

# **BUILDING AN ALPINE-WIDE WEB OF SHEPHERDING ORGANISATIONS: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

## **CONFERENCE DOCUMENTATION**

### **CIPRA, a diverse and multifaceted organisation**

The International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) is an autonomous, non-profit umbrella organisation committed to the protection and sustainable development of the Alps. It has an international executive office in Liechtenstein, seven national agencies in the Alpine states and one regional agency in South Tyrol. As a network operating across the Alps, CIPRA represents around 100 organisations and institutions as well as individual members.

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## I. BACKGROUND

The return of large carnivores to the Alps has many consequences for Alpine farming and the work and practices of shepherding. Within the scope of the project [“Knowledge transfer on the co-adaptation of humans and wolves in the Alpine region”](#), a study was conducted to investigate the potentials and challenges for a cross-border shepherd organisation in order to master current and future challenges to the shepherding profession and to build transnational support and networking structures for shepherds.

Building on the results of this project, CIPRA International and the [Euro Large Carnivores](#) project invited representatives from shepherding organisations in the Alpine region, representatives from agricultural organisations as well as policymakers to a virtual conference that took place on 27 January 2022. The invitation was addressed to actors with an influence on the framework conditions (e.g. working conditions) of shepherding.

More than 34 participants from Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Germany, Italy, France, and Switzerland discussed the issue at the conference.

## II. PROGRAMME

### INTRODUCTION

Moritz Klose (WWF, Germany) started the conference with a short introduction to the [LIFE Euro Large Carnivores](#) project, which supported the conference financially. [Click here for the recommendations](#) of the project and the [invitation to the final conference](#) on 16 March 2022.

### POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES FOR A CROSS-BORDER SHEPHERD ORGANISATION IN THE ALPS

Esther Haesen, a shepherdess from Switzerland, then presented the results of a study conducted by herself and Andrea Sulig – also a shepherd in Switzerland – to investigate the potentials and challenges for a cross-border shepherd organisation. The full study can be found on the [CIPRA website](#).

The study showed that the following five areas could potentially be fields of activity for a cross-border shepherd organisation:



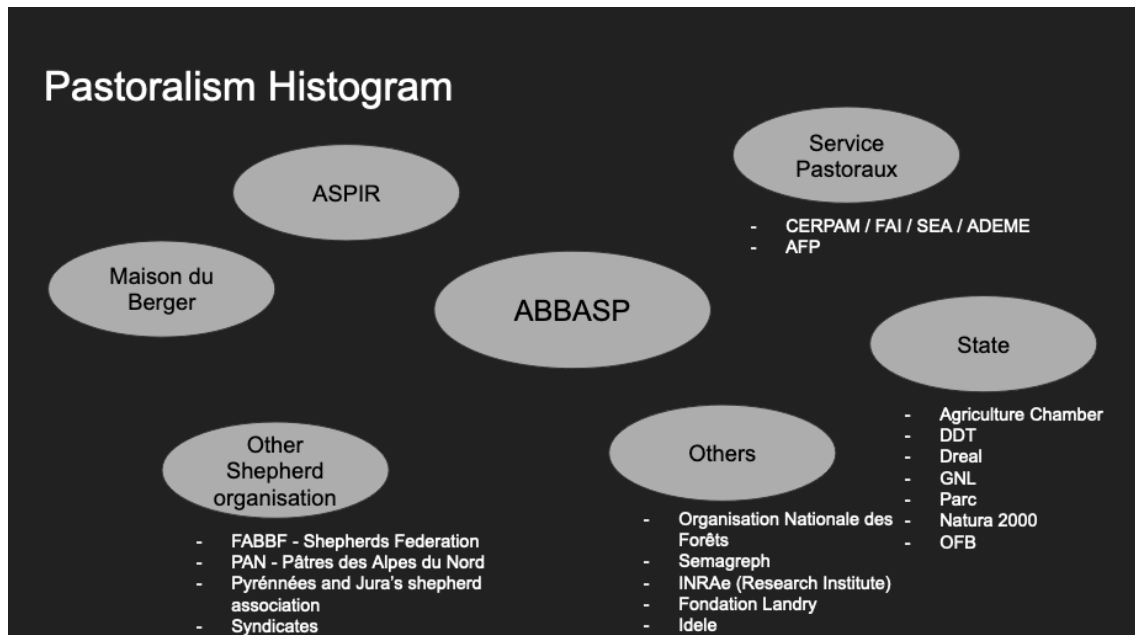
<b>Public relations</b>	Promote shepherding as demanding profession that requires qualification Educate public about work & challenges of shepherds Raise awareness on role of pastoralism for nature conservation & regional economic cycles
<b>Professional training</b>	Provide information on existing training opportunities Help benefit from experiences of other countries
<b>Exchange and networking</b>	Organise conferences, excursions and festivals Promote exchange of experiences between shepherds
<b>Advocacy of shepherds' interests</b>	Increase shepherds' representation in the political sphere Improve employment and accommodation conditions Achieve representation of shepherds not permanently living in country where they work
<b>Rights and duties</b>	Serve as contact point for information

However, four major challenges to such a transalpine organisation were also identified:

- **Legitimacy:** How can an Alpine-wide organisation be seen as a tangible partner by existing shepherds' organisations and shepherds?
- **Transboundary** and yet very close: How can a cross-border organisation work close to the grassroots level without losing sight of the bigger picture?
- **Voluntary basis:** Given that local shepherds' organisations are already facing many challenges, is a voluntary basis realistic for a cross-border shepherds' organisation?
- **Rights and duties** in different countries: Covering rights and duties of shepherds in different countries is a labour- and cost-intensive procedure.

