



19.9.2018

MISSION REPORT

following the ENVI Committee mission to the French Alps, 12-13 July 2018

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Members of the mission:

Herbert DORFMANN (EPP) - Chair of the delegation

Marijana PETIR (EPP)

Renata BRIANO (S&D)

Accompanying Member:

Michel DANTIN (EPP)

Introduction

At its meeting of 11 June 2018, the Bureau endorsed the request made by the ENVI Committee to send a delegation to the French Alps from 12-13 July 2018. The aim of the delegation is mainly to assess the impact of the implementation of the Nature directives, and in particular the predation of large carnivores such as wolves, on livestock farming.

The mission included meetings in Chambéry and several site visits in the Savoie and Isère departments and was accompanied by Ms Emma Soto Renou and Mr Lorenzo Vicario from the Secretariat of the ENVI Committee, and Ms Muriel Mouret from Parliament's Marseille office.



Summary account of meetings

Thursday 12 July 2018

Morning - meetings

The delegation first met with **Stéphane Bouillon**, Prefect of the region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, and coordinator of the French 2018-2023 National Action Plan on the wolf and stock-rearing activities, who briefly presented the Plan. He explained that based on EU harmonised sampling methods, the wolf population in France is currently estimated to be 430 wolves (an increase of 20% since 2017), and they are located mainly in the Alpine region. The Plan aims to limit the increase in the number of wolves in France and provides subsidies for measures aiming to protect herds including guard dogs, shepherds and fences. It also provides the possibility of simple and reinforced defensive shooting, which can take place in the summer and aims to kill wolves that attack herds, and simple and reinforced culling by shooting, which is only authorised between September and December, and aims to reduce the wolf population by a

defined yearly maximum number equivalent to the 10% of the estimated amount of wolves population (40 wolves in 2018). The Prefect also explained that 23 million € had been spent to fund protection measures and 3.5 million € to compensate for losses. He also called for a revision of EU legislation including the Habitats Directive in which protected species are listed, and in the context of the CAP review and its proposed reduced funding by 17%, called for an alternative source of funding for compensations.

Michèle Boudouin, President of the National Ovine Federation (FNO), then took the floor to stress that wolves had become a major problem for the ovine sector not only in terms of the number of animals lost but also as regards the psychological impact the attacks have on breeders. She explained that pragmatic solutions were needed and made reference to Parliament's resolution of 3 May 2018 on the current situation and future prospects for the sheep and goat sectors in the EU (2017/2117(INI)), which calls for the EU to do more to control and manage the spread of predators, such as wolves and non-protected wolf-dog hybrids, in grazing areas.

Olivier Thibault, Director General of the Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (ONCFS) and Guillaume Rousset, ONCFS Director of Research, explained that estimating the wolf population is not straightforward and ONCFS relies heavily on the work of 3500 observers across France. What is clear is that there has been an important and rapid spread in the French wolf population and that in addition to the permanent presence zones there are new areas being colonised. The ONCFS has also studied the hybridisation of wolves with dog populations and estimates that 2% of wolves in colonisation fronts are first generation hybrids. The potential positive impact of wolves on biodiversity, for example by controlling deer populations, is also being assessed.

Émilie Bonnard, MP from Savoie, expressed her concerns in relation to the speech made by Commissioner Vella at the conference organised in the European Parliament 15 May 2018 on the topic of wolf predation and pastoralism, in which he explained that the presence of wolves was beneficial for tourism.

In the subsequent discussion, several Members agreed that Commissioner Vella may not have realised the importance of the problem and Michel Dantin explained that at a meeting he had had with the Commissioner on 9 July, the Commissioner had stressed the importance of Member States providing information on the problems they face. The Commissioner had also indicated that guidelines on the flexibility provided by the Habitats Directive were being prepared. Several Members also voiced their support in relation to a revision of the Habitats Directive, but stressed that ENVI had recently decided not to reopen the Directive and that it would therefore be difficult to amend the annexes. Renata Briano also indicated that Parliament's Intergroup on "Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside" may also be able to help. Marijana Petir indicated that in Croatia, compensation was provided for losses, but that it was not possible to shoot wolves.

