



SUMMARY
2ND STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP
ON EU ACTION ON LARGE CARNIVORES

Brussels, 5th December, 2013

SUMMARY

The European Commission has stepped up its efforts since 2012 to address challenges of conserving large carnivore species in modern European landscapes. A dialogue with stakeholders at EU level has been launched to address the diversity of conflicts associated with the presence of large carnivores, and the controversies over the ways in which they should be conserved and managed.

A first multi-stakeholder workshop in January 2013 clarified the issues surrounding real and perceived conflicts around the coexistence with large carnivores.

In response to encouragement received from participants to this first stakeholder meeting, a second workshop was held on 5th December, 2013 with over 90 participants from a diversity of stakeholder interest groups and Member States public authorities and representatives of the European Commission.

I. A proposal for an EU Platform on Large Carnivores.

The structure and modalities of a proposed EU Platform on large carnivores were discussed. The proposal for this platform calls for a voluntary grouping of high-level representatives of the main stakeholder organizations involved in this issue, including possibly public authorities, who agree to an EU-level strategic dialogue concerning the conservation and sustainable management of Large Carnivore species in the EU.

The principle mission of this platform would be to promote ways and means to minimize, and wherever possible, to find solutions to conflicts arising between human interests and the presence of large carnivore species, by exchange of knowledge and experiences/good practices on coexistence from different regions of Europe and by working together to find commonly agreed solutions to real conflicts.

At the core of the platform will be the “Manifesto on Coexistence with Large Carnivores in the European Union”. This manifesto would be signed by participants to the platform. By signing the manifesto, they will commit:

- a) to respect existing EU legislation (the Habitats Directive);
- b) to recognize valid multiple interests in the European landscapes including the right to utilize natural resources in a sustainable way;
- c) to accept the need for commitment to engage in a constructive dialogue aiming to overcoming problems through commonly agreed solutions to conflicts, and
- d) to recognize the need for trans-boundary cooperation.

The members of the platform will moreover engage in the following activities:

- a) one annual meeting to update each other on progress and coexistence experiences made at national/regional level, to facilitate networking between platform members and to discuss selected topics of interests;
- b) an exchange of information on the activities of the platform, meeting reports, good practices in the form of documents /manuals, gateway to the portals of the member organizations through a website;
- c) voluntary participation in implementation of certain key actions still under developments (see section III). Members of the platform may also engage in practical actions at the population level.

There was a general support among the participants for the establishment of the platform. Many have recognized the benefits it could bring to its membership in access to knowledge and experience on coexistence with LC of other stakeholders, the possibility of networking with others and in finding partners for joint efforts, such as projects for EU or other sources of funding. Some stakeholder groups stressed the need to consult their constituency before being able to sign the manifesto. Some participants called for measures to ensure flexibility and subsidiarity within the frame of the implementation of the Habitats Directive.

Several stakeholders pointed out that, in view of the great diversity of circumstances, in addition to the dialogue at the EU level, similar fora at the regional/local level, or population-level of the large carnivores, would also be useful.

Several organizations have expressed the willingness to take the lead in certain activities of the platform.

II. Pilot actions on Large Carnivores at the population level – progress report on the Iberian wolf project

Francisco Alvares (CIBIO, Vairão, Portugal) introduced the rationale and outline of a pilot action at the population level which has just started to address the issues of predation by wolves on cattle in North-Western Spain and northern Portugal. The work will involve stakeholders in both ES and PT, and lead to exchange of experiences and production of practical guidance documents.

III. Exchange of views on the draft priority actions for LC populations

This consultation with stakeholders followed DG Environment's line that early stakeholder engagement is crucial to management planning of Large Carnivores. The Member State authorities (through the Habitats Committee) will be consulted on a more advanced version of the proposed actions.

Luigi Boitani (Istituto di Ecologia Applicata, Rome & Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe) introduced the draft documents prepared under a contract with DG ENV compiled by a team of experts mobilized. The lists of proposed priority actions for each population of brown bear, wolf, Eurasian lynx and wolverine currently recognized in the EU. The intention was to identify the most urgent actions for each population which will provide guidance/recommendations to different stakeholders and public authorities willing to engage in activities on LC species. The drafts had been circulated to the participants in advance of the meeting, and the responses of stakeholders who have in-depth knowledge of, and/or have experience with conflicts of human coexistence with certain Large Carnivore species of any of these known populations were solicited.

The discussions proceeded in grouping the LC populations in geographic clusters: the Iberian Peninsula, Central and Eastern Europe, the Alps and south of the Alp, and Fennoscandia. The short time available for discussions allowed only limited exchange of view, and participants were asked to send written comments if they had not done so far.

The discussions revealed that the preliminary lists of actions will require substantial further work. Although a number of proposed actions for many of populations found agreement with at least some of the stakeholders, there was the general impression that the bulk of the proposed action had a focus on the biology of the species. While accepting the need to have sound scientific data on which to base management decisions, the focus on research was in general found to be unbalanced. Several participants also underlined the need for the public funding to the livestock sector to be supportive and consistent with the coexistence principle and the conservation of large carnivores (coupled payments for livestock, compensations for damages, prevention measures). There were calls from several stakeholder groups to have a stronger focus on the socio-economic dimension of the large carnivore debate, including cultural aspects. The need to streamline the proposed actions with ongoing efforts at the national level was emphasized.

In closing the meeting the Commission thanked all participants for their active and constructive contributions.