

2.6 Guidelines for Public Engagement

Authors: Sybille Wölfl, Moritz Klose

Reviewers: Manuela von Arx, Aleksandra Majić Skrbinišek, Max Boxleitner

2.6.1 Introduction

Lynx reintroduction and translocation projects must be seen as interdisciplinary projects, combining in-depth species expertise with expertise in social issues. The success of such projects depends heavily on facilitating constructive and cooperative human interactions at all stages of the project. This has long been recognised.

Social dimensions in species recovery projects encompass numerous methods and approaches to promote coexistence between species and humans. Inevitably, social science data, i.e. data and knowledge about the human context, socio-economic, cultural and political aspects, are crucial for project planning and implementation. This includes, for example, stakeholder identification and various approaches to public engagement, integrated into a communication strategy that guides all phases of the project: preparation, implementation and exit.

Here we formulate guidelines for public engagement and present recommendations on how to manage human-human interaction in lynx reintroduction and translocation projects in Central Europe. We focus on general principles as practices and solutions are context dependent and need to be tailored to existing local, regional, societal and political conditions.

By continuously collecting and aggregating good practices and lessons learned from different conservation projects and organisations, we aim to illustrate possible approaches and share best practice examples.

2.6.1.1 What is public engagement?

Public engagement refers to the process of actively involving and interacting with the public to inform, consult, collaborate, and empower them in decision-making processes and subsequent (co)implementation of actions. It emphasises:

- **Communication:** It involves listening to and considering public input, concerns, and feedback, not just providing information.
- **Personal interaction:** It often involves workshops, meetings, surveys, interviews, or other activities, such as citizen science approaches, that encourage participation and discussion.
- **Building relationships:** It aims to build trust, understanding, and cooperation among decision-makers, conservation practitioners, and the public (see chapter 1.2 for the definition of the term public).

Public engagement is goal-oriented, that is, it aims to achieve specific goals or outcomes, such as gaining public support for translocation or reintroduction projects.

2.6.1.1.1 Levels of public engagement

The terms consultation, collaboration, co-decision, and empowerment represent progressively deeper levels of public engagement in decision-making, each reflecting a different degree of

stakeholder influence and participation. Defining these levels clearly allows project managers to manage expectations and foster a collaborative environment that maximises public engagement and project success. In order to achieve broad support among those affected by the project, it is essential to clearly define and communicate the levels of participation that are possible and desired.

Consultation: At this level, stakeholders are asked for their opinions and suggestions, and provide information and feedback. This input is considered by decision-makers, but stakeholders have no direct influence on the final decisions.

Collaboration: At this level, stakeholders work together with the project team. They are actively involved in discussions, planning, and some decision making. While they are not the ones who make final decisions, their input is more integral to the process, and they share some responsibility for the results.

Co-decision: Co-decision is a formalised form of collaboration where stakeholders are partners in a project and have equal power in the decision-making process. Decisions are made jointly, with both stakeholders and project managers sharing authority and responsibility. This level ensures that all participating parties have a significant and equal say in the outcome and promotes shared ownership of the project.

Empowerment: Empowerment is the highest level of stakeholder involvement, where stakeholders have the authority to make decisions independently. They are given the resources, responsibility and autonomy to manage certain aspects of the project. This level often involves capacity building to ensure that stakeholders are well-equipped to handle decision-making roles effectively.

2.6.1.1.2 Methods of public engagement

In general, public engagement in reintroduction projects of endangered species typically involves several key methods. These methods aim to foster understanding, support, and collaboration among various stakeholders, ultimately promoting successful reintroduction efforts and coexistence between the species and human populations.

