



Università degli  
Studi di Udine

## SUMMARY PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION FOR BROWN BEAR CONSERVATION IN THE ALPS



OCTOBER 2005

Report by: Parco Naturale Adamello Brenta  
Via Nazionale, 24 - 38080 Strembo (TN), Italia



## SUMMARY PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION FOR BROWN BEAR CONSERVATION IN THE ALPS

This document represents the fulfilment of ACTION A.3 (*Characterization of communication principles in individual bears' expansion areas*) of the project, co-financed by European Union in the framework of LIFE Nature program, named:



### **LIFE Nature CO-OP PROJECT** **“Principles for the establishment of an Alpine brown bear metapopulation”** **LIFE2003NAT/CP/IT/000003**



*With the collaboration of:*



Edoardo Lattuada  
Andrea Mustoni  
Filippo Zibordi  
**Parco Naturale Adamello Brenta**



ZAVOD ZA  
GOZDOVE SLOVENIJE

Marko Jonozovic  
Miha Marenc  
**Slovenia Forest Service**



Beate Striebel  
Norbert Gerstl  
Georg Rauer  
**WWF Austria**



Università degli  
Studi di Udine

Stefano Filacorda  
Giorgio Marchesini  
Antonella Stravisi  
**Dipartimento di Scienze Animali**  
**Università degli Studi di Udine**

# INDEX

<b>INDEX</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1 PREMISE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>3 SEARCHING FOR A STRATEGY</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>4 WHEN BEARS ARE ARRIVING</b> .....	<b>6</b>
4.1 TARGET .....	6
4.2 GOALS .....	6
4.3 ARRIVAL PREPARATION ACTIVITIES.....	7
4.3.1 <i>Activities of prime importance</i> .....	7
4.3.2 <i>Activities of minor importance</i> .....	8
<b>5 WHEN BEARS ARE AROUND</b> .....	<b>9</b>
5.1 TARGET .....	9
5.2 GOALS .....	9
5.3 ROUTINE ACTIVITIES.....	10
5.3.1 <i>Activities of prime importance</i> .....	10
5.3.2 <i>Activities of minor importance</i> .....	11
<b>6 WHEN BEARS ARE AT RISK</b> .....	<b>12</b>
6.1 TARGET .....	12
6.2 GOALS .....	12
6.3 “CRISIS” ACTIVITIES .....	13
6.3.1 <i>Activities of prime importance</i> .....	13
6.3.2 <i>Activities of minor importance</i> .....	14
<b>7 REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>15</b>
7.1 ACTION PLANS.....	15
7.2 CASE STUDIES.....	15
7.3 WEB RESOURCES ON BROWN BEAR IN EUROPE .....	16
7.4 PROJECT ADDRESSES .....	16

## 1 PREMISE

The following document was compiled thanks to EU contribution in the framework of a LIFE Nature Co-op project aimed at assessing the possibilities of a steady establishment of bears in Central-oriental Alps: its goal is to identify summary principles of communication to the public useful to support the establishment of an Alpine brown bear metapopulation. This report is, thus, above all addressed to all technicians operating in administrations, corporations and organizations competent from a territorial point of view. Its purpose is not to present all the actions needed to prepare brown bear arrival or to face brown bear presence, but just to outline the **communication actions useful to cope with brown bear presence**, with special reference to urgent actions needed in areas of new colonization.

A correct and successful communication strategy is, in fact, a basic requirement to promote the safeguard of expanding and/or exploring bears, which are the essential elements to ensure contacts between bear populations of Italy, Austria and Slovenia and to support in this way the creation of a metapopulation on the Alps. Moreover, a correct communication is a basic requirement for the general objectives of species conservation at European level.

In case of bear presence in new settlement territorial conditions, the principles here outlined should serve as a reference for the administrators of the interested areas in order to facilitate the necessary public relations. In areas where the species is already settled, or even where it occurs sporadically, these principles should serve as a support to better plan an efficient communication strategy for brown bear conservation.

The aim of this report is to be useful to favour coexistence between men and bears, but the hope is that what is here outlined may be of help also to cope with the presence of other Alpine large carnivores, such as wolf and lynx, who usually pose analogous concerns.