## AN OVERVIEW OF PASTORAL ORGANISATIONS IN FRANCE

In France pastoral organisations already have a long tradition that goes back over 30 years. Thomas Pachoud, a French shepherd and president of the French shepherds' organisation ABBASP (Association des bergères et bergers des Alpes du sud et de Provence), gave an overview of the work conducted by ABBASP and the various partners with which they interact.



## GROUP DISCUSSION

Following these two inputs, participants were divided into four groups and the following questions were discussed in each group:

1. What are participants currently doing for shepherds and what are they doing to make shepherding a sustainable / future-oriented job?
2. Do they see more need for action for shepherds and, if yes, where?
3. Could an Alpine-wide organisation help to move this forward and, if yes, how?

Topics currently addressed by participating organisations are:

- Offering educational programmes for shepherds
- Organising information events for shepherds and farmers
- Helping to improve the accommodation situation for shepherds through lobbying, infrastructure renovation or helping municipalities to access funding
- Offering information regarding the expanding numbers of large carnivores and protection measures for sheep flocks (fencing and guard dogs for livestock)

Participants in fact see more need for action for shepherds in the following areas:

- Increasing the representation of shepherds in political decision-making processes, both at EU level and in national strategic plans.
  - Click here for the [CAP plans for each country](#).
- Increasing financial budgets for shepherds (e.g. funding for shepherds' wages, exchange projects between shepherds, etc.).



- Ensuring that the money intended for shepherds actually reaches them.
- Finding ways to ensure shepherds stay longer in the profession: the job of shepherding must become more long-term in nature!
- Providing more education opportunities for shepherds, as the comeback of large carnivores increases the demand for shepherds and the need for experienced shepherds: it is no longer a job that can be done with no previous experience.
- Raising awareness of the value and necessity of shepherding while keeping pastures open, including for nature conservationists.
- Increasing the value of sheep meat: very few people eat this product, thus for many it has little value. This view of sheep meat may also be related to the low appreciation of shepherding in general.
- Shepherding is close to vanishing in Slovenia, Switzerland, Austria and some parts of northern Italy: is it currently hard to find good shepherds as they have not been in demand for such a long time?

As to the question of whether an Alpine-wide organisation could help to move matters forward, there were mixed opinions:

Pros	Cons
Interesting to have one, more powerful voice. Possibility of forming working groups for lobbyism.	No need for a new organisation: rather a network of existing organisations to promote exchanges so as to help and collaborate with each other.
An Alpine-wide organisation might be helpful for reciprocal learning about the understanding and development of laws, rights and duties.	Time-consuming to work at local or regional levels. Not sure what can be contributed at Alpine-wide level except lobbying.
Opportunity for more exchanges on training for shepherds, currently often organised at national or regional level.	Difficult to imagine an Alpine-wide organisation as a “quick-response” organisation.
Possibility of developing faster training in countries where shepherding is not yet so developed.	It might be too early for Austria to participate because shepherding is not that developed there yet.
A network of existing organisations also needs some kind of structure to administer it.	Different groups with many individual experiences differ in their definition of shepherding, making it difficult to find a common denominator for an Alpine-wide shepherding organisation. Conflicts and mistrust between different groups of shepherds might occur.



## AN ERASMUS FOR SHEPHERDS – PRESENTING OPPORTUNITIES TO START AN ERASMUS+ PROJECT FOR SHEPHERDS IN THE ALPS

In keeping with the spirit of connecting shepherds over the Alpine region, Manon Wallenberger (CIPRA International) presented the possibility of creating an Erasmus+ for shepherds.

### With whom?

- Partners can be shepherd organisations, agricultural schools, pastoralism associations but also groups that are not registered as organisations.
- Partners need to...
  - ...work in the Alps.
  - ...get a PIC number (EU).
  - ...engage themselves in a 2-3 years project.
  - ...join two international meetings with 5-10 participants/partners.
  - ...have one contact person for the project.

### For whom?

- Shepherds in training and/or who already have experience
- Members of the partner organisations



### How?

- One-to-one exchanges lasting from three days to two weeks.
- With the goal of gender balance
- Participants will receive...
  - ...a travel grant depending on the distance in km (between 100-500km = 180 euros)
  - ...50 euros/day for food and accommodation (for a 10-day exchange = 500 euros)
- Partners receive 3'000 euros budget/year to organise a national activity in the scope of the project.
- Travel costs and accommodation for the international meetings are covered by the project.





The call for interested partners is open until 7 March 2022 (email to [manon.wallenberg@cipra.org](mailto:manon.wallenberg@cipra.org)).

## ROLE AND CAPACITY TO LOBBY IN THE USE OF CAP FUNDS FOR SHEPHERDING ORGANISATIONS

Finally, Katrina Marsden (Adelphi, Germany, [marsden@adelphi.de](mailto:marsden@adelphi.de)) gave a very interesting and practical overview of the different CAP funds related to shepherding.

**Actions financed**

Investment costs: fences / surveillance  
Maintenance costs: fences / surveillance

Investment costs: dogs  
Maintenance costs: dogs

Staff costs: shepherding

Grazing premia

Agricultural advice  
Technical support  
Vulnerability analysis

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### III. THANK YOU

CIPRA International and Euro Large Carnivores and its partners would like to thank all enthusiastic participants and all speakers for their efforts and interest in the topic of shepherding. Let's work together in the Alps, for the Alps, on the Alps!