

PUBLICATION

Report
Biodiversity
EU
Trade
Ecologic Legal

Wildlife Crime

STUDY FOR THE ENVI COMMITTEE



[1]

According to Chinese authorities, the coronavirus spread to humans from wildlife at a wildlife market in Wuhan. Most likely, Ebola and AIDS also originated from wildlife. Besides the serious threats to biodiversity and sustainable development, the risk for human health is thus an additional reason to strengthen the efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and other forms of wildlife crime. Over the last years, Ecologic Institute has published several studies on environmental compliance and crime related to wildlife crime. The most comprehensive study on wildlife crime was presented to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) of the European Parliament in Brussels in April 2016.

In the context of preparing an EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking, the European Parliament commissioned a study to analyze wildlife crime in the EU, in particular the level and quality

Wildlife Crime - also a threat to human health

of enforcement in Member States. This study was compiled by a consortium led by Ecologic Institute. The study provided numerous insights on how to enhance the fight against wildlife crime. First, a higher priority should be placed on combating wildlife crime at the political level in addition to the measures taken by enforcement bodies. Secondly, Member States should provide for the specialization of enforcement staff and units. Finally, the report highlights the need for improved data collection, better cooperation and more demand reduction measures. The study was published on the European Parliament website in March 2016 and is available for download.

Wildlife crime has established itself as a serious threat to biodiversity and sustainable development. The EU is both an important market for illegal wildlife products and an important actor in the fight against wildlife crime. Therefore, the European Commission has recently adopted an EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking.

The [study](#) [2] was compiled by a consortium led by Ecologic Institute and comprising the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), the Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM), the University of South Wales, Ragnhild Sollund of the University of Oslo, Tanya Wyatt of the University of Northumbria and Teresa Fajardo del Castillo of the University of Granada.

Structure of the study

The study contains as first chapter an introduction to the CITES convention, which regulates the trade in endangered species, and the EU legislation on wildlife crime. This is followed by a review of academic and official literature on wildlife crime. Moreover, the report contains two chapters on illegal wildlife trade in the EU, and implementation of EU wildlife regulations and law enforcement in EU Member States respectively. These chapters are based on a review of selected official reports and statistics for 25 Member States, data from the EU-Twix database which contains data on seizures reported by the EU Member States, and an in-depth analysis including interviews for five selected Member States (Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom).

Wildlife crime in the EU

On wildlife crime the study finds that the EU is both a destination and a transit region for wildlife products. The study identifies the following four important trade routes across the EU:

- Large mammals like elephants, rhinos and big cats are traded from Africa and South America to major trade hubs (e.g. airports) in the EU and for further transit to Asia

- Leeches, caviar, fish, as well as reptiles and parrots for the pet trade in Europe are smuggled via coastal routes
- Endangered birds are traded from South Eastern Europe to Southern Europe
- Russian wildlife and Asian exports are transported via Eastern European land routes.

The overall trend in wildlife crime measured in the number of seizures has been roughly constant in recent years. Seizures are concentrated in countries with large overall trading volumes like Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, France and the United Kingdom. The most frequently seized species are reptiles, mammals, flowers and corals.

Wildlife crime enforcement in the EU

On wildlife crime enforcement the study concludes that the regulatory framework is by and large sufficient for combatting illegal wildlife trade. However, insufficient and uneven levels of enforcement of the existing legislation across the EU are a major concern. What is problematic are in particular the varying and often low levels of sanctions imposed in Member States, a lack of resources, technical skills, awareness and expertise among law enforcers, prosecutors and judicial authorities, and the low priority given to wildlife crime by enforcement institutions.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

The study ends with conclusions and policy recommendations for the European Parliament. Some of these recommendations are that higher priority should be given to fighting wildlife crime at the political level as well as by enforcement bodies; Member States should provide for the specialization of enforcement staff and units. Improved data collection, better cooperation and more demand reduction measures are also recommended.

Main Link

Download: Wildlife Crime [pdf, 2.7 MB, English]

Ecologic Related Articles

- Environmental Crime and the EU: Synthesis
- European Union Action to Fight Environmental Crime (EFFACE): Conclusions and Recommendations
- Wildlife Crime
- Analysis of Wildlife Crime in Five Member States
- Delivering and Enforcing the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking
- EU Accession to CITES
- Environmental Offences in Germany 2016: a statistical analysis
- Status quo und Weiterentwicklung des Umweltstrafrechts und anderer Sanktionen

Citation

Sina, Stephan; Gerstetter, Christiane; Porsch, Lucas et al. (2016): Wildlife Crime. Study for the ENVI Committee, Brussels.

