



## FACE POLICY REQUESTS ON LARGE CARNIVORES

Large carnivores occur in a great diversity of ecological, socio-economic, cultural and political situations in Europe. This can help to explain the different attitudes towards large carnivores, which sometimes divide society.

### I. Improving coexistence:

The Habitats Directive should offer sufficient scope for the conservation and management of large carnivores and their habitats. However, FACE is of the view that certain provisions of the Habitats Directive have been implemented in a disproportionately restrictive manner or not used to their full potential (notably Article 2/3, Article 16 and Article 19). In this context, FACE:

- Calls for greater recognition of “*economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics*” as outlined in Article 2.3 of the Habitats Directive;
- Calls for greater recognition of the existing flexibility<sup>1</sup> of implementation approaches that consider specific local, regional and national circumstances to reduce unavoidable problems/conflicts between people and large carnivores.

### II. Updating the annexes of the Habitats Directive:

Certain populations of large carnivore species in the EU, like the Wolf and Brown Bear in some Member States, no longer qualify for strict protection under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive - due to successful conservation measures. Further, as many large carnivore populations are increasing and expanding in Europe, it is important that conservation priorities are set according to the most up-to-date and comprehensive scientific knowledge. Article 19 of the Habitats Directive provides for a legal obligation to update the annexes to reflect best available science. In light of the case-law from the EU Court of Justice, Article 19 is applicable and has legal effect. The European Parliament as well as a majority of the Member States have called upon the Commission to update the annexes. In this context, FACE:

- Calls on the European Commission to promote the correct application of Article 19 of the Habitats Directive which provides that the annexes shall be updated in accordance with technical and scientific progress<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See also (point 6) of the Council conclusions on EU Action Plan for nature, people and the economy:  
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/19-conclusions-eu-action-plan-nature/>

<sup>2</sup> To address the practical challenges resulting from the application of the annexes to the Directives, it is the opinion of FACE that certain large carnivore populations should be moved from Annex IV to V as/when ‘Favourable Conservation Status’ is attained.



### III. Management planning for large carnivores:

Large carnivore populations are often transboundary in nature with very large home ranges. Administrative units are frequently unable to contain a viable population of any large carnivore species on their own. Therefore, planning for large carnivores should occur in a coordinated and cooperative manner. In this context, FACE:

- Calls on the European Commission to promote and propose means for the funding and development of coordinated transboundary management for large carnivore species<sup>3</sup>.
- Calls on Member States to develop adaptive management plans which effectively mitigate human-large carnivore conflicts (e.g. in areas with significant livestock depredation problems and/or areas with zoning for large carnivores).
- Calls on Member States to focus on 'populations' and not 'individuals' in line with the Habitats Directive.
- Calls on Member States to consider well-regulated harvest as a preventive measure to reduce conflicts.

### IV. Improved stakeholder involvement:

The EU Action Plan for nature, people and the economy recognises the need to improve stakeholder consultation to address the continuous challenge posed by large carnivores that come into conflict with some human activities. FACE:

- Calls on Member States to secure the participation of those most closely affected by large carnivores such as hunters, farmers, land owners and other land managers in order to guarantee the success of large carnivore conservation and management<sup>4</sup>.

### V. Supporting decisions with science, instead of bias:

Against the existing evidence base, some NGOs continue to pursue lobbying campaigns to prevent or seriously restrict hunting as a management tool for large carnivores. FACE is deeply concerned that these 'protection-based' approaches can negatively impact the conservation of large carnivores. When strict protection includes complete hunting bans, there is evidence demonstrating that illegal killing (even through poisoning) gains increased social acceptance, in particular for Wolf and for Brown Bear<sup>5</sup>. In this context, FACE:

- Calls on Member States to make decisions based on the best available knowledge in the natural and social sciences when designing and implementing large carnivore management plans;
- Calls on the Romanian Government to support the statement<sup>6</sup> of the EU Large Carnivore Platform, noting in particular that: "*The current hunting ban is not solving this problem*", but instead, it is making it worse. This issue is also applicable to other Member States.

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<sup>3</sup> See brochure: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/no\\_borders\\_brochure.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/no_borders_brochure.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See Rural Development funding:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/85\\_RD\\_leaflet\\_E.1.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/85_RD_leaflet_E.1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Research shows that illegal killing has enjoyed social acceptance in Scandinavian countries for Wolf and in Austria (leading to total eradication) for Brown Bear.

<sup>6</sup> See: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/45\\_Workshop%20statement\\_FINAL-en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/45_Workshop%20statement_FINAL-en.pdf)