The present document was compiled on behalf of argumentations shared by all partners of the present LIFE Co-op project, who have acquired experience in bear conservation and management in the last decade also thanks to LIFE projects realized in their own countries. Appropriate questionnaires have been prepared by the promoter of the project and then compiled by each partner in order to get a deep insight into the communication activities performed in each area of competence: such questionnaires have been used as a basis for the writing of chapters 4, 5 and 6. A synthesis of the different experiences and opinions has been realized for the writing of this document as a whole.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

Probably few animals in Europe have captured the imagination of people as the brown bear has. In the history of coexistence between men and bears, the species has aroused ambivalent feelings and emotions in public imagination, shifting from being considered a dangerous enemy and a threat to human supremacy on nature to becoming the symbol of wilderness, ecological harmony and the emblem of a renewed human relationship with the environment.

Prominent figure in novels, children stories and later puppies, cartoons and advertisement, bears have also been represented in legends and popular tales as a ferocious and aggressive pestilence, which had to be wiped out.

Wherever this twofold evocative potential comes from, it had - and still has - the effect of a prejudicial knowledge of the species, based mostly on heard tales and wrong assumptions than on proven certainties and scientific acquisitions.

Although the change in the economy and demography of Italian, Slovenian and Austrian Alpine mountainous regions and the cultural transformation slowly altered the consciousness of nature and environment, the image of brown bear in public opinion remains often incorrect from a biological point of view.

In human populations living in bear areas, fear of bears, as well as the threat that the plantigrade poses to human interests, still influences current attitudes towards the species. These aspects of man-bear coexistence appear critical in the relationship between the two species and seem to depend more on the emotional perception of the conflict than on the real danger for people and economic loss (which, by the way, can be prevented and refunded by appropriate measures). In other words, negative attitude for bears has its roots in the attacks on humans and in the damages which in the past had, in a different socio-economic context than today, a real incidence, but has now taken on features that go well beyond the biology and ecology of the species.

For all these reasons, namely to oppose the incorrect information which often is the sole learning of public opinion, but also to promote bear acceptance in local populations and sense of responsibility, fair and objective communication on the species appears critical and essential to favour the coexistence of men and bears. Not by chance, among the 8 "*required actions by countries*" listed in the "Action plan for the conservation of the brown bear in Europe (*Ursus arctos*)" (Swenson *et al.*, 2000), two regard communication aspects such as: "*public involvement in brown bear management*" and "*public awareness, education and information*".

The extinction of bears in the Alps can be attributed to economical reasons which were magnified by cultural aspects: in the same way, whether an Alpine bear metapopulation will be restored reflects human decisions and actions, in a word human culture. The importance of communication and education thus lays in a consent as wide as possible by resident populations which is the premise on which a conservation project for brown bear has to be built.

As problems experienced with bears, and large carnivores in general, are far from unique, much can be learnt by common considerations deriving from different experiences acquired in the framework of brown bear management projects in various countries. This stands at the basis of this action of LIFE Co-op Project.

### 3 SEARCHING FOR A STRATEGY

An effective communication strategy towards bears is different for the activities which have to be carried on and for the target groups to which it has to be addressed to in relation to the moment a certain area is facing. Considering these premises, in the present document we divide the activities which have to be promoted into three phases, representing three different situations (not necessarily consequent one to the other):

- “arrival preparation”: preparation of brown bear colonization where the species is absent (for more details see also chapter **4 - When bears are arriving**);
- “routine”: ordinary situation in areas where the species is already settled or where it occurs sporadically (for more details see also chapter **5 - When bears are around**);
- “crisis”: extraordinary situations, during which the presence of brown bears is put at risk or when it is anyway necessary to cope with events of “excessive” public interest which can have negative impact on the species (for more details see also chapter **6 - When bears are at risk**).

Any of the above listed phases should fall into an accurate planning, especially considering that a fundamental rule for brown bear conservation is “to leave as little space as possible to improvisation”.

In detail, before the start of any project (**first step**), it has to be created a strategic communication plan which has to be based on a specific analysis of the situation (general context, acceptance of the species, target groups and needs of the interest groups, available funds, etc.) and has to make clear which are the objectives to be reached and the means to reach them. This plan should be developed by experts in communication in synergy with wildlife managers and should foresee a set of short and long-term actions to be performed in different stages and situations of bear management.