- **Surveys and Interviews:** Conducting surveys, interviews, or focus groups to assess public attitudes, perceptions, and concerns regarding the reintroduction of lynx and wildlife management strategies.
- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Engaging with stakeholders such as hunters, landowners, farmers, and local communities to understand their perspectives, address potential conflicts, and involve them in decision-making processes.
- **Public Information Campaigns:** Conducting informational campaigns through various media channels to raise awareness about the importance of the project, the role of lynx in ecosystems, and the potential benefits to local communities.
- **Public Consultations:** Holding community meetings, workshops, or town halls to discuss the project, address concerns, and gather feedback from residents and local authorities.
- **Conflict Mitigation Strategies:** Developing and implementing strategies to mitigate potential negatively perceived interactions between lynx and land users (e.g. hunters, foresters), such as compensation programs for livestock predation, livestock protection measures, and promoting coexistence practices. It includes conflict mitigation strategies to mitigate potential conflicts among stakeholder groups.
- **Education and Outreach Programs:** Providing educational materials such as brochures, fact sheets, and educational videos that explain the project's goals, the expected benefits and the

ecological role of lynx. Organising outreach activities like school programs, community events, workshops and guided tours to educate the public on lynx biology and build support.

- **Media Engagement:** Working with media outlets to disseminate accurate information, highlight success stories, and address misconceptions or negative perceptions surrounding lynx reintroduction projects.
- **Citizen science:** Engaging stakeholders in project implementation through citizen science and other collaborative approaches can significantly enhance outcomes. Stakeholders often have interest, knowledge, skills and resources (human and other) that can be essential for successful field implementation. By contributing directly, they become co-creators and co-owners of the data and results, fostering a sense of shared responsibility. This active involvement not only strengthens the quality of project outcomes but can also play a critical role in ensuring the long-term sustainability and impact of the project results.
- **Long-term Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing mechanisms for ongoing communication, monitoring, and evaluation of the reintroduction project's progress, impacts on ecosystems, and interactions with local communities (see protocol 2.5 *Post-release monitoring*).

2.6.1.2 Who is the public?

Usually, the term "public" refers to the general population, which includes all people in a given area. However, it is useful to differentiate the public into different sub-groups based on their level of involvement, interests, and roles in the decision-making process. Differentiating these subgroups allows for more targeted and effective engagement strategies tailored to their specific interests, concerns, and roles in the project. It also helps decision-makers ensure that a variety of perspectives are considered in the decision-making process. In general, the following sub-groups are of special interest in lynx reintroduction projects:

📌 Interest Groups

- **Hunting Associations:** Organisations representing the interests of hunters, and other recreational users of natural resources.
- **Environmental NGOs:** Organisations advocating for conservation, wildlife protection, and sustainable management of natural resources. They often represent specific environmental interests and may lobby for particular policies or projects.
- **Forestry and Agriculture Associations:** Groups representing businesses or industries that may be impacted by lynx reintroduction projects or wildlife management decisions, such as agriculture, or forestry.

📌 Government Agencies

- **Conservation or Wildlife Management Agencies:** Government bodies responsible for overseeing wildlife management, conservation, and regulation. They play a key role in decision-making and implementation.
- **Local Government:** Rural district or regional authorities that may have jurisdiction over areas where the project activities occur. They may be involved in land-use planning, permitting, or funding decisions.

📌 General public and local inhabitants:

- Individuals who may have an interest in wildlife / lynx but may not be directly involved in decision-making processes. Their attitudes, behaviours, and support for conservation efforts can still influence outcomes.

- Local residents who live in or near areas where the reintroduction project is taking place. Their perspectives, concerns, and support are crucial for successful implementation.

📄 **Researchers and Academics**

- **Scientists:** Researchers studying wildlife ecology, behaviour, and conservation. Their expertise can inform decision-making and contribute to the development of effective management strategies.
- **Academic Institutions:** Universities and research institutions conducting studies related to wildlife management, conservation biology, and ecosystem health.

All of these entities can be considered **stakeholders**, i.e. individuals, groups, or organisations that have an interest or stake in the outcome of a project or decision. They can affect or be affected by the project's actions, decisions, or goals.

Primary stakeholders are those who are directly affected by the project. For example, local residents living in the release areas, hunters, landowners or farmers affected by livestock predation, or businesses such as forestry operating in an area where a reintroduction project is planned.

