

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

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE MONEY

Norway's farmers and Europe's carnivores are running out of shared space

30 July 2026

Every spring, as livestock leave their winter shelters for the high mountain pastures of Europe, farmers like Kari in Skjåk, Norway, face a season of uncertainty. Large carnivores –wolverines, wolves, bears– have been steadily returning to landscapes where they had been absent for generations. For the communities that depend on those same landscapes, their return raises difficult questions about how people, animals and wild predators can share the same terrain.

“It becomes that constant unease that you carry with you all the time,” says Kari, a livestock farmer in inland Norway. “You are afraid that something will happen.” Hers is not an isolated experience. Across Europe, the recovery of predator populations is bringing into sharp relief a conflict that is rarely just about livestock – it touches on livelihoods, identity and deeply held visions of what the European landscape should look like and who it belongs to.

A Conflict That Goes Deeper Than Livestock Losses

The economic damage is real and measurable. But researchers warn that focusing on compensation payments misses the point. The impact on farmers extends far beyond financial loss. “It is not only your bank account that is affected – it is also the motivation to get up in the morning, work and live your lifestyle,” says John Linnell, CoCo project coordinator and Norway-based researcher. “It is not only yourself and your flock of sheep, but the farm, your family and whole village community”, adds Kari.

These conflicts, as John puts it, “deal with fairly fundamental values – totally different visions about what the European landscape should look like and how it should be used.” They are not disputes that can be resolved by a single policy instrument or a compensation cheque.

Twelve Countries, One Thousand Voices

In response, researchers from 12 European nations have launched one of the most ambitious studies of human-wildlife conflict ever undertaken on the continent. Scientists and students are travelling farm to farm –up and down mountains, across rangelands and through remote valleys– conducting long, in-depth interviews with more than a thousand farmers, hunters and landowners.

The project, coordinated by the University of Inland Norway at Evenstad, is deliberately designed to capture individual experience rather than aggregate data. “We want to zoom in on how things are experienced by real farmers, living and working in a specific place,” explains project lead John Linnell. “To get their concrete individual experiences – but not just one or two, a thousand people across Europe.” Each participant is treated as a named individual, not a data point. “They should not just be a number. They should have a proper name,” insists John.

What the Research Aims to Change

The interviews are now complete. Across 12 countries, more than a thousand farmers, hunters and landowners have shared their stories, and researchers are currently analysing the data to turn those experiences into concrete policy recommendations and practical tools, a roadmap designed to help predators, grazing animals and people share the same landscape with less conflict.

The researchers are clear-eyed about the limits of what is achievable. “There will never be agreement on the underlying values,” acknowledges the project lead. “But there can be agreement on the need to find compromises and to accept that there will always be differences and you have to somehow share space.”

The reintegration of large carnivores into European landscapes is, as John describes it, “a fairly dramatic change”, the reversal of centuries of deliberate extermination. Getting it right will require listening carefully to the people who live with the consequences every day. For farmers like those in Skjåk and thousands of others across Europe, that cannot come soon enough.

Follow the project’s progress and stay informed about new findings at <https://cocoproject.eu/>.

Watch the documentary filmed in Skjåk, Norway: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPwchJl0yaY>

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.