Eva Aliacar, Director of the Vanoise national park, explained that in national parks no hunting is allowed, but wolves can be scared off and prevention measures (dogs, shepherds, and fences) are permitted. The number of attacks in the park have remained stable (39 attacks with 180 victims in 2017). She also explained that the park staff are usually the first on site after the attacks are reported, and provide information to the ONCFS and psychological support to the breeders affected. They also provide advice in relation to the prevention measures and are taking steps to encourage shepherds to work in the parks by providing better accommodation and small mountain shelters that can be heliported. As regards the main issues, she explained that these relate mainly to the conflicts between breeders and tourists especially in relation to

guard dogs, the impact of prevention measures on biodiversity (as regrouping animals leads to more intensive grazing), and financial and staffing costs.

Paolo Salsotto, President of the Italian Natural Park of the Maritime Alps, considered that the national parks are not only important to protect species but also to study them. He explained that farming in the Alpine areas has decreased and forests cover has increased which has encouraged wolf populations to grow. It is estimated that there are 65 wolf packs in the Italian Alpine region representing approximately 400 wolves. Mr Salsotto also presented the LIFE WolfAlps project which was launched in 2013 and completed in May 2018, and aimed to study the species in seven areas in Italy and Slovenia. He added that the Italian Wolf Plan had been abandoned and that currently there was no plan in Italy. He also explained that the park carried out educational activities for tourists and children and ecotourism based on the wolf presence had been developed and “wolf friendly” products were marketed at a premium.

In the subsequent discussion, Members stressed the importance of educational activities, but were not convinced about the added-value of products coming from wolf areas and that the presence of wolves attracted tourists.

The meeting planned with representatives of **associations for nature conservation** including Ferus, ASPAS (Association pour la Protection des Animaux Sauvages) and France Nature Environnement had unfortunately to be cancelled, as on 11 July the associations notified the delegation that they would not attend the meeting as they considered that insufficient time had been granted for the meeting and that the delegation programme was unbalanced.

Afternoon - site visits

Site visit at Fontcouverte-La Toussuire

Hubert Covarel, former president of the sheep union of Savoie, explained that sheep breeding was an economically viable activity in the area as they provide lambs later in the season (November-December), but that five wolf packs were now present in the area. The presence of guard dogs was increasingly problematic especially over the summer when there are more hikers and people riding mountain bikes. For him the conflict with wolves had become a societal issue with the view of urban populations at odds with that of rural communities. He stressed the difficult conditions faced by shepherds and the stress experienced by breeders. **Maurice Girard** and **Hubert Paraz**, two other local breeders, also explained that the regrouping the animals meant that the sheep ate less and that intensive grazing in certain areas resulted in reduced biodiversity. They also explained that the younger generation were now not willing to follow in their parent’s footsteps and take over the families’ farms. **Jaqueline Dupenloup**, Mayor of Saint-Alban-des-Villard, explained that there had been a discussion as to whether hiking paths close to herds should stop being maintained because of the guard dogs, but this separation between pastoralism and tourism has been rejected. Several representatives from farming associations highlighted the stress breeders were under and considered that urgent action at EU level was needed if pastoralism was to survive. **Émilie Bonnard**, MP from Savoie, stressed the importance of pastoralism to encourage biodiversity and considered that breeders should not be excessively constrained by legislation and be able to enjoy a certain amount of freedom. In response, **Herbert Dorfmann** agreed that the situation was not good for breeders or tourism and that there was a need for action at EU level to find the right balance.

Site visit at Beaune, Saint Michel de Maurienne

Leonard Mousset, owner of a sheep farm producing organic sheep cheeses, explained that his herd was attacked by a wolf in 2014 and 12 lambs were lost as a result. Since then, he has taken protection measures, including having two guard dogs and putting up fences and no further attacks have taken place despite several sightings of wolves on their grounds. Mr Mousset explained that even though no more attacks had taken place, it was not business as usual as it was difficult for him to sustain the additional work required and the stress generated continues to have a negative impact on him and his young family. In addition, the presence of guard dogs on the farm is problematic as they sell 95% of the cheese they make directly from the farm and the guard dogs scare tourists away.

