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OPINION
on the institutional placement of the Editorial Office
of the European Bison Pedigree Book

*(unofficial translation; the official Polish-language version is available at
https://prop.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/PROP-KOG_26-11_KRZ.pdf)*

This opinion concerns the institutional placement of the Editorial Office of the European Bison Pedigree Book (Księga Rodowodowa Żubrów, hereinafter: EBPB), in connection with a dispute on this matter between the Białowieża National Park and the European Bison Friends Society (EBFS). It is issued in response to nearly simultaneous requests from several members of the Council, the Białowieża National Park, and questions raised by the Ministry of Climate and Environment. On behalf of, and under the authority of the State Council for Nature Conservation, this opinion was prepared and adopted by the Species Conservation Committee of the Council.

For the purposes of this opinion, extensive material was collected and analysed, including correspondence, minutes, and publications related to the matter under consideration – primarily from the years 2022–2026 – including documents and explanations provided by both parties to the dispute at the Council’s request. An expert of the State Council for Nature Conservation also participated in a meeting organised on this matter by the Ministry of Climate and Environment, attended, among others, by representatives of the General Directorate for Environmental Protection.

The Council sent letters to the Białowieża National Park Directorate and to the European Bison Friends Society kindly requesting reply to questions concerning:

- the editorial teams of the pedigree books currently being prepared by each party;
- the existence and composition of any substantive advisory body supporting the editorial work;
- arrangements ensuring the long-term financing of the publication of the pedigree book;
- the stage of preparation of the 2025 volume;
- problems related to obtaining current data for the pedigree book;
- access to historical source data and the principles governing its availability;
- planned changes to the method of preparing and publishing the pedigree book;
- the possibility of returning to cooperation in maintaining a single pedigree book.

Both entities provided comprehensive responses to these questions, which were also taken into account.

Below, we present the position on the matter, the Committee’s recommendations, and the reasoning behind them.

POSITION

Having analysed all available information and reviewed the positions of both parties to the dispute, **the State Council for Nature Conservation, represented by its Species Conservation Committee, sees no convincing grounds for transferring the Editorial Office of the European Bison Pedigree Book, which has been managed successfully, correctly and regularly by the Białowieża National Park for the past 34 years, to the European Bison Friends Society.** There are no historical, legal, organisational or financial reasons for such a transfer. Still less are there compelling reasons to seek the termination of the approximately one-hundred-year-long activity of the European Bison Pedigree Book and replace its role with a new competing publication.

Considering the matter solely from a substantive perspective, the Council regards the current situation as regrettable and potentially detrimental to the conservation of the European bison, including ex situ conservation efforts. Without determining the extent to which either party bears responsibility for the personal or prestige-related dispute that has arisen, the State Council for Nature Conservation takes the view that **the continued operation of the Pedigree Book and the conservation of European bison will best be served by maintaining its management within the Białowieża National Park. This solution is, among other things, safer in terms of ensuring the continuity of this initiative, offers greater opportunities for modernising the system of data collection and dissemination, and, in the short term, is neutral with regard to the expected quality of the publication.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the Council does not expect either party to the dispute to withdraw in the near future and cease publishing “its own” European bison pedigree book, it presents the following recommendations in order to minimise the negative consequences of this dual situation while at the same time facilitating its resolution.

- I. For all stakeholders,** including managers of captive breeding centres and wild European bison populations, nature conservation authorities, scientific institutions, national and international non-governmental organisations, and others

Recognising that the European Bison Pedigree Book is the oldest, most distinguished, and at the same time a highly necessary initiative of its kind, having been managed for more than 30 years by the Białowieża National Park with confirmed formal and financial support from the Polish nature conservation authorities, we call upon all stakeholders to continue their cooperation with the Editorial Office of this Pedigree Book, regardless of any decisions concerning cooperation with the Editorial Office of the International European Bison Herd Book.

- II. For managers of captive breeding centres and wild European bison populations**

We recommend that entities which have not yet done so urgently contact the Editorial Office of the European Bison Pedigree Book and submit their data for the year 2025.

