



LIFE18 NAT/IT/000972



## **ROLE PLAY**

# **Wolf and human – challenges of coexistence**

**Educational material prepared within the project**

**LIFE WOLFALPS EU (LIFE18 NAT/IT/000972)**

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## The purpose

Despite the awareness of its importance, the learner-centered teaching method is still underestimated in the field of science and biology education. Role-playing is one of the approaches that encourage active student participation. It is useful in teaching complex biological and chemical processes, and especially topics that are controversial in nature, such as themes of large carnivores. The complexity of the management and coexistence with those species can be addressed with the help of role-playing.

The conservation of large carnivores, especially the wolf, is largely conditioned by the human acceptance. In the Alps, the habitats of large carnivores and the cultural landscape often collide, which often reflects in conflict situations with large carnivores, e.g. damage cases on human property, encountering in the nearest vicinity of human settlements. The conflicts consequently often lead to disagreements between different interest groups and also within the groups themselves. The use of role-play in the form of organized discussion and for example meeting simulation is a suitable way to illustrate the complexity and diversity of perceptions of the topic.

This is a proposal for a simulated discussion (role-play) on the topic of management and human-wolf coexistence is presented. Since the topic is very complex, the material is intended primarily for high school students. The education materials can also be used for the instructions in primary or secondary school programs as well, but it is recommended to adapt the topic (e. g. to include content on wolf pack communication, the role of individual stakeholders in wolf conservation, etc.).

To strengthen the understanding of the topic, gained through role-playing, it is further proposed to use the technique of different perceptual positions (i. e. perceptual positioning). This technique allows participants to become aware of their self-views and reasons for them, immerse themselves in the role of others and try to understand different situations from a neutral point of view.

## Goals

Role-playing and perceptual positioning encourage:

- ✓ recognition of different aspects of conceiving a particular concept, in this case coexistence,
- ✓ understanding that interactions with wolves are perceived completely differently by different people,
- ✓ understanding that an individual's position depends on the past experience, social status and already acquired knowledge,
- ✓ realization that the human-wolf conflict has primarily a socio-economic background.



## ROLE-PLAYING GAME

### Teaching instructions

#### SITUATION

The moderator (teacher) presents the students (participants) the situation that will be discussed. It is imperative that the presentation provides enough detailed information which allows students to empathize with it.



#### ROLES

The description of the situation is followed by a division of roles. A moderator who knows the students social backgrounds and their beliefs can divide roles more meaningfully. Each student (or couple) therefore receives a role that is most different from his or her beliefs. Upon the instructions, students read their stories and the attitudes they advocate. If there are a large number of participants in the group, the moderator can assign some students the role of the general public - listeners. They can ask questions at any time during the role-playing and ask the participants for additional explanations.



#### DISCUSSION

The discussion is led by a moderator by using students pre-planned questions. It allows the moderator to guide the simulation of the discussion and determinate the person who answers first (sets the course of the discussion). In addition, the moderator controls the simulation and makes sure that the conversation flows in the right direction and is neutral and also respectful to all participants.



#### EVALUATION

After the role-playing, the moderator conducts an evaluation of the discussion through pre-asked questions. It is essential for understanding the whole concept that the moderator summarizes with the group what they learned during the simulation.



## Role-play cards

### CARD 1: The situation

The card is intended for the moderator, who presents the situation and goals of the guided discussion (role-playing) to the group.

In the areas, where the cultural landscape and forested areas collide, human-animal interactions often occur. For the people who live in these areas, those interactions are often perceived as something ordinary. However, occasional conflicts also occur, especially when animals cause damage to human property or when we get the feeling that they are approaching us more than usual.

Wolves are one of the species that arouse both fear and admiration in humans. They attract a person's attention mainly because of their appearance, intelligence and ingenuity. Above all, we somehow identify with their social life in the pack, which remind us of our family life. In contrast, fear is usually associated with typical carnivore expressions, such as showing off teeth and tongue. Meeting the dog can also evoke the same feeling. Through evolution, it is likely that man has developed a fear of large predators, including large carnivores. In the social environment, this fear can be further reinforced through learning. To understand that wolves should not be perceived as a threat to humans, we need to acquire the information regarding their biology, ecology, and most importantly, behavior. However, the biggest source of fear is mainly false information (media and social networks) and experience with damage on human property.

Wolves began to repopulate areas in the Alps and elsewhere in Europe where they had been absent for decades. As a result, at those areas, more conflicts with wolves have arisen. In order to improve the understanding and, above all, the acceptance of the species by people, a number of communication activities are carried out with the aim to establish or maintain COEXISTENCE.