In the discussion, Members asked whether it would be possible to chip the wolves and track their movements this way, but the breeder considered that this would not be feasible and could be unreliable. Members also sought further information on the breed of dogs used as guard dogs and whether they could be better trained.

Friday 13 July 2018

Site visit in Lans-en-Vercors

Pascal Ravix of the GAEC (an association of a group of breeders) de la Crécia, explained that he personally had lost 60 of sheep (out of a herd of 500-600 sheep) following wolf attacks and the GAEC had lost hundreds of animals since 2013. The GAEC has since taken protective measures by acquiring 10 guard dogs of different breeds and paying for one shepherd. However conflicts between tourists and the dogs are frequent and the sheep have to be regrouped late in the afternoon which means that they cannot graze long enough and their diet has to be supplemented with cereal. They are also struggling with recruiting shepherds given their difficult working conditions, despite the fact that a chalet has been built by the commune to house them. The local population are also resentful as they considered that public funds could be used for other purposes and should not be used to subsidise private ventures.

Didier Rolland of GAEC des Chamois explained that his cattle had also been attacked by wolves and that three cows had been killed close to buildings. He also explained that the protection methods for cattle were not efficient enough and that the sector needed more support.

Marie-Noel Battistel, MP from Isère and **Michael Kraemer**, Mayor of Lans-En-Vercors, both stressed the importance of solidarity with the breeders and ensuring the security of hikers and tourists in the area. **Lionel Beffre**, Prefect of the Isère department, also explained that the subsidies granted to breeders were often misunderstood, but he considered these to be justified given the public good provided by the breeders in terms of encouraging tourism and benefits to society as a whole.

Conclusions

The Delegation ended by a press conference in the headquarters of the Vercors Regional Natural Park where **Herbert Dorfmann**, as chair of the delegation, explained that other regions in the EU, including his region in Italy, had been similarly affected by the presence of wolves. He considered that the Bern Convention of 1979 and the Habitats Directive of 1992 were now dated and needed to be revised to better reflect the current situation. Mr Dorfmann concluded that having a wolf management plan in France is overall positive (there are no plans in Italy or

Germany), but that this plan is expensive and queried whether this spending could be sustained. He also explained that the successfulness of coexistence is currently based on the number of attacks, but this is not enough as there are other factors that should be considered, such as the level of threat experienced by breeders and their families. Mr Dorfmann considered that the presence of wolves endangers pastoralism especially for the next generation. The aim should not be to eradicate wolves, but to strike the right balance. He also called for better communication on this issue.

Annex - Mission Programme

Wednesday 11 July 2018	
<i>Evening</i>	<p><i>Arrival of participants to the hotel in Chambéry</i></p> <p><i>"Hôtel Le 5 Chambéry"</i></p> <p><i>22 Faubourg Reclus – 73000 Chambéry</i></p>

Thursday 12 July 2018	
08.30	<p><i>Meeting in the hotel lobby</i></p>
08.45 – 11.15	<p>Meeting with Stéphane Bouillon, Préfet of the region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, and coordinator of the French Wolf Plan.</p> <p>Presentation of the French Wolf Plan by Mathieu Metral, DREAL (Direction régionale de l'environnement, de l'aménagement et du logement) Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and Véronique Guillon of the DRAAF (Direction régionale de l'alimentation, de l'agriculture et de la forêt) Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes</p> <p>Meeting with representatives from the Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (ONCFS)</p> <p>Olivier Thibault, Director General</p> <p>Guillaume Rousset, Research and Expertise Director</p> <p><i>Venue: Salon du Château, Préfecture of Savoie – Place Caffé, 73000 Chambéry</i></p>
11.15 – 12.15	<p>Meeting with representatives from Vanoise national park and Maritime Alps park (Italian natural park and LIFE beneficiary)</p> <p>Eva Aliacar, Director, Parc national de la Vanoise</p> <p>Paolo Salsotto, President, Aree protette Alpi marittime</p> <p><i>Venue: Salon du Château, Préfecture of Savoie – Place Caffé, 73000 Chambéry</i></p>