Secondary stakeholders may not be directly affected but may have an interest in the project or be affected by the outcome of a decision. They may include environmental organisations, other NGOs, recreational users of a natural area, government agencies, or academic researchers.

Tertiary stakeholders are influential but not directly involved, such as the media or the general public.

Key stakeholders are individuals or groups that can significantly influence the success of a project. They may have formal power, expertise, or resources that are critical to the project.

2.6.2 Project phases

Here we distinguish three main project stages during which different tasks arise and methods of public engagement are recommended.

2.6.2.1 Preparational phase

2.6.2.1.1 Install a communication manager

Installing a well-trained and experienced communication manager in the beginning of the project is highly advisable because they can play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between conservation goals of the project and interests and concerns of various stakeholders. The release of lynxes can evoke diverse reactions among people directly or indirectly affected. Each group may have distinct concerns and interests, ranging from fear of livestock predation and human-wildlife interactions to ecological benefits.

A communication manager is adept at understanding diverse perspectives, facilitating effective dialogue and developing suitable channels and means for public engagement. Their expertise in stakeholder engagement, conflict resolution, and public relations is indispensable for navigating the complex social landscape that surrounds a lynx conservation project. By fostering a cooperative and informed environment, they enhance the likelihood of the project's success and sustainability, ensuring that both conservation goals and community needs are met.

The work of engaging with stakeholders is time-demanding and sufficient resources should be allocated for this task (Consorte-McCrea et al. 2022), e.g. for various activities to proactively engage with stakeholders like public meetings, informational sessions and workshops, writing of press releases and managing online communication channels.

2.6.2.1.2 Identify your stakeholders

A stakeholder analysis helps to identify and understand the interests, influence and needs of the various stakeholders involved. It is useful to map the identified stakeholders according to their influence and interest in the project, e.g. using influence-interest grids or power-interest matrices (e.g. Reed et al. 2009, Bryson 2011), and to visualise their relationships, as there may be areas of potential conflict between stakeholders and the project, and between stakeholders themselves. It is of paramount importance to consider stakeholder interactions as this shapes their positions and willingness to collaborate (Hovardas 2018).

Assessing stakeholder interests and concerns helps to i) understand what each stakeholder group stands to gain or lose from the project, and ii) identify any concerns or objections that stakeholders may have.

Differentiating stakeholders allows for more targeted and effective engagement strategies tailored to their specific interests, concerns, and roles in the reintroduction or translocation project. It also helps to ensure that a variety of perspectives are considered in the decision-making process.

Stakeholder identification is also a prerequisite for the development of a communication strategy, as communication with stakeholder groups can then be tailored to their specific interests and influence.

It is necessary to continually update the stakeholder analysis and engagement plan based on feedback and changing circumstances.

2.6.2.1.3 Decide on stakeholder involvement and their roles in the decision-making process

The financial support of governmental organisations (GOs) is often essential for the implementation of a reintroduction or translocation project. At the same time, GOs are often reluctant to share power and expect to have full control over the decision-making process, i.e. to make the final decisions on project issues. It is therefore crucial to have a clear understanding of the respective roles and to agree on the level of public engagement (consultation, collaboration, co-decision, empowerment).

Different stakeholders have, or may develop, different levels of influence with GOs and politicians. This needs to be balanced in order to develop stakeholder engagement that is perceived as fair and equitable by all groups.

The more stakeholders and local organisations and communities are involved in project planning and implementation, the more sustainable the solutions and the greater the ability to manage conflict. This includes, for example, site selection, monitoring protocols and management strategies.

2.6.2.1.4 Stakeholder engagement plan

How to engage with stakeholders should be carefully planned based on a stakeholder analysis. An engagement plan determines the appropriate (and affordable) methods and approaches for public

engagement in time and space. Which methods are appropriate depends on the context, i.e. the area, the funds, the social and political situation. For example, engagement may include regular meetings, workshops, advisory committees, and one-on-one consultations. The engagement plan should also identify methods for stakeholders to provide feedback, ask questions, and raise concerns.

