

## Submitted Abstract

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| <b>Title</b>  | The Project Lifestockprotect. An Attempt To Preserve Traditional Mountain Livestock Farming In The Alps. |
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## Abstract

Traditional mountain livestock farming in the Alps is confronted with different socio-economic transformation processes that involve a decline in farms and livestock units in recent decades. An additional pressure is the return of the wolf, which requires an adaptation of grazing and surveillance systems, especially in the most vulnerable summer pasture areas. With the absence of this predator in the last 150 years, pasture management has changed, and livestock protection measures were abandoned to a large extent. Today, a considerable smaller number of livestock still spends the summer on mountain pastures in the Alps, but often unattended, also to save financial costs and time. This free-grazing practice causes considerable damage due to wolf depredation. Nevertheless, especially in the mountain regions, with harsher natural conditions than in the valleys, stakeholder doubt the compatibility of livestock protection measures with the present local circumstances. Besides the conflict with direct predation losses, the main arguments against protection measures are unaffordable additional costs and workload leading to a potential abandonment of mountain summer pastures. Therefore, these measures are often rejected.

The European LIFEstockProtect project tries to encounter this development in the German speaking area of the Alps, namely Bavaria, Austria and Alto Adige/Südtirol (IT). Using a bottom-up approach, capacity building training on livestock protection will take place through farmers' associations to implement effective strategies for the coexistence with wolves and preserve also small-scale livestock breeding for the future. Additionally, scientific activities will investigate the environmental impact of grazing on the site-specific biodiversity and define parameters to measure the feasibility of livestock protection in the Alpine ecosystem. Collaboration with and learning from farmers is key, also regarding the testing of fence materials, the establishment of volunteer networks and ambassador activities. In this context, the project will not limit its focus solely on livestock protection but wants to create awareness for the importance of mountain livestock farming for the landscape, recreation and local tradition. Based on that, it will elaborate potential benefits for the local community in regard to animal welfare, valorisation of local products and touristic opportunities.