However, there are many questions, ambiguities and also a misunderstanding regarding the coexistence. To establish a sustainable life for both man and wolf, it is necessary to previously ensure a social consensus, which often represents an important issue for all those who strive for tolerant coexistence on a daily basis.

In front of you are the stories of different people living with wolves, dealing with them, or are just interested in them. Our task is to try to find consensus in the concept of coexistence and address the solutions to ensure it.





## ROLE-PLAY CARDS 2-13: Roles – people stories

The moderator distributes the cards among the participants. If there are several participants, the individual card can be assigned to the pair, determining the one who of the pair will join the discussion. The second option allows the inclusion of all participant, despite the larger number. The participants who have not received an individual role can be given the role of the general public, whose task is to follow the discussion and encourage discussants to further explain their opinions.

*Note: in the story descriptions below, the use of the masculine form is exclusively neutral or unmarked.*

<b>LIVESTOCK BREEDER 1</b>	<b>LIVESTOCK BREEDER 2</b>
<p>I live in the core large carnivore area. We have had a farm for as long as I can remember. Until now, we have not experienced any damage. This year has been unbearable for us as wolves have killed most of our sheep and also some calfs. I protect my animals in the right way so that they do not escape from the pasture and do no harm to foreign property. How will the owner of the carnivores – the state make sure that their animals will not do damage to my property? We are constantly drawing attention to this escalating problem, but the situation is not progressing, since no one is taking us seriously. I suggest that all “animal lovers” come to live in our area and actively protect our animals.</p>	<p>I also live with my family in the large carnivore area. The farm presents the main financial source for us. We raise goats mainly for milk, therefore only the final products - yoghurts, cottage cheeses, cheeses are a real source of income. If we did not use various protection measures, such as fencing permanent pastures with electric fences and using high electric fences for night enclosures, while having at least one livestock guarding dog present at all times, we would probably not have no more animals. Because we do not raise goats for meat processing, the loss of every animal represents irreparable damage. My personal opinion is that no one will do anything for us. Every farmer must do everything to carry out his business.</p>





**HUNTER 1**

Until the wolves were reintroduced to the Alps, such extensive damage to game did not occur. Now our hunting grounds are almost empty. In our hunting club, we no longer see the possibility of realizing the culling plans at all. However, our existence depends on it. In addition, current managers and politicians make such demands for wolf culling that it is impossible to implement them. We hunters are volunteers. Who will pay for our work to sit for several days in the pasture and wait for the wolf to return? The local farmers then point the finger only at us, saying that if we have no profit from the captured wolf, we have no desire to shoot it.



**HUNTER 2**

In our hunting club, we have already participated in many projects regards the large carnivores. In our hunting ground, we get involved in collecting noninvasive samples, setting up photo traps and prey inspections. I believe that only together can we do something for nature, because experts need us in the field, and we need them, because only then can we stay up to date on the abundance and distribution of each species, including the wolf. We believe that the wolf is an animal that needs to be respected and we can learn a lot from it as hunters.



**LARGE CARNIVORE RESEARCHER**

Wolves are territorial animals that actively defend their territories. As a result, they cannot multiply excessively in a given area. In addition, only the leading (alpha) male and female mate in the pack, which represents an additional regulation of their abundance. In the first year of their life, about half (maybe even more) of the wolf cubs die. Wolf behavior is extremely plastic, which means that they can adapt extremely well to changes in the environment. This can also be observed in foraging behavior. Namely, they are opportunistic predators, which means that they feed on the prey that is most easily accessible and most numerous in a given area.

**MANAGEMENT EXPERT**

Different management aspects are needed to effectively manage the wolf population and ensure human tolerance. It is therefore crucial to allow the culling of wolves that cause unacceptable damage (e. g. many damage cases in the same area, damage to large grazing animals, such as horses and cows). However, we must be aware that culling alone will not solve the problems with damages. In all areas where the wolf is only occasionally present, it is necessary to adequately protect human property. With proper use and maintenance of preventive measures, the damage can be greatly reduced. In our work, we are in constant contact with local communities and various stakeholders, which makes us well aware of the situation on the field.







**LOCAL INHABITANT 1**

I live in large carnivore area, but we do not notice many encounters with the wolf or experience conflicts. I spend a lot of time in the nearby forest, but I have to admit that I have only observed a wolf from the distance once. As soon as he noticed my presence, he withdrew. I think wolves are much more careful than bears and avoid humans more. At the same time, I also believe that the presence of the wolf does not lower the quality of life in the countryside, as we do not feel any significant differences now.