To maintain engagement, the public and stakeholders should be kept informed throughout the project lifecycle with regular updates, progress reports, and success stories. Social media and community forums can be a way to maintain ongoing dialogue and engagement.

2.6.2.1.5 Develop a communication strategy

Part of the engagement plan should be a communication strategy with three main components:

- **Definition of clear goals and specific, i.e. measurable objectives.** Examples are: raising awareness, building support for the translocation/reintroduction, and educating the public. Objectives should support the overarching goals, e.g. increasing public knowledge about lynx, reducing misinformation, or garnering stakeholder support.
- **Development of key messages:** Creation of clear, concise, and compelling messages that communicate the importance of the reintroduction project, its benefits, and how the public can be involved. Inclusion of messages that address common concerns or misconceptions about the project to build trust and transparency.
- **Selection of appropriate communication channels:** Choose a mix of suitable communication channels to reach different audiences effectively. Channels can include traditional media (newspapers, radio, TV), digital media (websites, social media, email newsletters), and in-person methods (meetings, workshops, public forums).

It is important to base the communication strategy on a comprehensive stakeholder analysis. To differentiate between stakeholder groups, government agencies, NGOs, and the general public according to their interests, influence, and relationship to the project helps to tailor messages effectively. Knowing their perceptions, attitudes and concerns is crucial to create understandable and targeted messages.

Sometimes hunters, foresters, or livestock owners have concerns about the effects of lynx presence, such as making hunting more difficult, restricting forestry operations, or preying on livestock, and may be the most critical to lynx reintroduction. Trusting and transparent messages should be developed to address their concerns about lynx or misconceptions about the project. However, it is also important to take into account NGOs or conservationists who are often in favor of such projects, but sometimes fear negative effects of lynx presence on other protected or rare species, e.g. capercaillie, wildcat.

Although social media have become important and easy-to-use media channels, traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television should not be neglected. Different stakeholder groups may have different channels and ways of communicating, e.g. local residents mostly read newspapers for information. Knowing the preferred communication channels helps to plan the frequency of information and the type of message more efficiently. The frequency of information (about the species or the ongoing project) is a delicate balance that should not overwhelm stakeholders or local communities with information.

The communication strategy is critical to ensuring public support, addressing concerns, and fostering cooperation among stakeholders. Therefore, its effectiveness should be monitored and evaluated. Metrics include media coverage, public sentiment, and stakeholder feedback.

2.6.2.1.6 Build good relationships to media experts

The media or media professionals should be involved in the project as stakeholders and should be considered in the project's communication strategy. The media can greatly enhance the visibility of the project by disseminating information widely, increase public support through positive media coverage, and facilitate the overall success and sustainability of the project by providing information about the project's goals, processes, and benefits. Positive media coverage can also raise awareness and counter misinformation.

We recommend building and maintaining good relationships with media professionals from key media outlets (newspapers, TV, radio, online platforms) through ongoing and open communication. For example, i) providing regular updates to media stakeholders through press releases, briefings and newsletters; ii) offering exclusive access to project sites, behind-the-scenes tours and interviews with project leaders; iii) using storytelling, i.e. developing compelling stories and visual content (videos, infographics) that media can use to engage their audiences; or iv) organising events and press conferences to announce key milestones, launch phases of the project or celebrate successes.

Inviting media experts to advisory boards or stakeholder meetings ensures that their perspectives are included in the project's communication strategies. Involving them also helps manage crises by ensuring that accurate information is disseminated quickly, preventing the spread of misinformation.