The **second step** should be the monitoring of this strategy in order to verify if the strategy is working out and is efficient (or better: which communication action works well and which does not): a possible way of verifying this are public-opinion surveys and/or focus groups.

The **third step** should be the correction or change of inefficient strategies in a continuous feedback process.

In order to be able to give proper contents to the communication activities, in most of the cases it appears indispensable to plan and realize **scientific researches** about the species which should be based on a structured collection and analysis of data. Only with first hand researches, performed in the area of bear presence, communication sources gain reliability and prestige: the results of such scientific researches, moreover, must constitute the essence of all the communication activities described in more detail later.

## 4 WHEN BEARS ARE ARRIVING

The activities here suggested – “arrival preparation” activities - are to be considered in the following case: **areas where brown bears are absent but where the species colonization is to be considered possible in the next future according to the Environmental Valuation Model realized in the framework of the present LIFE Co-op project** (see maps of Action A2 final document).

### 4.1 Target

---

The communication strategy should be addressed to the following target groups (in order of importance):

1. local administrators and responsible authorities (community, district, province, park/natural reserve, etc.);
2. resident population;
3. hunters and hunting associations;
4. breeders, shepherds, farmers and beekeepers;
5. foresters, water managers and other professions working in the field;
6. school pupils and teachers.

### 4.2 Goals

---

Communication - focused on biological aspects as well as on the premises for the recovery of the species - should be transparent in order to give an objective portrayal of the species. It should especially aim to:

- create understanding on the importance of the recovery of the species in the area, stressing bear ecological, cultural, economic value (e.g.: bear as a part of the ecosystem, bear value for the conservation of biodiversity, bear in the culture and tradition of the area);
- clarify the legal status of brown bear at local, national and international level. At European level, for example, brown bear is included in Annex II of Habitats Directive (92/43 CEE) where it is referred to as “Priority species” (with asterisk), as species “for the conservation of which the Community has particular responsibility” (Art 1 of 92/43 CEE) and “for which Member States shall undertake surveillance of the conservation status” (art 11 of 92/43 CEE). In Habitats Directive, Annex IV, brown bear is also listed among the “species of community interest in need of strict protection”. Brown bear is moreover a species included in Annex II (“Species of strictly protected fauna”) of Bern Convention of 1979.;
- create confidence in bear management strategies (detailing objectives, methods, etc.);
- involve local people in bear management (e.g. creating occasions for a positive and constructive dialogue) trying to avoid that the presence of the species on the territory is perceived as superimposed;
- give people the instruments to deal with bears in an appropriate way, debunking rumours and false credences. In many areas, in fact, various “bizarre” behaviours are attributed to bears such as: they stand on back limbs when they are going to attack (on truth, this just indicates suspicion and insecurity); they run faster upwards than downwards, because of their shorter front limbs, so it’s always better to run downhill (on truth, their limbs are equally long and they run fast anyway); they can not climb on trees, so to



escape from them it's enough to reach the top of a tree (on truth, they are good climbers). All these beliefs are misleading and can prevent social acceptance: giving reliable and true information is thus essential to prepare the arrival of the species.

### **4.3 Arrival preparation activities**

---

Some of the instruments that are considered to be of use in this phase for bear conservation are listed below, subdivided into prime and minor importance activities.

