



Transboundary wolfmeeting Benelux and Germany

Date: 14 and 15 October 2021

Location: Flanders, Lommel (14 oct) and excursion to Leopoldsburg (15 oct)

Participants:

██████████ ANB, B
██████████ ANB, B
██████████ INBO, B
██████████ WWF Belgium and Wolf Fencing, B
██████████ Wallonia, B
██████████ Wallonia, B

██████████ Luxemburg
██████████ Luxemburg

██████████ NRW, D

██████████ prv Drenthe NL
██████████ prv Drenthe, NL
██████████ prv Gelderland, NL
██████████ prv Brabant, NL
██████████ trainee prv Limburg, NL
██████████ Zeeland, NL
██████████ BIJ12, NL
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██████████ BIJ12, NL

██████████ WWF Germany and EuroLargeCarnivores Project
██████████ Dutch Mammal Society
██████████ Dutch Mammal Society

Absent: Lower Saxony, Rhineland Palatinate. NL: Ministry, Groningen, Overijssel, Limburg, ██████████
██████████ and ██████████

All documents related to the meeting can be found on:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1x9d2XqtUoWRu5IKl60CrqhicV5PHWP7T>

Meeting part 1: Prevention

Technicity and effectiveness

Social and ecological aspects

European Co Financing: possibilities and experiences?

Problem: At this moment the money for preventive measures and compensation for damage by wolves in all regions is paid with the nature budget by the regions themselves. So it is not paid with EU money or agricultural budget because of *de minimis*. Another problem with the GAP budget is that if the budget is put in wolf fencing, then the GAP budget in other agricultural sectors lowers. Because the total budget doesn't grow with it, therefore the budget for wolf fencing from GAP is zero. The problem with using nature money is that that budget is much smaller than the agricultural budget, and in the next few years the amount of money needed for preventive measures will rise quickly.

The ideal situation: 100% payment of preventive measures and management is allowed, without *de minimis* and paid with European CAP/agricultural money for preventive measures.

There is a short 4-page explanation what to do on: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-IDYzB6kwQBldGZUKepsCt-32ZhohfSp>

Experience from regions:

- In NRW for a year the *de minimis* is eliminated, so there is a 100% budget. Paid by nature conservation budget. The period is changed from 2 years to half a year in a so-called wolf prevention area, after a territorial wolf is present for more than 6 months. For prevention always, but not for the compensation of the damage. This is interesting for the other regions, so [redacted] tries to get acceptance to send the letter to us. Money comes from the federal state. The rectification is necessary to avoid the *de minimis*, and not for EU money. Payments are not coming from the EU.
- Wallonia has asked the EC how to get preventive measures subsidized with the *de minimis* (staatssteunregeling in NL). This is max 20.000 euro max 3 j. Wallonia has no experience with European co-financing. There is only 100% subsidy for shared initiatives, not for a single initiative. [redacted] will share with us the letter to the EU
- Flanders has approved demonstration projects via the department of agriculture and the subventions for professional farmers partly is financed by the Flemish agricultural investment funding.
- In the Netherlands the Dutch Mammal Society has prepared a LIFE proposal, the provinces were not convinced yet, but they are reconsidering if they cooperate in LIFE wolf NL.
- Luxemburg: The money for prevention and damage is coming from the nature conservation budget. We haven't thought about *de minimis* yet.

What are the costs of prevention and what is the influence on feasibility

Problem: "Making abstraction of practical and ecological facts, it could seem much cheaper to make a fence around the wolf, than around the sheep" "Why to invest so much in one species?"

The amount of money spent on preventive measures is at least 10 times more than the damage (Dutch fact finding study). Farmers are mandatory to protect his/her livestock. But there's an exception for wolves because of 150 years of absence (but only in the transition period). Point of attention: cross compliance. Feasibility is a matter of culture and social acceptance. If a shepherd in Slovenia etc loses a sheep to a wolf, then they see this as they did their work badly.

Wallonia is thinking of defining a list of other species for compensation. A consequent policy for wolves and other protected species is needed. Lux: wolf, badger, beaver. Wallonia also lynx appeared again recently.