2.6.2.1.7 Set up a social monitoring

Social monitoring provides knowledge about the different perceptions and concerns of stakeholders. Some stakeholders may make universal claims such as "no one wants lynx in this area" or "all farmers fear attacks on livestock", etc. Quantitative surveys are a good approach to obtain representative data on the proportion of negative, neutral or positive attitudes among the public and different stakeholder groups. Qualitative interviews are more complex and time-consuming, but can facilitate an understanding of specific beliefs, perceptions or concerns, and the relationship between these categories. In addition, the results of qualitative studies help formulate targeted questions for a quantitative survey.

Social monitoring requires careful planning at all stages of the project, i.e. it should be designed as a longitudinal study to monitor any changes in attitudes or perceptions towards lynx or support for the project. To understand how attitudes change over time and how they might relate to your project activities, consider conducting surveys at different stages of the project, e.g. pre-project, post-project, and mid-project.

Depending on your budget and the level of detail you wish to obtain, there are different monitoring methods and service providers available, such as online surveys, telephone surveys or face-to-face interviews. Consider working with an experienced research organisation to design and conduct the monitoring.

2.6.2.1.8 Inform the public about the planned project

To ensure that people who may be interested in or affected by the project are aware of its activities, it is crucial to communicate about the project at an early stage, before the first translocations take place. By providing accurate information about the project, as well as the behaviour, ecology and benefits of lynx, the project can help dispel myths and allay fears, thus helping to build a positive perception of the project. When people feel informed and involved in the project early on, they are more likely to support and participate in conservation efforts. This is particularly important in areas where lynx have been absent for a long time and reintroduction represents a significant change in the local environment. Transparent communication helps to dispel any misconceptions and shows that project managers are committed to taking the community's concerns and values into account.

Finally, public awareness can lead to better monitoring and reporting of lynx activity. Local residents who are well informed about the project are more likely to report sightings, track movements, and provide valuable data that can help inform conservation efforts.

2.6.2.2 Implementation phase

2.6.2.2.1 Public information campaigning

We talked about the needs for emphasising on informing the public above. Various means are available and should be considered to reach different target audiences with the messages and information you want to send. Here we present a selection of different formats you might want to consider:

☐ Meetings and Workshops:

- Objective: Foster direct engagement and open dialogue.
- Public Meetings: Host regular community meetings to provide updates on the project, discuss plans, and address concerns. Ensure these meetings are accessible to all groups that are potentially interested in the project.
- Workshops and Training Sessions: Organise workshops for specific groups such as farmers, hunters, and local officials to inform them on lynx behaviour, ecological effects of lynx, and practical coexistence strategies as well as monitoring techniques.

☐ Informational and Educational Materials

- Objective: Disseminate clear and accurate information.
- Brochures and Flyers: Create easy-to-read materials that explain the lynx reintroduction project, its goals, benefits, and how it will be managed.
- Fact Sheets and FAQs: Develop detailed fact sheets and frequently asked questions (FAQs) documents to address common concerns and misconceptions.

☐ School and Youth Programs

- Objective: Engage the younger generation and foster long-term conservation values.
- School Visits and Presentations: Conduct presentations in local schools to educate students about lynx and the importance of biodiversity.
- Interactive Activities: Organise activities such as nature walks, wildlife tracking, and art projects related to lynx to inspire interest and engagement among children and teenagers.

☐ Digital and Social Media Outreach

- Objective: Reach a broader audience and provide timely updates.

- Project Website: Maintain a dedicated website with comprehensive information about the project, regular updates, and contact information for inquiries.
- Social Media Campaigns: Use platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to share stories, photos, videos, and updates, encouraging community interaction and feedback.
- Newsletters and Emails: Send regular newsletters and email updates to keep the community informed about project progress and upcoming events.

📄 **Collaboration with media**

- Objective: Reach a broader audience and provide timely updates.
- Regularly send out press releases about project updates and progresses and organise events that journalists would like to attend to obtain more information about the project, e.g. press conferences or press trips to the project sites. Arrange interviews with project representatives and local supporters to discuss the project's aims and benefits.