Should two European bison breeding registers for the year 2025 indeed be published, we appeal that, in order to minimise misunderstandings and confusion, all publications and documents referring to animals assigned identification numbers during the period in which two pedigree books exist should always clearly specify to which numbering system a given

number refers. This recommendation also applies where a particular animal has been reported to only one of the two registers.

III. For both editorial offices of the European bison pedigree books

We appeal that, despite differences of opinion between the entities involved, the editorial staff—some of whom belong to the same organisation and all of whom are conservation professionals pursuing the same objective—make efforts to avoid confusion caused by the dual numbering of the same animals, for example by agreeing on a common numbering system or, if this proves impossible, by avoiding duplication of numbers, for instance through the introduction of a distinct symbol identifying the respective pedigree book.

IV. For the Management of the Białowieża National Park and the Editorial Office of the European Bison Pedigree Book

Despite the limited resources available for maintaining the Pedigree Book, we suggest considering a substantial modernisation of the system used for collecting, analysing and making data available. While appreciating the tradition of publishing the Pedigree Book in printed form, we recommend consulting users as to whether a continuously updated system—where records become available immediately after submission and approval, with the possibility of browsing all historical records using selected search criteria—would better meet their needs.

Consideration may also be given to whether it would be more appropriate to improve the existing application, develop a new one, or make use of an existing information system such as ZIMS for Studbooks. In such a model, the end of each year could be marked only by the preparation of a summary of submitted records. The first of the above recommendations also concerns securing financial support for the modernisation of the publication process from dedicated funding sources.

It is advisable to seek and take into account the opinions of breeders also with regard to any possible expansion of the scope of collected and disseminated data.

JUSTIFICATION

1. Background and development of the dispute

In October 2023, the Ministry of Climate and Environment received an “Application for the Transfer of the Editorial Office of the European Bison Pedigree Book from the Białowieża National Park to the European Bison Friends Society.” The applicant was the Association itself. Although this was not explicitly stated in the application, it was apparent that, together with the management of the Editorial Office, the Association wished to retain the existing editorial staff and therefore intended to take over the editorial team, including the employees of the Park. The application stated that the existing editorial team “manages the EBPB competently and enjoys the trust of breeders, who are willing to cooperate with them. The Editorial Office in its current composition may continue to function for many years.”

The application was justified by three categories of arguments: historical, formal-legal, and the “will of breeders”.

It was pointed out that the “European Bison Pedigree Book (...) was initiated by the International Society for the Protection of the European Bison, established in Berlin in 1923”

and therefore by a non-governmental organisation of breeders. After World War II, the Society entrusted responsibility for the Pedigree Book to Dr Jan Źabiński in his capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Society's Board. In subsequent years, the quality of management of the Pedigree Book varied. Reference was made to "many years of delays in publishing volumes and lack of contact with numerous breeding centres." In the meantime, "the International Society for the Protection of the European Bison effectively ceased to function in the 1950s, and there was no institution in Poland bringing together European bison breeders." The "Editorial Office of the EBPB (...) passed through the Warsaw Zoological Garden, the Institute of Environmental Protection, and ultimately arrived at the Białowieża National Park in 1991", "because there was no appropriate organisation to take over its management." As a result, "subsequent volumes have been published annually and on a current basis." The applicant argued that the European Bison Friends Society, established in 2005, "is an organisation bringing together breeders and owners of European bison in Europe (...) and has European bison conservation among its statutory objectives. Therefore, one hundred years after its establishment, the European Bison Pedigree Book should be managed by an organisation of breeders and no longer needs to remain 'nationalised'."

According to the applicant, "all breeding books are maintained by breeders' associations rather than state institutions, in accordance with the *Act of 10 December 2020 on the prganisation of animal breeding and reproduction*. It is also important to relieve the state budget of the costs of maintaining the EBPB. While the Białowieża National Park is the leading institution in European bison conservation, its task is to care for the free-ranging and enclosed populations of the species within the Park and the Natura 2000 site 'Białowieża Forest'. The Editorial Office of the EBPB is not an integral part of the BNP."

The applicant further stated, enclosing examples of correspondence, that "breeders ask why the Pedigree Book, which is a document containing data submitted by them and serving as a basis for decisions concerning European bison breeding, is located within a state institution rather than being maintained by an organisation that brings breeders together and represents them. European bison breeders wish to participate in discussions concerning the scope of data, methods of presentation, and possibilities for their use in breeding."

