

PRESS RELEASE

COCO PROJECT

Service provider in the sense of §5 TMG adelphi research gemeinnützige GmbH

MEDIA CONTACT

Paula Cros Marchena
Alt-Moabit 91
10559 Berlin

info@coco.eu

SHARING LANDSCAPES WITH WILDLIFE

Special Feature on Pastoral Systems and Large Carnivores

23 June 2026

A major collection of interdisciplinary research, years in the making, has been published under the title “Sharing landscapes with wildlife: conflict and coexistence between High Nature Value pastoral systems and large carnivores”. Bringing together 15 scientific contributions spanning pastoral and rangeland systems across Europe, the Americas, and Central and East Asia, the Special Feature, published in the Journal People and Nature, represents the most comprehensive and interdisciplinary overview of carnivore-pastoralist coexistence published to date.

A Critical Moment in European Policy

The publication arrives at a particularly charged moment. The disputed EU Nature Restoration Regulation became law in 2024 and is being implemented by EU Member States, and the European Commission has since approved a controversial proposal to reduce the protection status of wolves under the Habitats Directive, prompting fierce debate across the continent. At the same time, the Global Biodiversity Framework acknowledging that human wildlife conflict and coexistence has significant impacts on biodiversity, now explicitly mandates efforts to minimise conflict and ensure the meaningful participation of local communities in decision-making.

Against this backdrop, the Special Feature aims to provide the kind of integrated, evidence-based knowledge that at times is missing from the policy debate.

Beyond Depredation: A Systemic View

High Nature Value (HNV) pastoral systems are recognised as cornerstones of European biodiversity, cultural heritage and ecosystem service provision. In contrast to more intensive, conventional farming systems, for HNV pastoralism, it is the farming practices themselves which allow important species and habitats to persist in certain areas. However, these systems, which are maintained through herding, transhumance and extensive grazing are under severe pressure from economic, social and environmental drivers. The return of large carnivores adds a further layer of complexity.

A central finding across the contributions is that carnivore impacts, including livestock depredation, cannot be addressed in isolation. The editorial identifies three systemic drivers that undermine pastoral resilience – and with it, the capacity for coexistence:

1. **Loss of mobility and common resources:** the erosion of traditional grazing routes, seasonal movement patterns and shared land access.
2. **Unfavourable market and policy environments:** economic pressures and CAP incentives that push pastoral communities toward intensification or abandonment.
3. **Shifting social and institutional contexts:** demographic change, labour shortages and the weakening of local institutions.

Current policy responses –typically centred on financial compensation for livestock losses, protective measures and culling permits– are found to fall short by failing to address these deeper structural vulnerabilities.

What does coexistence mean?

The feature does not stop at diagnosis. Contributions from diverse systems –from reindeer herding in northern Sweden and livestock farming in France, Italy, Romania, Austria and Spain, to rangelands in Tibet and Kazakhstan and private ranches in Chilean Patagonia– also point to enabling conditions for sustainable coexistence.

These include place-based and participatory approaches that treat pastoralists as knowledge holders, the co-production of knowledge that weaves traditional and scientific expertise and governance frameworks that are adaptive and built on sustained trust with local communities.

“Many thanks to the excellent editorial team bringing together large carnivore and HNV pastoralism experts and to our authors for their exciting contributions. The collection of papers in this Special Feature offers the most comprehensive and interdisciplinary overview of coexistence in HNV pastoralist landscapes in Europe published so far” states Katrina Marsden, editor, author and Director at CoCo partner’s adelphi Research.

The feature concludes with calls for better coordination between agricultural and conservation policy, and for treating coexistence not as a fixed outcome to be achieved, but as an iterative, adaptive process requiring long-term institutional commitment. The CoCo project aims to continue working to address this challenge building a “Roadmap to Coexistence”.

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.