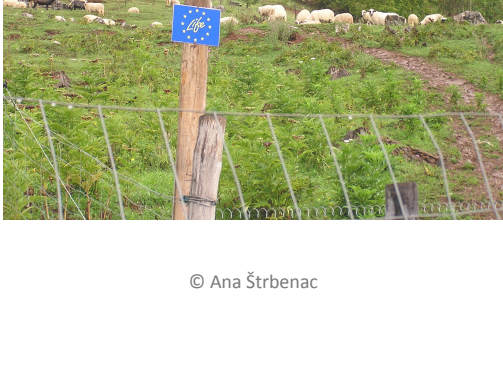
CITA is leading the launch of a detailed quantitative field data survey on livestock management practices and pastoralists' relationship with wildlife, covering a wide diversity of pastoral systems currently in use across 12 European countries. This extensive fieldwork includes face-to-face surveys with at least 1,000 pastoralists. The goal is to document this diversity of livestock farming systems and gather valuable perspectives on pastoralists' views and experiences related to their work, as well as the status and impact of predators and other wildlife on pastoral systems, and the effectiveness of different husbandry strategies to avoid or reduce damage.



© John Linnell

## Knowledge Consolidation: Mapping the Pastoralism-Wildlife Policy Landscape

To better understand how policies shape pastoralism-wildlife interactions, CoCo researchers have launched a series of workshops mapping the policy landscape across 12 European countries. In a recent online workshop, experts from Umeå University and adelphi led discussions on how policies from multiple sectors interact—sometimes complementing each other, sometimes creating conflicts. By analyzing existing policies, gathering insights from pastoralists and stakeholders, and comparing approaches across countries, CoCo aims to identify gaps, improve coherence, and provide policy recommendations at both the EU and national levels. Stay tuned for findings that will help shape a more sustainable future for pastoralism and wildlife!



© Ana Štrbenac

## Co-creation, dissemination, exploitation and communication

Given the high interest and controversy surrounding wildlife and pastoralism interactions, adelphi leads work to navigate these dynamics by involving stakeholders in knowledge creation. The goal is to engage with stakeholders, end-users, and the public to enhance research quality and impact. In this context, adelphi developed a [communication and dissemination plan](#). We have also established a project advisory board of scientists and practitioners.

CoCo

Co-creating Coexistence

Deliverable D8.1

PLAN FOR COMMUNICATION AND  
DISSEMINATION

# RELEVANT POLICY NEWS

## Commission proposes to align the protection status of the wolf in EU legislation to the Bern Convention

On 7 March 2025, the [Commission proposed a targeted amendment](#) of the annexes of the Habitats Directive. This will align the [Habitats Directive](#) to the changed protection status of the wolf from 'strictly protected' to 'protected' under the [Bern Convention](#), which entered into force on 7 March. The Commission's proposal would give additional flexibility to Member States in managing their local wolf populations, so that they can take measures that are well adapted to regional circumstances. As the wolf will remain a protected species, Member States' conservation and management measures will still need to achieve and maintain favourable conservation status. Additionally, Member States will still have the possibility to maintain a higher level of wolf's protection, if deemed necessary under national law.

## Vision on the future of farming and food launched by DG AGRI

The European Commission has outlined a [vision for the future of farming and food production](#) in the EU. The roadmap builds on the work of the [Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture](#), proposing key pathways for the future of agri-food policy until 2040.

# PROJECT NEWS AND EVENTS

## Advancing CoCo's Research | Zaragoza, 14-16 January 2025

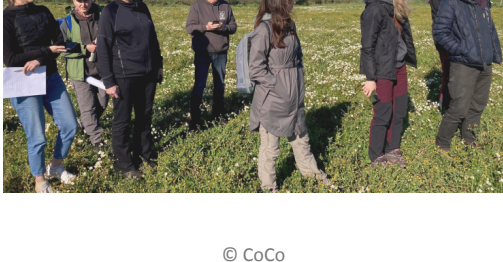
To start the project a series of online kick-offs in December were followed by a [meeting organised by the Spanish partner](#). CITA at their headquarters in Zaragoza. Through a mix of plenary discussions and breakout sessions, participants collaborated on key aspects of the project, including refining methodological approaches, selecting case study areas, and shaping the pastoralist survey.



© CITA

## Preparing for the CoCo Pastoralist Survey | Rome, 18-19 March 2025

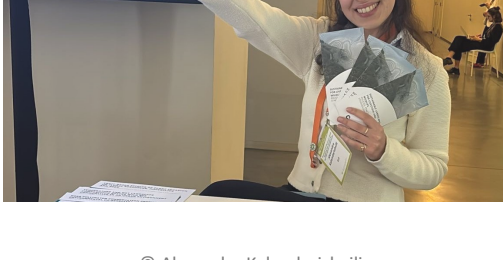
CoCo partners met in Rome for an [intensive two-day workshop organised by Italian partners](#) IEA and the University of Turin and Spanish partner CITA. The meeting aimed to fine-tune the upcoming pastoralist survey, which will gather insights from 1,000 pastoralists across 12 European countries and train participants to carry out field visits. During the 2 weeks after the meeting, the survey was piloted in the field with more than 30 pastoralists in 9 countries. In Slovakia it was piloted with 4 pastoralists in the Liptov region to obtain experience and feedback to tweak the final version that will be used for the full survey. This survey is a key step in understanding the realities of pastoralism, including the challenges and opportunities posed by wildlife interactions. By capturing first-hand experiences, we aim to inform policies and practices that support sustainable coexistence.