Experience in regions:

- Wallonia: It is difficult to put maximum prices in the law, because they can change. So the market is taken into account.
- Luxemburg: prevention has only 75% subsidy because the fences also prevent dogs.
- NRW: 1.5 mln euro preventive measures in NRW for mainly sheep. 3 killed Shetland ponies, so thinking on subsidies for ponies in territories. 10-20% dead born calves is normal, numbers of natural loss of cattle have to be taken into account with subsidies. In NRW the costs/subsidy is not free, the farmer has to make an application and every case is checked, both for damage and preventive measures.
- NL: fixed price per meter (3 euro). A new fence is more expensive. With a max of 100 euro per sheep. Plus 500 euros for other costs per farmer. For shepherds it is 30 euros per sheep. Only paid for the investment, not for the labour, which is an issue. For damage are fixed prices for the race of cattle. Also payment for destruction and the vet, and the dead young in the first 2 weeks (collateral damage). In the Netherlands in the province of Fryslan there is an initiative to build a fence around the complete province. Only 50m is realized, this is mainly a media message.
- Flanders: risk zone for goats/sheep/alpacas/ponies 148m around the wolf territory, if there is damage, also payment of prevention in a specific perimeter for big livestock (cows, horses). Subvention for the investments in improving the fences counts max. 4,8 euro/meter. Subvention for the maintenance is a forfaitary amount of 4,5 euro/meter.

Effects of fencing areas on landscape fragmentation? Fencing out a larger agricultural area?

It is not about more fences, but different fences with extra electricity, and it depends on how many sheep you have, and for how many species fences are built. It is a balance between protection level for wolves and a bit of effect for roe deer. Wallonia also looks at the alternatives for fences. Protection by avoiding wolves in countryside by scaring measures (not with fences), to keep the wolf in the forest. But this could be a legal problem, there is a case in Romania. On the other hand, it is a problem that the wolf learns that it is not dangerous to live in the countryside. Therefore alternative solutions are needed in the autumn. In Saksen Anhalt the people from the government that take DNA also have the fladry with them, to ensure rapid response protection. Another way (Flanders) is that the farmers are asked if they want to be helped by wolf fencing team Belgium (WFTB) to decrease the necessary efforts for prevention. Some people refuse the measures.

Experiences with livestock guarding dogs in tourist areas.

- In the Netherlands two pilots have been running. Problems are the costs of 5000 euro, parasites of dogs that infertilize cows, and aggression of the guarding dogs.
- It is discussed if guarding dogs are only suitable for a big professional sheep farmer or shepherd.
- Tourists don't read signs that give warning and instructions when entering a zone with guarding dogs.
- Is it possible to put guarding dogs with sheep without a shepherd? It is, but when there are tourists, a shepherd is needed. In France there is a budget for extra shepherds as a preventive measure.
- It can be extra income for a shepherd to breed the guarding dogs. The guarding dogs are only going to be very expensive during the transition period.
- A good protocol for breeding and training the guarding dogs is needed, otherwise dogs can be aggressive to people. It will take time to train these dogs and we need the motivation of the farmers/shepherds. We might need to reorganize the sector.

Meeting part 2: EuroLargeCarnivores, bold wolves

Update EuroLargeCarnivores by [REDACTED]

The project EuroLargeCarnivores has started in 2017 and will end in feb 2022. It has published various different communication products (videos, factsheets, stories) at www.eurolargecarnivores.eu

End of 2021 the project will publish recommendations to the European Commission, the Member States, and the European Regions. For the letter there will also be Standard Operating Procedures covering key topics of how to best address large carnivore challenges:

- Participatory Monitoring
- Management Plans
- Livestock Guarding Dogs & tourism
- Use EU subsidies for damage prevention
- Shepherding as job perspective
- Monitoring Programme (technical)
- Transparency (monitoring)
- Rapid Response Teams
- Artificial Feeding & tourism
- Livestock Guarding Dogs (pedigree, import, training, certification)
- Quality control of livestock damage prevention
- Investigation of high damage areas
- Process Livestock damage cases and compensation
- LC in urban areas / human habituation / food conditioning
- Derogations

2021-2027 CAP will become the main funding for damage/prev measures. At this moment often the nature budgets are used - but the European Commission encourages the use of CAP/agricultural funding:

- The EU provides financial aid which Member States can use to support farmers experiencing livestock depredation by large carnivores. The implementation of such payments is a choice that needs to be made by the managing authorities in the Member States or regions.
- Compensation for stock lost to large carnivores is not financed by the EU but can be paid through state aid (national or regional financing). Member states can decide to make prevention measures mandatory (where this is possible) as a condition to have access to the compensations.
- The main measures to protect livestock against large carnivore depredation are fencing, livestock guarding dogs and shepherding.
- Currently protection measures can be funded under the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) which run until the end of 2022. Modifications can still be made to the ongoing programmes if such measures are not included. State aid can also be used to fund these actions.
- Under the new CAP (likely to begin January 2023), the same measures can be funded under the new Rural Development Programmes Eco Schemes, under the direct payments' budget of the new CAP, could provide additional support to livestock breeders
- Managing authorities are working on their CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) now and should make sure that where relevant, livestock protection measures are included, especially if they are identified as needs and measures in the Prioritized Action Frameworks.
- Managing authorities are obliged to consult stakeholders about the CSPs before they are finalised.

The EU Habitat Directive Species Guidance on Wolves is out and available here https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/nature/conservation/species/guidance/guidance-document_en.pdf

Bold wolves and problematic situations

In case a wolf is aggressive to people without a reason, then it should be killed.

What to do in problematic situations like a wolf that keeps attacking well protected cattle?

The answer is written down in the ecological guidelines of the Habitats Directive. The answer is: it depends. For every case questions have to be answered: Is there an alternative, is the measure proportional?

If it is needed to remove the wolf, derogation from the EU is needed and the population of wolves must be in or on its way to a favourable reference population and favourable reference range. The Favourable Reference value has to be defined per member state. Until a member state has defined the FRP/FRR and is in the favourable reference situation, derogation will not be given. It is ok when a country is working towards this goal, and it is the question whether or not the shooting of the wolf will be of influence on this process. In 2024 the next Habitats Directive Report has to be delivered (period 2019-2024), so then the goal has to be set for the metapopulation and for the member states. All the present countries haven't set a goal yet.

In the 2017 Habitats Directive report some countries have reported goals like 'the same as last time' 'much more than last time' or a number.

<https://nature-art17.eionet.europa.eu/article17/species/summary/?period=5&group=Mammals&subject=Canis+lupus®ion=> (look at FRP in column Population)

The question behind the question is when are we able to shoot wolves. Politicians are looking for easy clear decision schemes like '3 attacks on well protected cattle' is a maximum and allows capturing, shooting, etc. This generalist approach is not conform with European legislation. The (ecological) circumstances have to be analysed. A solution can be to set up a panel of experts.

Some details:

- If you wait too long, then poaching will be a problem to get derogation.
- It is the question if shooting a bold wolf is an adequate solution, because if you shoot a wolf, and the pack falls apart, the livestock damage may increase.
- In France most wolves are shot in july-sep because then most sheep are present. Big study going on in France. What can be the alternatives: more than 5 wires, guarding dogs, etc.
- It is difficult to prove that a wolf is jumping over the fences. It might also find a weak spot in the fence. It is possible to train the wolf to learn to jump over fences.
- What is the effectiveness of the preventive measures, who is checking if the voltage is high enough? The farmer can have restored the fences after an attack of a wolf that has found a weak spot.

The member states are thinking about how to deal with bold wolves and set goals on Favourable Reference. We agree that it can help to have a protocol for bold wolves for the countries together, that is ratified by the EU. The species guidance document describes how to deal with bold wolves. Process: we need some people for a task force [redacted] agrees to take the initiative. [redacted] agrees to participate. Other colleagues will be contacted to start the task force with representatives of each region.

Meeting part 3: Transboundary cooperation

Let this meeting work for you. The question to the group is: is a MoU needed? because the MoU is not signed yet. What do you need to get the most out of this transboundary meeting?

NRW: I am here as a personal interest, I am not an official representative of NRW. This group should get an official status. We can learn from the similar initiative 'International conference on lynx in the Alps'. <https://www.admin.ch/gov/de/start/dokumentation/medienmitteilungen.msg-id-1666.html#context-sidebar>

NL Gelderland: we decided not to sign the MoU, I don't need formalization. It is an ideal way to get new ideas. There are some parallel platforms too. We talked about a taskforce for a special subject. We should find a structure for international cooperation (like the flyway management programme for the geese).

NL Drenthe: This is a place to get information from.