The applicant acknowledged that "the BNP is a stable institution", but added in general terms that "successive directors have shown varying degrees of interest in the Pedigree Book. On two occasions, the Editorial Office was destabilised by staffing changes introduced by Park directors, after which it was necessary to correct errors and mistakes."

The applicant suggested that the future cooperation of breeders with the Editorial Office of the EBPB should depend on a change in the institution within which it is embedded, concluding: "This change is the will of the breeders, and without their cooperation and goodwill, without data voluntarily submitted by them, the Pedigree Book would become, at best, a national document."

Following the change in the leadership of the Ministry, in February 2024 the European Bison Friends Society submitted another application concerning the same matter to the newly appointed Chief Nature Conservator. This time, the argumentation was based primarily on the claim that:

“During the period when the Editorial Office of the European Bison Pedigree Book has been located within the Białowieża National Park, conflicts between the Editorial Office and Park directors have arisen on three occasions.”

The first two incidents, which had also been alluded to in the previous application of 17 October 2023, were said to have occurred in 2005 and 2011. The third was described as a “conflict” with a former Park Director in the first half of October 2023.

The causes of these difficult situations were said to concern matters related to the form of employment, working hours and workplace arrangements for editorial staff members, the level of their remuneration, and the structure of reporting relationships within the Park.

Two possible solutions were identified as “appropriate”:

- “Removing responsibility for the European Bison Pedigree Book from the Statute of the Białowieża National Park and transferring this task, together with the entire archive, to the European Bison Friends Society.”
- “Restoring the status quo, that is, the situation existing before 1 October 2023” (with regard to the employment arrangements of the Editorial Office staff).

In this letter, even more explicitly than in the previous application, the argument was raised that breeders might cease cooperation. It was stated that:

“Without close cooperation with breeders and their trust, there will be no Pedigree Book, or it will become a publication of limited credibility because it will not contain up-to-date information. As a result, there is a real danger that breeders will no longer wish to submit data to the Editorial Office in the Białowieża National Park, and consequently the Pedigree Book will simply cease to exist.”

Further correspondence between the Association, the Ministry of Climate and Environment, and the Management of the Białowieża National Park, as well as other documents available to the State Council for Nature Conservation, indicate that the Association continued its efforts to assume responsibility for the Editorial Office and management of the Pedigree Book. The conflict surrounding the matter intensified, including in relation to the newly appointed Director of the Park.

In addition to the previously raised issues, personal matters came increasingly to the forefront, namely questions concerning which individuals, with what qualifications, and on whose recommendation should be members of the Editorial Office of the European Bison Pedigree Book and its Scientific Advisory Board.

One may gain the impression that, during 2024 and 2025, both the Ministry and the Park Management attempted to let the matter resolve itself by refraining from action or by prolonging decision-making processes. At the same time, the Association consistently pursued its objective of taking over the Pedigree Book. This included presenting its perspective on the dispute in correspondence with breeders and during meetings organised by the informal but active breeder network known as the European Bison Conservation Center, conducting a “vote” on the matter during a meeting of that network in September 2025, and registering on 14 January 2026 a new periodical (annual publication) entitled the *International European Bison Herd Book* (hereinafter also “IEBHB”).

Even before the registration of the IEBHB, in a letter dated 18 December 2025, the President of the Association informed the Director of the Department of Nature Conservation at the Ministry of Climate and Environment that: “From 2026 onwards, the European Bison Friends Society will collect data concerning European bison kept in breeding facilities worldwide. The collected data will be published annually under the title ‘International European Bison Herd Book’ (International European Bison Studbook). (...) The overwhelming majority of breeders have already supported the change in the place where pedigree data are registered and have already begun submitting information on changes and population status in breeding facilities.”

She further wrote: “It may happen that breeders accustomed to using the address ebpb@bpn.com.pl send their data to the practically non-existent European Bison Pedigree Book. Therefore, I would request that steps be taken to prevent confusion resulting from unnecessary registration of European bison. I ask that information submitted by breeders be forwarded by the Białowieża National Park to the Editorial Office of the International European Bison Herd Book.”