12.15 – 13.15	<p>Working lunch (without interpretation)</p> <p>offered by the Conseil départemental de la Savoie</p> <p>Venue: <i>Conseil départemental de la Savoie, Préfecture of Savoie – Place Caffé, 73000 Chambéry</i></p>
13.15 – 14.30	<p><i>Bus transfer to first visit site (La Toussuire)</i></p>
14.30 – 16.30	<p>Site visit with Hubert Covarel, former president of the sheep union of Savoie</p> <p>Venue: <i>La Toussuire, 73300 Fontcouverte La Toussuire (meeting point at the Bellard chair lift)</i></p> <p>Stakeholder discussion with Mayor of La Toussuire, Mr Bernard Covarel and farming associations and economic operators (on site)</p>
16.30 – 17.30	<p><i>Bus transfer to Beaune Saint Michel de Maurienne</i></p>
17.30 – 18.30	<p>Site visit with Leonard Mousset, Member of society of pastures economy and of Union for the Protection of Pastoral and Rural Activities</p> <p>Venue: <i>Le Mollard, Beaune, 73140 Saint Michel de Maurienne</i></p>
18.30 – 19.45	<p><i>Bus transfer to the hotel</i></p>
20.30 – 22.30	<p>Working dinner with local institutions (without interpretation)</p> <p>Offered by the Mayor of Chambéry, Michel Dantin, MEP</p> <p>Venue: <i>City hall of Chambéry – Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, 73011 Chambéry</i></p>

Friday 13 July 2018	
08.20 – 09.45	<i>Bus transfer from hotel to Lans en Vercors in the Natural Regional Parc of Vercors</i>
<p>During the visits in Lans-en-Vercors the delegation will be accompanied by</p> <p>Lionel Beffre, Préfet of the Isère department</p>	
09.45 – 11.15	<p>Site visit in the Groupement Agricole d'Exploitation en Commun (GAEC) des Chamois with Didier Rolland, affected by cases of attacks on cattle</p> <p><i>Venue: Lans-en-Vercors</i></p> <p>Site visit of GAEC de la Crécia with Pascal Ravix, President of the pastoral grouping sheep meat</p> <p><i>Venue: 436 Chemin Clément, Lans-en-Vercors</i></p>
11.15 – 11.30	<i>Bus transfer within Lans-en-Vercors</i>
11.30 – 12.00	<p><i>Press conference</i></p> <p><i>Venue: Vercors Regional Natural Park – 255, chemin des Fusillés, 38250 Lans-en-Vercors</i></p>
12.00 – 13.30	<p>Working lunch (without interpretation)</p> <p>Offered by the Vercors Regional Natural Park</p> <p><i>Venue: Col de l'Arc, 14 route de Saint-Donat, 38250 Lans-en-Vercors</i></p>
End of the programme	

List of further people that the delegation met during the site visit and the working lunches

Thursday 12 July 2018

Mr Patrick Poyet, Regional delegate, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes of 'ONCFS

Ms Mireille Celdran, Head of hunting, wild fauna and flore office MTES

Ms Marianne Vebr, Head of mission Wolf, lynx, bear and cormoran at MTES

Ms Émilie Bonnivard, MP from Savoie

Mr Hervé Gaymard, President of Conseil départemental de la Savoie

Mr Lionel Mithieux, Vice-President of Conseil départemental de la Savoie

Ms Michèle Boudouin, President of the National Ovine Federation (FNO)

Mr Claude Font, Secretary General of the National Ovine Federation (FNO)

Friday 13 July 2018

Ms Marie-Noel Battistel, MP from Isère and President of the National Association of the elected representative from mountain (Association nationale des élus de la montagne - ANEM)

Mr Michael Kraemer, Mayor of Lans-En-Vercors

Mr Bernard Covarel, Mayor of la Toussuire

Mr Franck Girard, Mayor of Saint Nizier

Mr Michel Vartanian, First Vice-President of the Regional natural Park of Vercors

Mr Olivier Putot, Directeur of the Regional natural Park of Vercors