Luxemburg: I am here for practical work, so therefore I don't need to formalize. Although it can help with outside communication if we are an official group.

Wallonia: Many countries are learning from each other, that is important. We should find a way to get concrete realization of our group. Do we need a website?

Flanders: Our work, in which we advise, needs some legitimization from the neighbouring countries. It would be good if we are more focused in the preparation, so that we are aware of what can be achieved. It would be good to write down what we bring home, to communicate outside, but better not to build our own website, it is too much work.

Raffael: Large Carnivores Platform (LCP) has a secretary that can be of help. We are a European region. We could ask if they can help us. The only thing we need is a press release.

NL Brabant: I think that other stakeholders want to participate, will this group change as part of the LCP?

We miss France, Lower Saksyony and Rhineland Palatinate?

We have made some appointments:

- **Taskforce Favourable status:** This taskforce led by [REDACTED] will make a proposal concerning: How to define favourable status for transboundary wolf. Who do we need (who defines the favourable status). What are the steps to get there? When it is ready, it will be sent to the participants that can make amendments.
- **Derogation:** How to handle wolf problem situations, with the ecological guidelines. Flanders will have some questions on this topic and share these, so other regions can react. [REDACTED] share this information with the group (In Flandres the evaluation process on the protocol for bold wolves is planned for the winter period. Based on the reactions, Dries will inform and consult the international group). The new guidance document: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/nature/conservation/species/guidance/guidance-document_en.pdf
- **Operation exchange taskforce:** can tackle fast issues.
- **Financing:** Share the formal writing about the EU CAP that will be send by some of the regions. Other regions can react to that.
- **Monitoring:** The Benelux countries will use standardized monitoring based on the German monitoring plan, share questions about problems in monitoring, and share results. [REDACTED] will ask regions who need to be involved. Flanders: [REDACTED] Luxemburg: [REDACTED] Others can join

- **Uniform subsidy schemes:** Bottom up adjustment based on exchange of the practice en schemes in each region [REDACTED]
- **Injured wolf:** [REDACTED] (not present) says a wolf can recover unless it is dangerous to people or unless the wolf is too injured. A broken leg is not deadly for a wolf. There is still a discussion if this is deadly for a solitary wolf. Suspect is reported to local authority/policy. They decide. Very few cases of wolves are recovered in Deuverden (Germany). Flanders have centres to recover wild animals including wolves (badger, beaver). They don't have protocols for either of these animals. In the NL a vet has to come to the injured wolf. The reason the vet was put in the wolf plan was because the prov needs a judgement.

Meeting Part 4 - Excursion

On Friday Oct 15th the group was taken on excursion to and across military training areas in Limburg, Flanders. The regionally responsible nature conservation liaison manager introduced the group to the conservation challenges, solutions (including a laser triggered wild fence vehicle collision minimisation approach) and allowed them to visit the control tower overlooking the Pampa military training areas plain.

Next meeting: the first meeting was in Lower Saksony, the second in the Netherlands, the third in Belgium (Flanders). Therefore it is an idea to ask Rheinland Pfalz if they want to host the meeting in 2022 [REDACTED] will call [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had planned to be present at the meeting this time.

Share on <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1x9d2XqtUoWRu5IKI60CrqhicV5PHWP7T>

On the Google Drive monitoring plans, protocols etc are shared. What else to share?

- Subvention schemes per country (everybody)
- EU writing about agricultural and nature money for prevention measures (Wallonia)
- CAP [REDACTED]
- NL Fact Finding study, working on the English version. [REDACTED]
- German annual reports are on <https://www.dbb-wolf.de/Wolfsvorkommen/territorien/karte-der-territorien>.

Flanders: Update the participants list on

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1qdNEraHml2gqANZwjdaevgi67i3ONkG_9G3I2At9ugI/edit#gid=0

Link to media:

<https://www.tvl.be/nieuws/internationale-experts-overleggen-over-de-wolf-127376>

Art 17. reporting on wolf: <https://nature->

art17.eionet.europa.eu/article17/species/summary/?period=5&group=Mammals&subject=Carnivora+lupus®ion=

Briefing note CAP:

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/EU_Platform_CAP_and_LC_June_21.pdf

Species Guidance Wolf:

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/nature/conservation/species/guidance/guidance-document_en.pdf