

Large Carnivore Platform, Fourth Plenary Meeting

Press Release

EU Large Carnivore Platform Plenary Meeting: Sharing good practice for coexistence

Brussels, 2 June

Representatives from landowning, herding, hunting, research and conservation organisations met yesterday in Brussels for the fourth annual meeting of the EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores. The Platform was established to “promote ways to minimize and find solutions to conflicts between people and large carnivores”. During the Plenary meeting, the first since the European Commission adopted the new [Action Plan for nature, people and the economy](#), the members reviewed their work from the previous year and discussed future plans.

The main items on the agenda were a discussion of [good practice examples](#) for coexistence with large carnivores based on activities carried out in a range of countries. The Platform plans to publish a report on the case studies later in 2017. The Platform also agreed a statement on recent developments in large carnivore management in Romania (see below). Finally, a number of regional, national and local large carnivore Platforms were invited to the meeting to explore how to link their work with that of the EU Platform.

Humberto Delgado-Rosa, Director for Natural Capital, DG Environment, who co-chairs the meeting for the European Commission, said: “A focus of our new action plan is building political ownership by working together with stakeholders and member states. It’s been interesting to discuss how the EU Platform and national and regional Platforms can work together and share information. There is more potential to establish similar groupings in the Member States where large carnivores are already present or are returning”.

Thierry de l'Escaille, Secretary General of the European Landowners Organization and co-chair of the Platform said: “The Platform members all have their own priorities for coexistence and their own worries and concerns about large carnivores. The value of the Platform is that we can agree on the process of making decisions, as we have seen with the statement on Romanian large carnivore management. This must involve all affected stakeholders and ensure mutual information exchange and a respectful, good-humoured approach to discussions between stakeholders with initially opposing views.”

Following agreement of the statement, a Platform workshop will take place in Bucharest, Romania next week organised by the European Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation (FACE), their national member, the General Association of Romanian Hunters & Anglers (AGVPS), WWF International and WWF Romania to discuss large carnivore conservation and management in Romania.

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Statement of the EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores on recent developments in large carnivore management in Romania

The EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores (hereafter referred to as the Platform) is a [grouping](#) of organisations representing different interests that have agreed to a joint [mission](#): “To promote ways and means to minimize, and wherever possible find solutions to, conflicts between human interests and the presence of large carnivore species, by exchanging knowledge and by working together in an open-ended, constructive and mutually respectful way”.

On 4th October 2016, Romania’s Minister of Environment, Water, and Forests, Cristiana Pașca Palmer, [announced](#) a decision not to issue harvest quotas for Brown bears, Grey wolves, Lynx, and Wild cats, citing concerns about the monitoring and data collection methods related to the different large carnivore populations in Romania.

This approach was [supported](#) by some conservation NGOs, including WWF, which is member of the EU Platform and some scientific institutions. They share the concerns regarding the quality of monitoring system, used as the basis for defining the harvest quota. They therefore support a precautionary approach to management decisions until a new system is developed which integrates hunting with other supplementary options such as better livestock protection to reduce conflict around large carnivores.

However, other members of the Platform, the European Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE), the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), and the European Landowners Organisation (ELO) [responded](#) by expressing their views that the decision could compromise the conservation of large carnivores in Romania based on a longstanding tradition of using hunting as a management tool. Reports from some rural stakeholders indicate increased conflict around large carnivores since October 2016, when the decision was made.

While Platform members’ views on the justification of the decision differ, they agree that, in order to promote coexistence between people and large carnivores, any management decision should be made based on sound science and taken in an inclusive, participatory manner.

Following a decision of the Platform members dating back from a meeting, which took place on the 24th of November 2016, the Platform would like to issue the following statement:

The conservation of large carnivores is part of the [EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020](#) and an objective of the Habitats Directive, which all EU Member States have committed themselves to implement.

Europe is witnessing a [recovery](#) of large carnivore populations in modern human-dominated landscapes. This increase in large carnivore numbers has been mainly enabled by the legal protection of the species, namely in the Habitats Directive as well as the Bern Convention, to which the EU and Romania are a Party.

In comparison to many EU Member States, Romania has maintained robust populations of large carnivores. With regard to their management, Romania is entitled to make various decisions concerning the conservation and management of large carnivores in line with existing international obligations and the pertinent legislative frameworks and regulations. The EU Habitats Directive, for

example, has certain margins of flexibility that allow management to be tailored to national/regional circumstances. Since its accession to the EU, until the above-mentioned decision, Romania used derogations to allow hunting of large carnivores.

The Platform [agrees](#) that: “Any management of large carnivores must be determined on the basis of sound scientific evidence using best available and reliable data”. Continued research and improvement and integration of monitoring methods (including the involvement of hunters, conservationists and other stakeholders in collection methods) is, therefore, essential to good management.

If a broad participation/ involvement of all relevant stakeholders is sought on large carnivore management from an early stage, it is more likely to be successful than if policy is imposed from the top down without consultation. Governments and agencies should take this into account in their decision-making process on large carnivore management.

The members of the Platform offer to work together to assist local experts and Romanian authorities by providing best-practice advice on issues related to large carnivore monitoring, management and coexistence, recognised by the European Commission.

The Platform is further organising, based on agreement between WWF and FACE, a regional workshop in Romania in June 2017 to discuss this issue in more detail as well as to support the development of best practice guidelines on involving stakeholders in large carnivore conservation/ management/ monitoring practices.

The Platform invites the government of Romania to:

- Engage with all relevant stakeholders and to use this workshop to establish a long-term constructive and open dialogue to ensure coexistence between people and large carnivores, in particular, with those who live closest to them in rural areas.
- Guarantee an appropriate participation of a representative range of stakeholders in future decisions related to the management and monitoring of large carnivores.
- Make use of the EU Platform to help moderate and facilitate a participatory, national consultation process, including potentially using it as an example to support the establishment of a similar national Platform.

Agreed by the Platform members:

ELO - European Landowners' Organization;

Joint representatives of Finnish and Swedish reindeer herders;

FACE - The European Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation;

CIC - The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation;

IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature, European Union Representative Office;

WWF - Worldwide Fund for Nature, European Policy Office and

EUROPARC Federation.



Further information and press contacts

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For more information on the work of the Platform, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/coexistence_platform.htm

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