

PRESS RELEASE

COCO PROJECT

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A NEW ERA FOR LARGE CARNIVORES:

European Council downgrades the protection stats of wolves

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The **Bern Convention's** decision to downgrade the **protection status of wolves** comes into force today, moving them from "strictly protected" to "protected." This change, to be mirrored by the EU's Habitat Directive, allows for measures such as culling problematic wolves and introducing hunting quotas.

Purpose of change: This shift follows extensive lobbying by rural groups but remains controversial. It provides an additional tool for managing wildlife but requires careful handling. Member states must make significant investment in monitoring and institutional structures to ensure sustainable use.

Recovery of Wildlife: Over the past 30 to 40 years large carnivores such as brown bears and wolves have made remarkable comebacks. This is partly thanks to conservation laws such as the Bern Convention and Habitats Directive which have also supported recovery of their prey such as deer and wild boar. This is a significant (and rare) conservation success story.

Conflict potential: The return of wolves and bears (as well as deer and wild boar) has also reignited conflicts around wildlife damages, especially livestock depredation and safety concerns. This is challenging for rural communities, particularly farmers, pastoralists and hunters, and has sparked debates on our relationship with nature.

Bringing different voices together: The **CoCo project** is an EU Horizon project funded by the European Union with 18 partner institutions across 12 European countries. It aims to "Co-create Coexistence" by integrating local voices and experiences into wildlife conservation models. By engaging with local communities and respecting their insights, the project endeavours to design viable coexistence models.

(<https://cocoproject.eu/>)

Quotes:

“The *CoCo Project* arrives at a critical moment – it will provide valuable knowledge to guide policy as the focus shifts from ‘how do we prevent large carnivores from extinction?’ to ‘how to live with a conservation success?’. We can’t promise easy answers, but we can at least ensure that a diversity of perspectives are given a voice in the discussion.”

Professor John Linnell, Inland Norway University of Applied Science, CoCo Project lead

“The CoCo Project aims to balance the top-down policy approach followed until now by integrating local voices, giving local knowledge equal weight to academic approaches. By engaging with local communities in co-creation of the project approach, and respecting their insights, the project endeavours to design viable coexistence models.”

Katrina Marsden, Head of Programme, adelphi, Work Package lead Dissemination and Co-creation.