In letters addressed to the Director General for Environmental Protection and the Chief Nature Conservator dated 16 February 2026, the former Secretary of the European Bison Pedigree Book at the Białowieża National Park, now Editor of the International European Bison Herd Book within the Association, presented an additional argument in favour of changing the publisher of the Pedigree Book.

She stated that, following her departure, “the current Editorial Office of the European Bison Pedigree Book at the BNP does not guarantee [that the Pedigree Book will be maintained properly], as it lacks the necessary experience and sufficient knowledge.”

The Editor of the new publication further wrote: “It is untrue to claim that ‘the European Bison Pedigree Book has a professional editorial team’, because what exactly is this professionalism of the persons employed by the Editorial Office based upon? None of these individuals possesses the experience and knowledge required for the proper maintenance of the Pedigree Book, because from whom could they have learned it? Such knowledge is acquired through many years of work under the guidance of an experienced person.”

The same letters also reveal future plans: “European bison breeders expect from the Editorial Office not only lists of animals but also, and perhaps above all, breeding advice based on European bison genetics. The leading specialist in the genetics of this species is Professor Wanda Olech, who is also President of the Association and Co-Chair of the IUCN Bison Specialist Group. The Action Plan currently being prepared by the Group will contain a provision stating that only European bison entered in the International European Bison Herd Book will be taken into account under this plan and in all projects concerning European bison. Likewise, the EEP programme within EAZA intends to indicate exclusively the International European Bison Herd Book in its recommendations to breeders as the sole appropriate and professional source of information on European bison worldwide.”

The two principal bodies responsible in Poland for species conservation and the management of protected species populations expressed their views on the matter in the first half of April 2026 (the Director General for Environmental Protection in a letter dated 3 April 2026, and the Chief Nature Conservator – Deputy Minister of Climate and Environment – in a letter dated 12 April 2026).

Both identified the Białowieża National Park as the institution appropriate for the continued management of the European Bison Pedigree Book. They emphasised that such an arrangement guarantees: “financial stability, historical continuity, and the security and credibility of the collected data”, and further serves as a guarantee of “impartiality and objectivity” while ensuring that “the Pedigree Book remains an independent scientific tool of general accessibility.”

2. Assessment of the situation

The State Council for Nature Conservation appreciates the achievements and importance of the European Bison Pedigree Book, which is likely the oldest continuously functioning breeding register for an endangered species maintained for the purposes of species restoration. The Pedigree Book is almost as old as the Council itself, and the volumes published between 1965 and 1996 were issued under the Council’s patronage.

The Council considers it of paramount importance to ensure the continued stable functioning of the European Bison Pedigree Book as a continuation of an established undertaking of recognised international standing, serving both as an important instrument for European bison conservation and as a valuable component of the Polish and European heritage of nature conservation.

The Council also acknowledges the substantial contribution made by both parties to the dispute over the management of the Editorial Office in restoring and safeguarding the European bison—the symbol of Polish nature conservation. Each of these entities has its own distinct character.

The Białowieża National Park has, from the outset and continuing to the present day, played a key role in restoring the pure line of the European bison to the natural environment. The Białowieża Forest and its surrounding areas are home to more than one-third of Poland’s free-ranging population of the species.

The European Bison Friends Society, in turn, provides valuable scientific and organisational support, including for European bison breeders. The Park approaches bison conservation from an ecological perspective, emphasising the use of natural processes in the management of wild populations. The Society specialises, among other things, in advisory activities, including issues relating to animal husbandry and breeding.

These two approaches, supported by different scientific communities, complement one another, stimulating substantive exchange and ultimately contributing to the continued growth of the global European bison population.

Until now, even significant differences in approaches to European bison conservation—for example concerning the acceptability of commercial culling and the commercial use of body parts—have, where disputes arose, generally been debated on substantive grounds and with a view to developing rational compromise solutions.

It is therefore with even greater concern and regret that the Council observes the current dispute, which has created divisions within communities engaged in European bison conservation. The dispute has now resulted in the existence of two independent pedigree books for the species, a situation that may lead to dual pedigree numbering of newly born

animals, incomplete datasets in both competing publications, and potentially even the disruption of the continuity of publication of the European Bison Pedigree Book.

