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## Human-animal conflicts and social dimension

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### Working with stakeholders to mitigate a human-wildlife conflict: challenges and opportunities

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DOI: 10.20315/evmc.2025.136

After centuries of absence, grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) has returned to the Alps, supported by strong protection laws that have enabled its population to recover. However, the species' prolonged absence has disrupted traditional coexistence practices, leading to significant conflicts, particularly with livestock farmers. The European LIFEstockProtect project aims to mitigate these human-wildlife conflicts by promoting practical protective measures, including the use of livestock guardian dogs, electric fencing, and permanent shepherding. The project has implemented various activities, such as peer-to-peer training courses for breeders and shepherds, educational videos on livestock guardian dogs, field excursions showcasing best practices, public awareness campaigns, and the establishment of a volunteer network to assist shepherds in the field. A central component of LIFEstockProtect is stakeholder engagement, an approach widely recognized for enhancing ownership and fostering mutual understanding between decision-makers and those impacted by their decisions. In the context of human-wildlife conflicts, stakeholder involvement is vital for identifying and addressing both real and perceived barriers to implementing effective protection measures. This presentation will focus on the Italian project region of South Tyrol, where wolves have been gradually increasing since their return in 2010, alongside a rise in livestock predation. Despite this, acceptance of wolves and willingness to adopt protective measures remain low, particularly among livestock farmers who bear the brunt of these challenges. Throughout the project, diverse approaches were employed to collaborate and communicate with this key stakeholder group to reduce conflict and develop sustainable solutions. We will present challenges faced during these efforts, share successful strategies, and open a discussion on effective methods for engaging stakeholders in addressing contentious issues like human-wildlife coexistence.