Language

English

Author(s)

Dr. Stephan Sina
Dr. Christiane Gerstetter
Lucas Porsch
Ennid Roberts, LLM
Lucy Olivia Smith
Katharina Klaas

Author(s)

Teresa Fajardo de Castillo (University of Granada)

Credits**With contributions from**

Ragnhild Sollund, University of Oslo
Andrew Farmer, IEEP
Andrea Illes, IEEP
Malin Meyer, IEEP
Kamila Paquel, IEEP
Nicolien van der Grijp, IVM
McKenna Davis, Ecologic Institute
Susanne Langsdorf, Ecologic Institute
Ulf Stein, Ecologic Institute
Michael Schock, Ecologic Institute
Jennifer Maher, University of South Wales
Tanya Wyatt, University of Northumbria

Funding

- European Parliament, Directorate-General Internal Policies of the Union (EP DG Internal Policies)

Year

2016

ISBN

978-92-823-8813-6 (paper), 978-92-823-8812-9 (pdf)

DOI

10.2861/451062

Dimension

124 pp.

Project

Wildlife Crime

Project ID

Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LIST OF BOXES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

1.1. Objective of the Study

1.2. Methodology

2. THE CITES FRAMEWORK AND THE EU LEGISLATION ON WILDLIFE CRIME

2.1. The CITES framework

2.2. The EU legislation on wildlife crime

2.3. Conclusions

3. WILDLIFE CRIME: A LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Summary of key literature findings

3.1.1. Illegal wildlife trade within the EU

3.1.2. Organised criminal groups operating in illegal wildlife trade and the role of the EU

3.1.3. Links of EU wildlife crime to money laundering and avoidance of financial regulations

3.1.4. Law enforcement in the EU

3.1.5. The role of the EU in global wildlife trade

3.1.6. Best practices examples of regional cooperation on wildlife crime

3.2. Summary of gaps in the existing literature

3.3. Conclusions

4. SYSTEMATIC OVERVIEW OF WILDLIFE CRIME IN THE EU

4.1. Illegal wildlife trade within the EU

4.2. The role of the EU in global wildlife trade

4.3. Organised criminal groups operating in illegal wildlife trade in the EU

4.4. Links of EU wildlife crime to money laundering and non-compliance with financial regulations

4.5. Conclusions

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OF EU WILDLIFE REGULATIONS IN THE EU MEMBER STATES

5.1. Measures to address wildlife crime

5.2. Penalty levels for wildlife trafficking and related offences

5.3. Cooperation on law enforcement and other activities

5.3.1. Cooperation between national authorities/actors

5.3.2. International cooperation of Member States

5.4. Enforcement activities and effectiveness of framework in place

5.5. Conclusions

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusions

6.1.1. Illegal wildlife trade within the EU

6.1.2. Legislative frameworks

6.1.3. Involvement of organized crime and money laundering in wildlife crime

6.1.4. Global dimension of wildlife crime and relevance to Europe

6.1.5. Enforcement of wildlife regulations in the EU Member States

- 6.1.6. Added value of an EU Action Plan
- 6.2. Recommendations
 - 6.2.1. Priority setting
 - 6.2.2. Awareness raising and capacity building
 - 6.2.3. Demand reduction
 - 6.2.4. Specialisation
 - 6.2.5. Cooperation
 - 6.2.6. Data recording and access to data
 - 6.2.7. Sanctions
 - 6.2.8. Legislation
 - 6.2.9. Research
 - 6.2.10. EU Action Plan
 - 6.2.11. Specific recommendations to the European Parliament

REFERENCES

ANNEX: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Keywords

wildlife crime, CITES, illegal wildlife trade, wildlife trafficking, EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking, law enforcement, international cooperation, organized crime, money laundering, EU-TWIX database, Europe, literature review, online survey, desktop research and analysis, country studies, interviews

Source URL (modified on 05/06/2020 - 12:28): <https://www.ecologic.eu/13645>

Links

[1] <https://www.ecologic.eu/sites/files/presentation/2016/wildlife-crime.jpg>

[2] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/570008/IPOL_STU%282016%29570008_EN.pdf