In this opinion, we do not seek to reach definitive conclusions regarding arguments relating to labour law. We accept that both parties may have legitimate arguments that are not fully reflected in the documentation available to us. Such matters do not fall within the statutory competence of the State Council for Nature Conservation.

We merely note that issues of this nature may arise in any organisation, whether public or non-governmental. Such matters should not determine substantive decisions. Their resolution lies within the competence of the National Labour Inspectorate and labour courts. Both parties to the dispute are well aware of this, as they have previously made use of these legal avenues.

2.1. Historical conditions and current state

We do not find sufficient justification for the “takeover” of the European Bison Pedigree Book by the European Bison Friends Society in the historical arguments presented. The claim, appearing on the organisation’s website and in certain documents, that the European Bison Friends Society “is the continuation of the International Society for the Protection of the European Bison founded in the 1920s” or that it “is the successor of that Society” is purely declarative in nature. It has no legal basis and produces no legal effects whatsoever. It is a different legal entity, registered in 2005.

Interruptions in publication of the Pedigree Book, as well as errors or gaps in individual volumes, occurred both (or particularly) during the period when the Book was published by the International Society for the Protection of the European Bison, and when the actual publisher was a public institution.

As the European Bison Friends Society itself emphasised, since the publication of the Pedigree Book was entrusted to the Białowieża National Park, it has been issued regularly and without significant reservations as to its correctness. The completeness of data in successive volumes currently depends primarily on the quality and timeliness of data provided by breeders, and missing data are regularly supplemented in subsequent editions.

The Białowieża National Park is the longest continuously operating publisher of the Pedigree Book, having carried out this function stably for over one-third of a century and having so far compiled and published data covering 38 years (1987–2024).

2.2. Legal conditions

The assertion that “all breeding books are maintained by breeders’ associations”, as well as attempts to demonstrate that a change of the entity managing the Pedigree Book follows from legal requirements, are incorrect.

In practice, studbooks of endangered and protected species for conservation purposes are maintained mostly by zoological garden associations such as EAZA, WAZA, and AZA, using the ZIMS for Studbooks database operated by Species360 (formerly the International Species Information System) under EEP and SSP programmes. Within these frameworks, some studbooks are also maintained or co-maintained by public entities—for example for the Przewalski’s horse (*Equus ferus przewalskii*) or the golden lion tamarin (*Leontopithecus rosalia*).

For the European bison, the current programme coordinator is Ms Nadja Lane from Jersey Zoo. Using this database or other IT systems, studbooks are also maintained for many other endangered species, including those for which zoological gardens are not the primary breeding institutions. These are operated by various entities, including NGOs managing breeding or conservation programmes, but also by public institutions—for example for the Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) or the Japanese crested ibis (*Nipponia nippon*).

The Act of 10 December 2020 on the organisation of animal breeding and reproduction cited by the European Bison Friends Society does not apply in this case. It not only allows studbooks to be maintained by public entities, but primarily concerns only selected species of farm animals within the meaning of EU Regulation 2016/1012 and species listed in the relevant provisions of the Act. It does not apply to breeding or pedigree registers established for conservation (restoration) purposes, including European bison.

The objectives of national parks in Poland are defined in Article 8(2) of the Nature Conservation Act. These include the preservation and restoration of natural resources and components of nature (including species), which is precisely the purpose served by the European Bison Pedigree Book. Under §2 of the Regulation of the Minister of the Environment of 18 February 2013 on the statute of the Białowieża National Park, the Editorial Office of the European Bison Pedigree Book (as well as the European Bison Breeding Centre) constitutes an integral part of the Park's structure. Thus, the publication of the Pedigree Book by the Białowieża National Park is currently part of the legal order of Poland.

At the same time, it should be emphasised that the activities of the European Bison Friends Society concerning the establishment and publication of the International European Bison Studbook are fully legal. No one can be prohibited from undertaking such activity, regardless of how many European bison pedigree books may ultimately exist. However, this does not mean that such a privately established initiative is entitled to question the legitimacy or legality of the existing solution in order to replace it with its own publication.