#### **4.3.1 Activities of prime importance**

- Defining roles and competences. In the framework of communication activities, it appears fundamental - prior to the start of the communication itself - to define who will be in charge of each communication activity and what kind of issues will be covered by each person/administration. This is essential not to overlap between one administration and the other, with the risk of creating doubles (double leaflets, double public conferences, etc.) or contrasting information (e.g. interviews or newspaper articles giving opposite side of the matter). Defining roles and competences is a key issue also for other management activities connected with the preparation of bear arrival.
- Coaching and training experienced personnel for field communication and contact on site. In order to be prepared to face bear presence, with particular reference to conflictual situation, it appears critical to individuate some persons as central information points for bears questions, on the example of Austrian "bear advocates". These persons have a central role in becoming a reference point for anybody asking for information on any issue regarding brown bears (as well as being an essential part of the coordination unit for bear issues).
- Coaching and training guards and forest wardens. In order to be prepared to cope with bear presence, it appears critical to train personnel wandering in the forests for giving information and answers about: biology and ecology of the species, updated news about bear presence areas, recognition of bear signs of presence, behaviours to be followed in bear presence areas. The training and information updating should go on also in the "routine" phase, as guards and forest wardens should continue to serve as "communication tools" in the field.
- Building up a good contact with mass media. Rumors and interpretation coming from presumed "bear experts" could be very harmful for brown bear conservation. For this reason, it appears critical to establish a direct channel of information with the media: a good way could be to set up good relationships with some journalists with a positive attitude towards the species ("bear friend journalists"). This avoids media looking for all available information, with the possibility that they use less competent or trustworthy sources ending up giving a wrong portrayal of the species.
- Building up good contacts with political decision makers. Long-term political support is essential for brown bear conservation projects. For this reason, it is important to establish good relationships with the political sphere in order to create trust and establish a direct channel of information, which appears particularly useful in crisis situations. As political decision makers are continuously changing, these "good contacts" should always be updated and renewed.
- Building up good contacts with experts and administrators of the areas of bear potential provenience. Great experience can be acquired from bear managers and administrators used to cope with bear presence since long time. For this reason, it



is wise to seek the advice of these experts forestalling the arrival of bears («We never had a bear here before and now a bear is crossing our district: why not asking what to do to neighbour “bear-experienced” administrators?»).

- Brochure and leaflets. Are very useful to give standardised information as they can be widely distributed in certain areas. They appear to be particularly useful in this phase as they can prepare resident population to bear encounter explaining how to recognize bear signs of presence and which behaviours have to be followed in case of sightings. If properly organized, they can also help to disprove false theories and statements.
- Meetings and lectures for stakeholders. A direct involvement of the most bear concerned groups (i.e. shepherds, breeders, beekeepers, farmers, etc.) appears essential in order to prepare a good acceptance for the species. Meetings with stakeholders help to pass information without intermediary and allow to dispel doubts and allay fears. In order to avoid scarce affluence to these events (many stakeholders may not be very keen on bear lectures...), incentives - i.e. presence bonus, credits, economic facilitations, buffets, gadgets, etc. - can be thought of.
- Conferences/seminars for experts. The support of scientific community, apart from permitting to acquire knowledge and management tools, helps to get acknowledgement from local administrators and attracts the attention of the media. A conference focused on the species, with a good media coverage, may both help to set up a plan of the activities needed to well prepare bear arrival and introduce bear issue to public and politic opinion.

#### **4.3.2 Activities of minor importance**

- School lessons and educational activities. Educating the young generations is a necessary step to promote the acceptance of bears in the mid-long term and thus to favour the development of a bear Alpine metapopulation. Educational proposals for primary, secondary and high schools appear a good method to reach ultimately parents, helping to create acceptance of the species.
- Exhibitions and/or special events. They may also be considered for preparing the arrival of the species, as they permit to spread information about cultural and biological value, as well as about critical issues. Bear focused theatre shows, contests, fairs, etc. (if properly organized and publicized), attract lots of people and, apart from amusing, may help to debunk false credences and pass some kind of cultural information.

## 5 WHEN BEARS ARE AROUND

The activities here suggested – “routine” activities - are to be considered in the following case: **areas where brown bears are present, with any consistency, either in a stable or in a sporadic way**. See the attached map, deriving from the Environmental Valuation Model realized in the framework of the present LIFE Co-op project (see maps of Action A2 final document), for details.

### 5.1 Target

---

The communication strategy should be addressed to the following target groups (in order of importance):

1. resident population;
2. hunting associations and hunters;
3. breeders, shepherds, farmers and beekeepers;
4. foresters, water managers and other professions working in the field;
5. school pupils and teachers;
6. tourists;
7. scientific community;
8. NGOs and local associations.

### 5.2 Goals

---

As credences are hard to die, the same effort of the “arrival preparation” phase must be carried on in order to discard rumours, beliefs and false convictions. Moreover, communication should be reliable, transparent and updated on the events occurring and on the aims, successes and failures of the project of conservation.