**LOCAL INHABITANT 2**

In the last year, we have been constantly detecting the presence of wolves near our villages. This way of life is unbearable, as we no longer dare to let children play alone in the village and especially in the woods. They are now transported to school by van and accompanied by a hunter on school walks. We are constantly drawing attention to the issue, but none of the politicians and experts wants to hear us. At the same time, they believe that the wolf is not dangerous to humans. Injuries to humans also occur everywhere else. Does an attack have to happen in our country as well, for any of those responsible to take action?





<b>REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ANIMAL PROTECTION SOCIETY</b>	<b>TOURSIT GUIDE</b>
<p>Wolves are extremely intelligent and sensitive animals. They would do anything for their family. Not even a man is so loving and sensitive. I believe that every animal is invaluable, so killing is not acceptable at all. Not all residents who have problems with wolves do enough to coexist with them. There is enough finance for everything, but not for the prevention. There are other effective measures instead of killing. For example, why not put all the wolves on the collars and constantly monitor their locations? Maybe sterilize all the dogs so they wouldn't be able to mate with the wolf? Shelters for lonely and orphaned wolves or perhaps even "problematic" individuals would also be crucial.</p>	<p>Wildlife watching programs and visits to the large carnivore habitat allow people to have a genuine experience, gain new knowledge, and at the same time overcome the fear of these species. As I guide tourists through the forest, where they observe the signs of the animal presence, including wolves, they show incredible interest and enthusiasm towards the species. I believe that visiting a wolf habitat can be extremely effective for raising acceptance of the species. In addition, tourists can effectively learn about proper behavior in the nature, which also leads to conflict reduction in the long-term.</p>





<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE (MUNICIPALITY)</b>	<b>REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MINISTRY</b>
<p>In our municipality, we have already participated in past projects on large carnivores. I have always been a supporter of the use and promotion of preventive measures, but in the long run we cannot subsidize them with the municipal budget, and people will not invest the funds themselves. However, I believe that the size of the wolf population has overgrown and a reduction in their number is also crucial.</p>	<p>We need to be aware that wolf is a protected species managed under well-defined conditions. In order to change the financing of measures and to introduce new practices into everyday use, it is necessary to change legislative procedures and regulations, which requires a lot of work and, above all, the procedures are time-consuming. At the ministry, of course, we support all effective ways to ensure coexistence with large carnivores, especially wolves. We try to be as proactive as possible in solving problems and take into account all aspects, for which we are often understaffed.</p>

**AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR**

Even without the presence of large carnivores, the Alpine area is largely unsuitable for agricultural activity. Protection against large carnivores requires an excessive financial and time investment from breeders, which makes breeders in the large carnivore area much less competitive in the market than other breeders. Due to all these burdens, young breeders no longer decide to farm. As a result, the Slovenian countryside will overgrow even more, we will soon no longer be able to obtain domestic dairy and meat products and we will be completely dependent on imports.

**VEGANS REPRESENTATIVE**

Every living being has the right to live a dignified life. We humans have no right to take that. It is not acceptable that humans raise animals for the food, so controversies over the large carnivore issue are pointless. If people were to eat more sustainably, and above all to use predominately plant food sources, which are completely sufficient to the needs of our body, this kind of problem would become irrelevant. I think that people who raise domestic animals for slaughter are much more morally irresponsible than carnivores that just eat this kind of food for their living.



**ROLE-PLAY CARD 14-24: People attitudes**

<p><b>LIVESTOCK BREEDER 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The only solution is to increase wolf culling quotas.</li><li>• The state should protect its free ranging large carnivores.</li><li>• Breeders are not obliged to feed wolves.</li><li>• No one will pay us for the extra time investments.</li></ul>	<p><b>LIVESTOCK BREEDER 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wolves are and will always be present; unfortunately, we need to do something.</li><li>• Use of preventive measures represent additional work and cost, but nothing compared to the damage we can experience.</li></ul>
<p><b>HUNTER 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current large carnivore management approaches are not effective.</li><li>• Managers do not have a real insight into the abundance of game at all because they do not consider our field knowledge.</li><li>• Wolves are currently causing irreparable damage to the environment.</li></ul>	<p><b>HUNTER 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wolves are needed to maintain balance in the forest.</li><li>• They are the best hunters - that's why we respect them.</li><li>• It is necessary to cooperate with the experts, because we cannot do anything without each other.</li></ul>
<p><b>LARGE CARNIVORE RESEARCHER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wolves are territorial species; they are able to self-regulate their abundance.</li><li>• A stable, vital pack usually preys on game rather than grazing animals.</li><li>• Wolves do not perceive humans as prey, they avoid interactions instead.</li></ul>	<p><b>MANAGEMENT EXPERT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only a combination of different management approaches (from culling to protection) is effective.</li><li>• Damage can occur in all areas where the wolf occurs and at the same time there are inadequately protected grazing animals.</li></ul>