📄 **Conflict mitigation and Support**

- Objective: Address and mitigate potential conflicts proactively
- Hotlines and Support Services: It is advisable to allocate resources to establish a platform or support service for reporting lynx sightings, livestock predation, or other concerns, and provide timely assistance and compensation where applicable.
- Discussion formats: Keep in mind that stakeholder interaction is very important. Stakeholders often have different values and beliefs which might clash and produce social conflicts. Beside usual conflict mitigation workshops it is also possible to create situations or offer activities, e.g. field trips for lynx tracking, visiting other projects, where your stakeholders get to know each other better in a different environment and make common experiences.

2.6.2.2.2 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an ongoing activity throughout the project lifecycle and is very time consuming. In addition to regular updates on the progress of the project (through methods described under 2.2.1), it is important that key stakeholders are specifically involved in regular meetings where specific issues or problems that may arise can be addressed.

In the early stages of a reintroduction project with a small population and infrequent encounters, beliefs and myths about lynx behaviour may outweigh biological facts and actual experience with the species. In this phase, it is valuable to regularly and repeatedly inform stakeholders about lynx behaviour and ecology. Two topics seem to be most important: i) interaction with ungulate populations (like roe deer and chamois) and ii) predation on livestock. Sometimes local people express their fear of having a top predator such as a lynx around. This should also be addressed.

A valuable method of stakeholder engagement, especially with hunters or nature lovers, is to involve them in the monitoring program, either through radio telemetry or camera-trap monitoring (see protocol 2.5 *Post-release monitoring*). Sharing the field experience, such as reviewing camera-trap images, following lynx tracks, or searching for telemetry locations, is a good way to learn and build relationships and trust.

2.6.2.2.3 Release events

A lynx release is one of the highlights of a conservation project. It is a great opportunity to invite your key audiences to promote the transparency, inclusiveness, and collaboration that are essential to building trust and support for the project. When stakeholders are invited to participate, they feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the project. This involvement can lead to more supportive and proactive attitudes. Events provide a platform for stakeholders to voice their concerns and for project leaders to address them directly. This face-to-face interaction is more effective in building trust than written communication alone.

Practical Steps for Inviting Stakeholders

- **Identify Key Stakeholders:** Refer to your stakeholder analysis and identify all relevant individuals who have an interest in or may be affected by the project.
- **Personal Invitations:** Send personalised invitations explaining the importance of their presence and how their input can contribute to the project's success.
- **Tailored Engagement:** Plan parts of the event that specifically address the interests and concerns of different stakeholder groups. For the cause of animal welfare some parts of the event might be reserved to a limited number of people while there should also be a part that is open for a wider audience.
- **By thoughtfully inviting and engaging specific stakeholders, a lynx reintroduction project can build a foundation of trust, foster community support, and enhance the project's overall success and sustainability.**

2.6.2.2.4 Crisis communication

There are many things that can go wrong in a conservation project. It is important to be aware of potential risks and be prepared to communicate about them. It is highly recommended to have a crisis communication plan in place before a crisis actually occurs. It should list all the things that could potentially go wrong and how to respond, and also include key messages/wording for serious events that could happen (e.g. a lynx is injured or dies during translocation, a released lynx kills livestock).

Key considerations in crisis communication:

- Communicate truthfully about the situation. Hiding information can lead to mistrust and rumors.
- Provide information as quickly as possible to prevent misinformation and speculation.
- Ensure that all messages are consistent across different platforms and spokespersons to avoid confusion.
- Show empathy towards those affected by the incident. Understand their concerns and address them compassionately.

2.6.2.3 Termination phase of the project

The release of the last lynx marks the end of the direct intervention, i.e. the translocation project. This is where the team's involvement and collaboration end, and the whole conservation initiative enters a new phase after the project is completed. To ensure that the project leaves a lasting positive impact and that the benefits of the project are maintained, it is recommended that an exit strategy

be developed at the beginning of the project. The exit strategy should be developed with the involvement of all project partners and relevant stakeholders.