2.3. Professional preparation

The European Bison Pedigree Book is ensured by the Management of the Białowieża National Park to have an editorial team with sufficient competence, including both biological knowledge (including European bison genetics) and editorial experience, including experience directly related to the Pedigree Book itself.

The Book has already been published for approximately 100 years. For the continuation of the conservation and recovery programme for this species, it is strongly advisable that it continues to be maintained for decades to come. Due to biological realities, changes in personnel within such an editorial team must be accepted as inevitable.

The Council acknowledges and respects the commitment, knowledge, experience, and achievements of both the current editorial staff of the Pedigree Book and the President of the European Bison Friends Society. However, the recent death of a long-standing editor serves as a sad reminder of the limited duration of any individual's ability to work on a single long-term scientific endeavour.

The fact that the former experienced Secretary (and in recent years de facto editor) of the Pedigree Book, after retirement, is willing to continue this work within the Society does not constitute a sufficient justification for changing the publisher.

The claim that “none of the persons [in the current editorial team] has the experience and knowledge required for proper management of the Book” is inconsistent with information provided both by the Białowieża National Park and by the European Bison Friends Society itself in other correspondence.

The key staff member of the new editorial team, who replaced the former Secretary, has worked in the Editorial Office for over a year and for at least eight months the former Secretary had the opportunity to train him in the specifics of the work. He is also a member of the Society and has long-standing scientific experience in European bison research, as evidenced by his publications. The other two members of the editorial team have extensive experience in nature conservation, environmental education, and editorial and publishing work. Their competencies are complementary.

According to the European Bison Friends Society itself, the Pedigree Book is an organised collection of data submitted by breeders and processed by the editorial team, including information on origin, sex, name, dates of birth, death, and transfers of animals. It constitutes a register of European bison in captive populations as well as population numbers in free-ranging and semi-free populations. Its maintenance does not require competencies beyond those that a person with biological education could acquire within a few months of practical training.

Historically, editors, secretaries, or collaborators of the Pedigree Book have included individuals with diverse educational backgrounds and initially limited experience. For example, the first key edition of the Book published in 1932 was prepared by Goerd von der Groeben—a sheep breeder from near present-day Elbląg—and Erna Mohr, at that time a secondary school teacher and zoological museum volunteer archivist in Hamburg (later a recognised mammal specialist).

According to information provided by the European Bison Friends Society in response to questions from the Council, the editorial team of the International European Bison Studbook consists of the former retired Secretary of the Pedigree Book and the President of the Society. In this case as well, the team possesses unquestionable and sufficient competence and experience to maintain such a studbook. However, this is not a sufficient reason to transfer the Pedigree Book.

2.4. Importance of cooperation

It is true that the success of the European Bison Pedigree Book depends on the involvement of breeders. Therefore, cooperation between the Publisher, the Editorial Office, and this community, which in Poland is largely represented by the European Bison Friends Society, is of great importance. It cannot be claimed that the Białowieża National Park has failed to maintain such cooperation.

For many years, the entire Editorial Office of the Book consisted of members of the Society. Members of the Society also formed part of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Pedigree Book, whose Chair (until her resignation in November 2025) was the President of the

Society. Even today, some key employees of the Park, including members of the Editorial Office, belong to the Society. It may be inferred that, indirectly—through the Society’s involvement in employment-related matters concerning its members working at the Park—this contributed to the emergence of the current dispute.

The European Bison Friends Society emphasises in some correspondence that breeders expect “ongoing advisory services”, including analysis of pedigrees, identification of optimal breeding solutions, confirmation of ancestry, and guidance on breeding direction. It is argued that the Society (specifically its President) provides such support, whereas the new editorial team does not have such competence.

It should be noted that advisory activity may, but does not have to, be linked to the Editorial Office of the Pedigree Book. There is nothing preventing it from being continued by the Society regardless of who is the publisher of the Book.

As indicated in available documentation, as a result of the dispute, the European Bison Friends Society has successfully encouraged some domestic and foreign breeders to cease cooperation with the EBPB and to cooperate exclusively with the International European Bison Studbook. Some breeders have chosen to cooperate with both competing books, which may result in duplicate and inconsistent numbering of the same animals.