### LOCAL INHABITANT 1

- It is harder to meet a wolf, than we think.
- We can share the same space with wolves.
- Conflicts with the wolf are more a construct of the media and certain groups of people than of everyday life in the countryside.

### LOCAL INHABITANT 2

- Wolves pose threat to our safety.
- The quality of life in rural areas is declining, as we can no longer move freely.
- We have become second-class citizens.

### REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ANIMAL PROTECTION SOCIETY

- Killing wolves is ineffective and unacceptable.
- Locals are not doing enough to coexist.
- There are other more appropriate measures to conserve the wolf, as each individual is irreplaceable.

### TOURIST GUIDE

- Visiting a wolf habitat can promote species acceptance.
- It is crucial that we pass on the knowledge of appropriate behavior when visiting nature.
- We need to know that people are just visitors, not residents of nature.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE (MUNICIPALITY)

- It is crucial to provide funding for preventive measures.
- As a municipality, we want to continue to act proactively.
- The wolf population is still over numbered.
- Preventive measures will be effective when species management is also ensured.

### REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MINISTRY

- Procedures for changing legislative procedures and regulations are time-consuming.
- We are committed to all measures that promote coexistence.
- We want to be proactively involved in solving large carnivore issues.

**AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR**


- Large carnivores should be preserved only in the traditional area, the forests of **Kočevska**.
- Breeders in the large carnivore area are uncompetitive to others.
- Due to large carnivores, agriculture is being abandoned and most of the Slovenian countryside is overgrown.

**VEGANS REPRESENTATIVE**

- We humans are morally irresponsible if we raise animals for food.
- If we ate a plant-based diet, all the problems with large carnivores would be irrelevant.
- Livestock breeders are more bloodthirsty than large carnivores themselves.

**ROLE-PLAY CARD 25: Questions for the simulated discussion**

The card is intended for the moderator who leads the discussion (as a part of the role-playing).



Before asking questions, the moderator invite the participants to introduce themselves. The presentation serves the purpose of getting to know the interlocutors in a further guided discussion. *Example: the participant says that he is a breeder (name and place of residence can be added) and briefly summarizes his story).*

After the presentation, the moderator starts asking questions and invites the individual participant to answer. In the meantime, the participants can complement each other, but the moderator must make sure that the discussion is organized and, above all, respectful.

Suggestions of pre-prepared questions that can be meaningfully supplemented or upgraded during the simulation:

***What does coexistence mean to you?***

***Do you coexist with large carnivores and if so, how?***

***Who do you think is responsible for ensuring coexistence?***

***Which measure do you think is most effective in ensuring tolerant coexistence?***

***What is your opinion regarding the cull?***

***Are you willing to invest in / co-finance protection measures to prevent damage?***

***What would need to be done to better understand the species?***

***Do you think education is important for ensuring better coexistence between humans and wolves?***

***What are you willing to change in yourself / your current behavior in order to reach a consensus with dissenters?***

***Do you think that man can replace the ecological role of the wolf?***

***Why are large predators important in an individual ecosystem?***

***What are you willing to do to preserve the wolf in **Slovenia**/.../...?***

***Why should we also consider the opinions of dissenters?***



## ROLE-PLAY CARD 26: Evaluation questions

The card is intended for the moderator, who asks questions in order to summarize the key points of the simulated discussion to be adopted by the participants.

The moderator leads the participants to the crucial conclusions of the discussion through pre-prepared questions.