Conflicts caused by bears should not be hidden or denied, but fairly expressed along with possible solutions and compromises needed to avoid, prevent and mitigate them.

Results of scientific researches carried on must be, especially but not exclusively in this phase, the core of the communication as they can give unequivocal and definite data about the species, helping to eradicate emotivity and misbeliefs. In case researches cannot be carried on, for the scarce number of bears present or for any other reason, a standardised data filing must be set up: this will anyway be of use for communication activities.

Apart from the goals indicated for the “arrival phase”, which keep their intrinsic importance also in this phase, communication at this step should especially aim to:

- improve the dialogue with residents and stakeholders, whose attitude may shift easily from one side to the other;
- keep acceptance level high;
- give detailed information about occurring events.

An additional danger to cope with is the excessive interest that the species, thanks to its intrinsic features, arouse in public opinion, mass media and political sphere. Most of the times, in fact, disproportional attention of the public towards brown bears can trigger a harmful process leading to an instrumental exploitation of the species, which may become an issue to raise audience figures (in a purpose-built polemic between bear supporters and bear opponents) or to get more votes at elections (in the contest between pro and against bear political parties).

## 5.3 Routine activities

---

Some of the instruments that are considered to be of use in this phase for bear conservation are listed below, subdivided into prime and minor importance activities.

### 5.3.1 Activities of prime importance

- Publicity of damage refunds and prevention measures which are activated on the territory. This action obviously requires the presence of already existing legislation for damage prevention and compensation, which is not here considered as it goes beyond the objectives of the present document. The fulfillment of this activity implies the realization of leaflets, concerning damage refunds and prevention measures, to be distributed to interest groups (i.e. potentially damaged categories). Appropriate meetings with interest groups should divulge any news about damage compensation methods. A tight and constant relationship with the heads of interest groups must be always searched for in order to keep them informed about ongoing situation, projects and progress and, vice versa, to be informed about brown bear perception by interest group. This last thing appears crucial to intervene before the “crisis”.
- Bear telephone lines. A committed telephone line for bear problems, emergencies, doubts and signalings for the public is a good way to create a sense of trust and can offer help in many different occasions. A bear hotline for rapid consulting of experts and authorities can also be thought about: it appears highly important in “crisis” situations. A bear hotline for proper and well known use can be attached to other numbers used from public in crisis situations, like police or emergency center number.
- Information on the media. Exploiting “bear friend journalists” (see “arrival preparation” phase) helps to achieve the goals above mentioned. In fact, a periodic writing and publishing on local media (newspapers, magazines, but also radio and TV) of articles concerning the ongoing situation, projects and progress, as well as updated news about bears, can be very useful to involve local population on bear issues and not to let them feel something is being hidden, with a consequent risk for bear acceptance. In particular, newspaper articles appear fundamental to cope with major events (positive or negative events): it is more profitable to anticipate, with press conferences or releases, the spreading of the news in order to manage it instead of passively be subjected to journalists’ view of the facts (newspaper are often looking for scoops). On the other hand, a newsletter or magazine articles (especially if addressed to potentially involved social categories) seem more appropriate for routine updating of the situation and can help creating a group of support.
- School lessons and educational activities. Involving and training young generations appears a definite way of ameliorating public opinion in the long term as this permits not only to create a set of knowledge about the species in school pupils, but can also be useful to reach parents of school students and thus a part of resident population. Of course, trained educational staff should realize all didactic activities: these should be focused not only on biological and ecological aspects, but also on local traditions and culture. A “bear educated” kid easily will be an adult supporting bear conservation.
- Public lectures, informative meetings, conferences and courses. As the information and updatings are directly passed by trained experts to the public (without any intermediary, as happens with newspapers and radio-TV), lectures, meetings and conferences should be carried-on on a regular basis. The possibility of organizing specific courses and/or seminars addressed to different targets should be

considered in order to increase the knowledge, acceptance and involvement toward the species. To avoid the risk of low participation or scarce comprehension in meetings addressed to potentially problematic social categories, the involvement of a mediator-facilitator (i.e. a person belonging to the same social category, previously prepared on bear issues and thus on bear's side) is advisable: a shepherd would hardly be receptive towards a bear expert, but he would definitely pay attention to a delegate of the local shepherd association talking about bears.