Both entities, when asked by the Council about the possibility of renewed cooperation, do not exclude such a possibility in principle; however, the conditions they set and mutual accusations indicate that achieving it—especially after the emergence of a competing studbook—would be extremely difficult and in the near future practically impossible.

2.5. Development prospects

The information obtained does not indicate that a change in the publisher of the Pedigree Book would result in any significant change in its format or prevent such changes. At most, it could slow down the desired modernisation of data accessibility.

Both competing editorial offices declare, in general terms, that they intend to continue their current publishing lines. The European Bison Friends Society declares that the Book will be supplemented, at breeders’ request, with “data resulting from pedigree analysis”. It is also stated that, in cooperation with EEP and EAZA, the Society will “introduce changes or additions necessary for the ex situ conservation of the European bison”.

The Białowieża National Park, in turn, reports that it is undertaking:

- development of digital systems, including correction of errors in the electronic version of the Pedigree Book,
- improvement of data quality,
- facilitation of information exchange,
- increased data accessibility,
- expansion of the Editorial Office’s activities to include promotion and education concerning the Pedigree Book and European bison conservation.

At the same time, the Park does not plan to abandon the traditional printed form of publication.

The plans of both entities are currently at a general stage of formulation and do not indicate any revolutionary changes. Only the Białowieża National Park explicitly indicates the development of IT tools.

2.6. Inancial aspect

According to available data, the Białowieża National Park has secured stable funding for the maintenance of the Pedigree Book at the necessary level, which has not been demonstrated by the European Bison Friends Society.

The Society informed the Council that it will finance the publication of the Book from its own resources, with the level of support to be determined after the publication of the first volume. No specific or estimated amount was provided, nor was any funding source identified for subsequent years.

The Society is under no obligation to disclose its financial situation or plans to the Council. Publicly available information indicates that it obtains funding from public grants and private donations; however, its financial statements are not publicly available in the National Court Register repository. This most likely indicates that it uses a simplified income and expenditure accounting system, implying that in 2015–2024 its annual revenues did not exceed 100,000 PLN. There is therefore no basis to assume that it can provide stable long-term funding for this important undertaking.

The Białowieża National Park has an allocated annual budget for the Pedigree Book of over 150,000 PLN. This amount is currently sufficient for its ongoing operation and ensures stability of publication. However, it is insufficient for major innovations, such as the development of a new IT system, which would likely require additional one-off funding, for example from a dedicated grant programme.

3. Consequences of secession

The establishment by the European Bison Friends Society, together with the former Secretary of the EBPB, of a new competing studbook with identical objectives and similar content has effectively become a fact. It is considered unlikely that these activities will be discontinued, as they have been consistently developed over more than two years.

Similarly, there are currently no legal, substantive, or voluntary grounds for the Białowieża National Park to discontinue the EBPB. It must therefore be assumed that in 2026 two pedigree books covering the year 2025 will be published. Both will be incomplete but partially complementary (a separate, also incomplete register for most zoological gardens is maintained by EAZA under EEP).

This will result in:

- a reduction in the status of the EBPB due to larger-than-usual data gaps, while the new International European Bison Studbook will not achieve the same status previously held by the EBPB;
- a reduction in Poland's prestige in contributing to global standards of species management, due to unavoidable and diplomatically uncomfortable attempts by both editorial teams to attract international partners, driven largely by personal and prestige-related motives;
- the emergence of informational chaos due to the duplication of numbering for some animals by both institutions (excluding EEP/ZIMS numbering, which follows a different system).

It is difficult to predict how long this situation will persist. It will likely continue until one of the editorial offices achieves a sufficiently clear advantage in data quality and completeness, making the continuation of the other publication clearly irrational. Generational changes or policy decisions may also contribute to this outcome.

Other actors may primarily focus on mitigating the negative effects of this situation.

The Committee's position and recommendations are based on the facts presented above.

Signed on behalf of the Chair of KOG PROP

Dr Andrzej Kepel
Chair of the Council

For information:

- Ministry of Climate and Environment
- General Directorate for Environmental Protection
- Białowieża National Park Directorate
- European Bison Friends Society
- general public