Question suggestions:

***What did you learn during the discussion?***

***Have you ever imagined that in addition to your aspects, there are also different ones?***

***What are the reasons that make the opinions so diverging?***

***Do you find any common ground worth considering to reach an easier consensus between different stakeholders?***

***Do you have a suggestion on how to conduct a real-life discussion with such a diverse group to take away as much as possible from working together?***



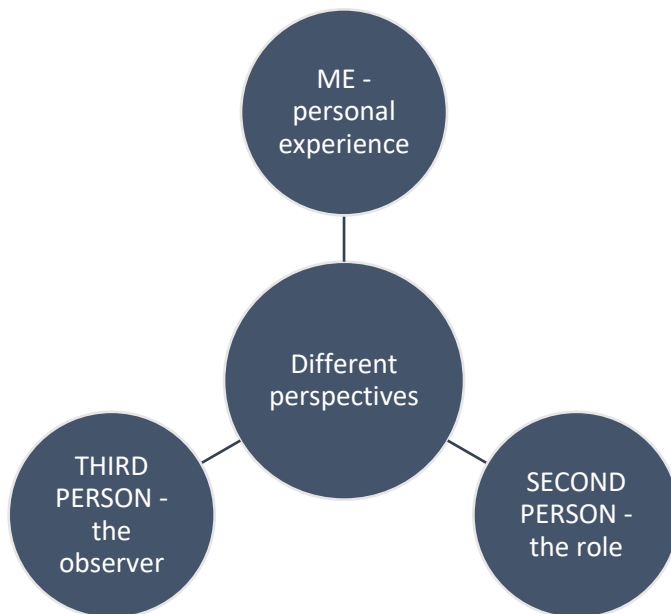
## DIFFERENT PERCEPTUAL POSITIONS - One eye and three different points of view

Through various perceptual positions, it is easier to become aware of and define the arguments that are supposed to support our attitude towards wolves and coexistence with them. It is only when we talk about them and want to articulate them that we often realize that they may not be defining our own opinions or experiences, but the one of the surroundings, family members, media assumptions, and social networks. It is often difficult for us to get used to another person, which is a precondition for finding common denominators in a conversation, and above all for finding common solutions. The technique of using different perceptual positions allows to deepen the understanding that the participants have already gained through the simulation of the discussion.





**Three different perceptual positions:**



ROLE	ABOUT THE PERSPECTIVE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<b>Me</b>	The first role is based on our previous experience and daily perception of the surroundings, regardless of the others' point of views. Our life experiences are gained from this perspective: our sensory perceptions and emotions.	Social roles that require a high degree of concentration, such as professional sports, represent distinct first-person perspectives - oneself.	In this position, the objectivity of the individual's perception of the surroundings is minimal. The individual is unable to see and judge events from the perspective of the other, which is unfavorable for resolving and preventing conflicts.
<b>Second person</b>	In this perspective, the individual is able to see and perceive the situation through the eyes of another. Those people are capable of great measures of empathy. The position of the other accelerates and deepens the learning process.	The ability to transition to another role allows an individual to gain additional, expanded information about a particular situation. Examples of successful social roles that are consciously or unconsciously able to take the role of another person are, for example, successful	When an individual spends a lot of time in the role of another, they can also experience the negative aspects of this perspective. In life, he no longer makes decisions based on his feelings, desires, and needs, but adapt them based on the needs of another, for example a partner (pronounced co-dependence).



		<p>communicators, salespeople, therapists.</p> <p>A key advantage of this perceptual position is the ability to resolve conflicts, as the individual can empathize with the feelings of the other and consequently understand them more easily.</p>	
<p><b>The observer</b></p>	<p>When an individual pass into the role of a third person, he is able to listen and see himself and others from the position of an observer as a person not involved in a particular situation. This kind of perspective allows more objectivity.</p>	<p>The transition to the third position can use a stop outside the emotional involvement in the situation and thus a better overview of the situation, see the "bigger picture". An exact role is appropriate when the individual wants to evaluate his conversion actions and improve them. This position means less intense in a more neutral emotion than in the transition to e.g. role of the second person.</p>	<p>Some people spend most of their time in a neutral, third person. These people do not usually feel strong self-emotional states, and on the other hand, they do not experience tense challenges in contact with other people.</p> <p>People who are very focused on their thoughts and feelings usually find it harder to move into this position.</p>



## Instructions for applying the technique

### **ALL THREE POSITION ATTITUDES**

Each participant writes down their attitudes and gives pro-arguments. Afterwards, each participant does the same for his role in the role play (the position of the second person) and the observer, where he defines both the views of himself (the first person) and his role (the second person).



### **INSIGHT**

Each participant briefly presents his / her findings to the other participants: did he / she find arguments that meaningfully support his / her own position? Did he refute them or maybe he just didn't know how to define them and allow himself a broader view of the topic?



### **ACTIVE AWARENESS or UNDERSTANDING OF OTHERS**

The moderator invites the participants to take proactive action to ensure the human-wolf coexistence in the future. It also directs all interested parties in finding new knowledge and forming positions.



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**"We can only judge another when we step into his shoes."**