- Texts, pamphlets. Although they have the limit that they cannot be widespread as other informative media because they are usually read only by deeply interested people, they represent a further medium to introduce the issue of bear conservation and can give effective answers to many topics. Examples of issues that can be covered by such monographs are: general information about biology and ecology of the species, scientific researches carried on in the area, bear presumed danger.

### **5.3.2 Activities of minor importance**

- Video documentaries. According to the available energies and funds, this communicative option appears very useful for many purposes such as school lessons and TV broadcasts. Broadcastings on wide audience TV channels may permit to acquire authority and thus strengthen bear management choices.
- Exhibitions, stands, museums, fairs. The realization of informative centers, as well as the organization of special events (as long as they are not only advertising events but aim also to divulge some biological contents), can be considered a good tool to involve people, arousing much interest and usually stimulating a positive attitude towards bears. Adequate publicity (at local level) and eventually good media coverage (on a wider level) are fundamental.
- Web site. Although Internet hardly represents a crucial information tool for resident populations - as it usually does not affect potentially problematic social categories and is not so widespread as communication tool among the Alpine populations - it may create support and involvement for bear conservation. Web pages should be periodically updated and available also in English as Internet can be widely used by foreign bear supporters, tourists and maybe also experts for updating.
- Guided excursions and tours, informative boards. These communicative options are of particular value to involve tourists (residents hardly participate to guided excursions in the area where they live), passing information at a deeper level as they take place inside bear habitat. The presence of expert guides appears of particular importance as this allows participants to get answers to specific doubts or worries. Although tourists are usually just a "minor" category in respect to residents (see paragraph 5.1), having them on bear's side may help to convince also tour operators and, in touristic areas, part of the residents.
- Informative gadgets. Again addressed particularly to tourists, the selling of gadgets, if joined with leaflets, can give information and raise positive attitudes towards the species.

## 6 WHEN BEARS ARE AT RISK

The activities here suggested – “crisis” activities - are to be considered in the following case: **situations in which brown bear presence (stable or sporadic) exists but is at high risk or when it is necessary to cope with events of “excessive” public interest which can have negative impact on the species.**

The achievement of such a phase is indicated by the following “alarm signals”:

- presence of problem bear on the territory. A problem bear is defined “damaging” if it repeatedly provokes damages to human activities (e.g. predating livestock, destroying beehives); it is defined “dangerous” when its behaviour substantially modifies so that it loses mistrust of men;
- brown bears arousing too much political or mass media interest and/or brown bears exploited for instrumental use: i.e. bears becoming element for political debates, political parties using bears to attack opponents, politics affecting brown bear conservation choices and projects;
- organization of meetings by groups of people/associations which are against brown bears aiming to get rid of the species;
- overall decrease of social acceptance.

### 6.1 Target

---

Crisis events can be very different one to another, so it is hardly possible to draw some common lines of conduct.

In any case, mass media appear to play a particularly critical role in this phase as they are usually attracted by controversies and thus tend to emphasize any news, including inaccurate and biased versions of the facts, which can easily lead to a disproportionate reaction by public opinion and politicians.

In crisis situations, the communication efforts should thus be addressed mainly to the following target groups:

1. local administrators and responsible authorities (community, district, province, park/natural reserve, etc.);
2. mass media;
3. resident population;

### 6.2 Goals

---

Crisis situations are no doubt the most critical events as public opinion can rapidly shift from acceptance to intolerance, led by mass media amplification and pressure on the political sphere. Such situations, which have to be considered usual in bear conservation programs for the intrinsic relationship between men and bears, can end up altering the perception and trust in bear managers and thus generate controversy in the public.

The following rules can be of use to manage the situation as good as possible:

- organize a meeting as soon as possible in order to state roles and competences among all involved people (e.g.: bear experts, administrators, wardens): rigid regulations must be imposed to all the involved parts;
- talk and cooperate with other authorities involved in bear management: all the moves have to be taken jointly;
- inform rapidly and actively previously established media contacts;

- use just one or few expert spokesmen to communicate with journalists: these spokesmen must be authoritative and competent as communication concerning bear themes is delicate and can thus be managed just by an experienced person;
- if possible, do not answer directly and straightaway to negative or polemic news in order not to widen the dispute. Otherwise, reply to questions in a clear and explicit way, without falsities and omissions but describing the situation correctly and objectively. While communicating with the media, it should be tried to exclude the emotive component, leading the contest back to biological and ecological aspects (i.e. if a bear chased a man in the forest, it is advisable to stress that bears do not see humans as preys, that their diet in Southern Europe is mainly composed by vegetables, etc.).