© CoCo

## CoCo at the Forum for the Future of Agriculture | Brussels, 1 April 2025

The [Forum for the Future of Agriculture \(ForumforAg\)](#) organised by European Landowners' Organisation (ELO) and its partners took place in Brussels, bringing together thought leaders, practitioners, and innovators from across Europe to explore challenges and opportunities they are currently facing regarding sustainable food systems and biodiversity. ELO showcased some of the ongoing projects. The CoCo project attracted [significant interest from attendees](#), sparking engaging conversations around human-wildlife coexistence and the integration of scientific, traditional, and experiential knowledge in biodiversity management.



© Alexandra Kalandarishvili

## CoCo at the Civil Dialogue Group on Environment and Climate Change | Brussels, 2 April 2025

European Landowners' Organisation took part in the [Civil Dialogue Group \(CDG\) on Environment and Climate Change](#) in April to present ongoing work on coexistence. The CDGs are the Commission expert groups specific to the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, bringing together civil society actors. ELO presented work on the [EU Platform on Coexistence between people and large carnivores](#) and in the context of exchange between stakeholders, the launch of the CoCo project.

## The "Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside" Parliamentary Intergroup: Downlisting the Wolf: A way forward for the EU | Online, 9 April 2025

The Parliamentary Intergroup organised an [event](#) to discuss the European Commission's proposal to modify the conservation status of the wolf in the European Union, changing it from "strictly protected" to "protected". The event featured a wide range of speakers, including policymakers and stakeholders representing diverse perspectives on the issue. John Linnell was present from CoCo and presented the concept of coexistence promoted by the project.

## Upcoming events

CoCo is participating in the following events:

- **Polish presidency of the EU: Sustainable management of populations of protected animals that cause losses in agriculture | Brussels, 15 May 2025.** John Linnell will represent the CoCo project describing planned work with pastoralists and how they can contribute to the debate on wildlife management.
- **6th Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Platform meeting | Ioannina, Greece, 19-22 May.** During the meeting updated information on management and monitoring of large carnivore populations in the region will be discussed and participants will exchange information on new projects and programs including the CoCo project.
- **Wolves across borders conference | Lunteren, Netherlands, 2-6 June 2025.** The CoCo project will be presented at a number of workshops including at the EU Large Carnivore Platform's plenary meeting.

# RELATED PROJECTS AND PUBLICATIONS

## Developing a methodology for setting Favourable Reference Values (FRV) for large carnivores in Europe

The Commission has released a [report](#) developing a methodology for setting Favourable Reference Values for the species brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), golden jackal (*Canis aureus*), and wolverine (*Gulo gulo*). It also illustrates the consequences of these approaches under different scenarios.

## Case studies on the impact of the wolf

For the [EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores: ten case studies areas](#) have been chosen to represent the variety of impacts of large carnivores across the EU. Focusing on scales lower than the national level, the studies reveal details of the carnivores-human conflicts that often are not evident from national statistics. Analysing existing data, supplemented by expert and / or stakeholder interviews, the cases demonstrate the range of possible impacts across the European territory.

# VISIT THE COCO PARTNERS: CITA

The Agrifood Research and Technology Center of Aragon (CITA) is a public research institution located at the Aula Dei Campus (Zaragoza), one of Spain's leading agricultural science hubs. CITA's mission is to generate high-quality knowledge to support farmers, policymakers, and society, with a special focus on sustainability, resilience, and competitiveness. The Animal Science Department, where integrates the scientists that are part of CoCo which includes the scientists involved in CoCo, plays a key role in developing sustainable livestock systems through research in animal production, native breeds, disease prevention, nutrition, genetics, and ecosystem services, thereby supporting the transition towards healthier and more sustainable food systems.



As part of the CoCo project, CITA leads the coordination and implementation of the large-scale pastoralist survey, a key component of Work Package 3, and the Task 2.3 "Pastoral systems in practice", where the diversity of pastoral systems in Europe and their interaction with wildlife will be mapped. Based on their expertise in Mediterranean livestock systems and stakeholder engagement, CITA has overseen the consortium collaborative design and piloting of the farmer questionnaire, playing a central logistical and methodological role, offering guidance and training to project partners. Fieldwork has now officially begun, and CITA is already conducting face-to-face interviews in Spain, gathering valuable on-the-ground data of the interactions between pastoralism and wildlife. This work will continue until the end of summer.