How this phase of the translocation project will be structured, i.e. new partners will join, old partners will leave, and what conservation actions will be continued, should be clarified during the preparation and implementation of the project, as it seems clear that the target population will need further protection and management to ensure the sustainability of the project's achievements (Conservation Measures Partnership 2020, Consorte-McCrea et al. 2022).

To ensure lasting positive outcomes of the translocation project, several aspects of public engagement should be considered in an exit strategy:

Communication with stakeholders: Ongoing communication helps maintain transparency, keeps the public informed about the project's progress and any challenges, and reinforces the community's role in supporting the project's outcomes. This can be achieved through regular updates via community meetings, newsletters, social media, and local media outlets. To inform the public about lynx conservation issues, their ecological roles, and the benefits of their presence continuous communication efforts are needed. By building partnerships with schools and training multipliers beyond teachers a cost-effective way can be setup.

Build local capacity to manage and monitor the lynx and its habitat after the project ends. Capacity building through training and education programs ensures that local stakeholders have the skills and knowledge to continue conservation activities independently. This can include involving them in monitoring activities, decision-making processes, and ongoing management practices. Citizen science initiatives can be a valuable tool, allowing the public to contribute data and observations, fostering a connection with the project. Check if individuals of local communities or organizations have the capacity and resources to help maintain the project's outcomes. Bound by conservation legislation, the regional government will usually become responsible for monitoring and managing the reintroduced species once the translocation project ends. Adequate resources within the responsible agency and a thorough handover of information from the project managers to the agency, as well as ongoing communication between the two, can help ensure the long-term success of the project.

Strengthen partnerships with local organisations, governments, NGOs and schools. Establishing strong collaborations with local and regional partners can provide ongoing support, resources, and expertise. These partnerships can help maintain conservation activities, secure funding, and provide a network for information sharing and advocacy.

A formal integration into local governance and institutional frameworks ensures that the project's approaches and objectives are maintained and supported over the long term. By establishing trust funds, securing long-term grants, mobilisation of government funds, new donors, community investment, etc. funding for public engagement issues can be secured after the end of the project.

Address potential conflicts and establish mechanisms for conflict resolution. Conflicts may arise from the presence of the reintroduced lynxes, such as livestock predation. Developing conflict mitigation strategies, such as compensation schemes or deterrent methods, and involving the public in these discussions can help mitigate negative impacts and foster coexistence.

2.6.3 Conclusion

When it comes to reintroducing a top predator like the lynx, it's all about communication, relationship building, transparency and trust.

A communications manager and his/her team responsible for planning and implementing public engagement methods need a high degree of emotional intelligence, in addition to relevant professional skills and (at best) experience in top predator conservation projects.

It must be emphasised that public engagement requires a continuous effort, i.e. human and financial resources, not only for the preparatory phase (planning is half of the project), but also after the project is finished.

The consideration of the social dimension is of utmost importance to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the project, i.e. the flourishing of the lynx population towards a self-sustaining viable population in an atmosphere of human tolerance and undisturbed human-lynx coexistence.

2.6.4 Best Practice Examples

... will be added ...

References:

Bryson, J.M. 2011. Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement. John Wiley & Sons.

Conservation Measures Partnership. 2020. Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation. Version 4.0. Online. Available online at: <https://conservationstandards.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/09/CMP-Open-Standards-for-the-Practice-of-Conservation-v4.0-English.pdf> (accessed June 17, 2024).

Hovardas T. 2018. Addressing human dimensions in large carnivore conservation and management. Insights from environmental social science and social psychology. In: Large Carnivore Conservation and Management. Earthscan Studies in Natural Resource Management, Routledge.

Reed, M.S., et al. 2009. Who's in and why? A typology of stakeholder analysis methods for natural resource management. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 90(5), 1933-1949.

WWF. 2017. Planning for sustainability and responsible exits. In: Resources for Implementing the CMP Open Standards, eds Fund WW. Available online at: http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/Sustainability_and_Exit_Strategies_March_2017.pdf (accessed June 17, 2024).