## 6.3 “Crisis” activities

---

Some of the instruments that are considered to be of use in this phase for bear conservation are listed below, subdivided into prime and minor importance activities. Such activities may be able to control crisis situation faster and avoid negative consequences (such as, for example, interruption of conservation programs).

### 6.3.1 Activities of prime importance

- Bear experts meeting. Organizing a summit among bear experts is one of the best ways to get good counseling and to exploit already acquired experiences. For this reason, this should be one of the first moves in the first days of the crisis.
- Contacts with territorial competent authorities. In order to be competent and fair in presenting the situation and answering to questions and doubts, it is essential to know precisely what is going on. A previously organized web of contacts among territorial competent authorities is important, during crisis situation, to get updated news on the events and to arrange a common strategy of action among all involved authorities.
- Contacts with the media. As media often represent a major part of the problem, previously established relationships with them appear crucial to solve the crisis and re-establish an objective and balanced situation. Depending on the kind of crisis event, it can be advisable to explain fairly what is going on, wiping out untruth and exaggerated opinions with possible solutions, or to withdraw the attention from negative events proposing a “parallel good news” about bears. Depending on already existing relationships with the media, this can be done by informing the news media without intervening directly or organizing press conference and/or realizing press releases. “Bear friend journalists” (see “arrival preparation” and “routine” phase) are essential to achieve these goals, although usually in crisis situation commentaries and news are realized also by other reporters. According to the situation, it may be of great help also to organize a public pronouncement or interview in favour of bears (press conference can be of use) by a well known foreign expert or nature conservation “celebrity”: his voice could be much more authoritative than local experts’ and could thus help soothing the situation.
- Contacts with politicians. Talks and, if needed, lobbying with political decision makers can soothe the crisis and help preventing the possible interruption of conservation project.
- Contacts with interest groups and stakeholders. As crisis events can lead to mistrust between interest group and “bear managers”, it appears fundamental to

tighten the relationships with the categories most involved by the crisis event (e.g.: if the crisis comes from a bear predation of sheep, shepherds are the most involved category; if the crisis comes from a bear attack on a hunter, hunters and hunting association are the most involved category). This should be done in direct ways, i.e. by public meetings, which permit to pass information at a deeper level and allow participants to get answers to specific doubts or worries. Previously established mediators-facilitators are of great use in this sense, as well as already existing “bear advocates” (see previous phases) who may go on functioning as reference points for bear issues.

- Bear telephone lines. The committed telephone line for the public (see subparagraph 5.3.1) becomes fundamental in crisis situations, as it is usually widely used by many residents to get news, information and reassurance, to voice criticism, etc.. An expert, regularly informed by bear managers, must thus attend it. The bear hotline for rapid consulting of experts and authorities can facilitate the exchange of information and opinions for the development of a common strategy (see over).
- Brown bear emergency team. If the crisis goes beyond the bear and men friendly situation, people need to have the possibility to call the experienced emergency group who is able to take proper and immediate measures on the field. Activities taken by this group are done by their professionalism and scientific knowledge according to the circumstances of the situation. Emergency group should be backup with the support of bear experts, managers and decision makers, both on local and the state level.

### **6.3.2 Activities of minor importance**

- Advertising campaign. Very expensive and not surely effective, it can be thought of in case what is needed is to ameliorate bear image or to increase the general acceptance of the species in the area. Nonetheless, it can be counter-productive so its realization must be considered in depth, with the help of experts in communication.



## 7 REFERENCES

### 7.1 Action plans

---

Ciucci, P., Boitani, L., 1997. *Piano di conservazione dell'orso bruno nelle Alpi orientali*. Settore diversità biologica WWF Italia: 1-107.

Decak D., Frkovic A., Grubescic M., Huber D., Ivicsek B., Kulic B., Sertic D., Stahan Z., 2005. *Brown Bear Management Plan for the Republic of Croatia*. Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Waer Management - Dep. for Hunting, Ministry of Culture – Dep. for Nature Protection: 1-90.

Dupré E., Genovesi P., Pedrotti L., 1998. *Studio di fattibilità per la reintroduzione dell'orso bruno (Ursus arctos) sulle Alpi centrali*. Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica e Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta. Rapporto Tecnico: 1-96.

Gerstl N., Laass J., Rauer G., Striebel B., 2005. *Management Plan: Bears in Austria*. In press.

Hofer, D., Promberger, C., 1998. *Guidelines for Developing Large Carnivore Management Plans*, Wildbiologische Gesellschaft München – Munich Wildlife society. LCIE publication # 1: pp. 22.

Jonozovič M., 2003. *Brown Bear Action Plan for the Republic of Slovenia for 2003-2006*. Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food: 1-20.

Jonozovič M., Ožbolt I., Koren I., Veselič Ž., Vidic J., 2002. *Brown Bear Management Strategy for the Republic of Slovenia*. Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food: 1-31.

Servheen, C., Herrero, s., and Peyton, B. (eds.), 1999. *Bears. Status Survey and Conservation action plan for the world bears*. IUCN - Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: 1-309.

Swenson J., Gerstl N., Dahle B., Zedrosser A., 2000. *Action plan for the conservation of the brown bear in Europe (Ursus arctos)*. Council of Europe, Nature and Environment, 114: 1-69.

Zedrosser A., Gerstl N., Rauer, G., 1999. *Brown Bears in Austria 10 Years of Conservation and Actions fort he Future*. Umweltbundesamt Band M-117. 1-42.

### 7.2 Case studies

---

Krystufek B., Flajsman B., Griffiths H., 2003. *Living with bears – A large European Carnivore in a Shrinking World*. Ecological Forum of the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia: 1-367.

Kaczensky, P., 2000. *Coexistence of brown bears and men in the cultural landscape of Slovenia*. Institute of Wildlife Biology and Game Management at the BOKU in Vienna, Munich Wildlife Society, Slovenian Hunting Association, Forest Faculty at the Biotechnical Institute at the University of Ljubljana.

### 7.3 Web resources on brown bear in Europe

---

Parco Naturale Adamello Brenta: <http://www.pnab.it/lifeursus/lifeursus.htm>  
Dipartimento di Scienze Animali - Università di Udine: <http://web.uniud.it/wildlife/>  
WWF Österreich: <http://www.wwf.at/bearlife>  
Zavod za gozdove Slovenije: <http://www.gov.si/zgs/medved>  
IUCN – The World Conservation Union: <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/>  
International Association for Bear Research and Management: <http://www.bearbiology.com/index.html>  
Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe: <http://www.lcie.org>  
Coordinated research projects for the conservation and management of carnivores in Switzerland - KORA: <http://www.kora.unibe.ch/>  
Baltic Large Carnivore Initiative: <http://www.lcie.org/BLIC.htm>  
Carnivore conservation: <http://www.carnivoreconservation.org/>

### 7.4 Project addresses

---

Parco Naturale Adamello Brenta (*Adamello Brenta Natural Park*)  
Via Nazionale, 24  
I - 38080 Strembo (TN) Italy  
Tel: +39 0465 806666.  
Email [lifeursus@parcoadamellobrenta.tn.it](mailto:lifeursus@parcoadamellobrenta.tn.it)

Dipartimento di Scienze Animali - Università di Udine (*Udine University – Dept. of Animal Sciences*)  
Via S. Mauro, 2  
I - 33010 Pagnacco (UD) Italy  
Tel: +39 0432 650110.  
Email: [stravisi@uniud.it](mailto:stravisi@uniud.it)

WWF Österreich (*WWF Austria*)  
Ottakringer Straße, 114-116 -A-1160 Wien - Austria  
Tel: +43-1-48817

Zavod za gozdove Slovenije (*Slovenia forest Service*)  
Večna pot 2  
1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija  
Tel: +386 (0)1 4700050  
E-mail: [rjavi.medved@zgs.gov.si](mailto:rjavi.medved@zgs.gov.si)