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Revision of the EU action plan against wildlife trafficking

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Setting the scene

December 2022 will be a critical moment for preserving global biodiversity. Signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will meet in Montreal for the conclusion of the 15th conference of parties to the CBD. At the meeting, the signatories will seek to shape global efforts to identify and commit to action to halt and reverse the continued destruction of biodiversity. One month earlier, parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) will meet in Panama to review measures to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of species.

The fight against wildlife trafficking is a crucial part of efforts to halt biodiversity loss. As highlighted by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, sustainable use of wildlife is essential to meet the needs of present and future generations. The sustainable use of wildlife can help stop the emergence of new pandemics, provide sustained livelihoods for local and indigenous people, and contribute to restoring and maintaining biodiversity. By contrast, illegal or ineffectively regulated trade in wild species is a threat to this sustainable use¹.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which is to be adopted at the 15th conference of the parties to the CBD in December, is expected to set concrete goals and targets to ensure that the harvesting, use of, and trade in wild, terrestrial, freshwater and marine species is legal and sustainable. This updated action plan is intended to contribute to the full implementation of this commitment by the European Union and its Member States.

The illegal wildlife trade remains serious and widespread. According to the 2020 World Wildlife Crime Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, no country in the world is unaffected by wildlife trafficking, with a wide variety of species involved, from eels to pangolins to rosewood². Globally, the numbers of seizures of trafficked wildlife by the authorities have fallen since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic³, but there is no evidence that trafficking itself is being curbed.

The illegal trade of species is a driver of global biodiversity loss⁴. The illegal exploitation of species can greatly weaken wild populations, and in some cases drive them to extinction⁵. Species that are not directly targeted for trafficking can also be impacted, for example through by-catch or habitat depletion. The illegal removal of keystone species from ecosystems can also have cascading effects, affecting ecosystem services, destroying important carbon sinks, and disturbing the health and balance of land and water⁶. Moreover, the release of trafficked alien species into the wild in destination countries can disrupt local habitats, with potentially devastating impacts on indigenous species.

Wildlife trafficking also has **very destructive socioeconomic impacts**. The widespread illegal trade of wild animals can increase the risk of transmission of zoonotic diseases (i.e.

¹ IPBES, *Summary for policymakers of the thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, 2022.

² UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report*, 2020.

³ TRAFFIC, *An overview of seizures of CITES-listed wildlife in the EU in 2020*, 2022.

⁴ IPBES, *Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany, 2019.

⁵ Maxwell, S. et al., Biodiversity: the ravages of guns, nets and bulldozers, *Nature*, 536, pp. 143-145, 2016.

⁶ UNODC, *Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime, Annual Report*, 2021.

diseases originating in animals that go on to infect humans), with potentially devastating results for public health. The destruction of ecosystems which can result from poaching and trafficking often **deprives local communities of legal and sustainable forms of income**. These legal and sustainable forms of income include nature-based tourism, well-managed trophy hunting, and sustainable trade in wildlife. Well-managed trade in wildlife can actively benefit species conservation, creating incentives for local communities to protect wildlife resources in their environment, while making a sufficient and sustainable living. However, **wildlife trafficking is economically extremely lucrative**. The attractiveness of wildlife trafficking – given the low risk/high reward nature of the crime – seriously threatens public safety. It weakens the rule of law and legitimate institutions. Wildlife trafficking both benefits from and contributes to corruption while simultaneously supporting further criminal activities⁷. There is clear evidence of **links between wildlife trafficking, organised crime (including weapons trafficking) and terrorism**⁸.

A key role for the EU to play

The EU functions as a hub for global wildlife trafficking⁹, and has a key role to play in the fight against it. The reported **value of the illegal wildlife trade in the EU was a minimum of EUR 4.7 million** in 2019 but is likely to be much larger¹⁰.

The EU is therefore globally well-placed to lead the fight against wildlife trafficking. EU regulations on the wildlife trade make it possible to go beyond the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in protecting endangered species against unsustainable exploitation. For example, the EU's current rules on trophy hunting expand permit obligations to – and increase scrutiny of – species beyond those in the strictest CITES listing.

The EU can build on its long experience in combating wildlife trafficking

The new action plan builds on the previous EU action plan against wildlife trafficking (2016-2020).¹¹ The evaluation of the 2016 action plan found that, since 2016, wildlife trafficking has risen up the agenda as a priority issue among a wide range of policymakers, law-enforcement agencies, and stakeholders in the EU and worldwide. The EU and its Member States have now scaled up enforcement measures, for instance through enhanced cross-border investigations with the active involvement of Europol, Eurojust and law-enforcement agencies. This has resulted in more seizures and prosecutions, including through the activities of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT). In addition, the European Commission has increased its support to – and cooperation with – relevant national authorities and European networks of enforcement practitioners on tackling environmental crime. The Commission also adopted a proposal for a new EU directive to crack down on environmental crime.

⁷ European Commission, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, *Study on the interaction between security and wildlife conservation in sub-Saharan Africa: summary report*, European Commission, 2019.

⁸ UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report*, 2020.

⁹ Europol, *Environmental Crime in the age of Climate Change*, 2022.

¹⁰ TRAFFIC, *Overview of seizures of CITES-listing wildlife in the European Union, January 2019 to December 2019*, 2020.

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking, COM/2016/087 final.

The EU has also led actions against wildlife trafficking in multilateral fora, notably under CITES. To deliver on the EU's commitment to take further action against elephant poaching and ivory trafficking globally, the EU updated its rules to end most forms of ivory trade in the EU.

The EU and Member States' diplomatic networks have also been mobilised, actively engaging in bilateral and regional dialogues. Last, but not least, the EU has since 2016 provided substantial funding for capacity building and international action against wildlife trafficking, including for: (i) advocating for the involvement of local communities in source countries of wildlife trafficking; and (ii) providing these local communities with alternative livelihoods and alternative sources of income.

Continued challenges and new opportunities

Despite these efforts, wildlife trafficking, combined with climate change and environmental degradation, continues to put a serious strain on wildlife as well as on people's livelihoods and security. There have been changes over time in both trading routes and traded species. Moreover, increased **use of online platforms for trading in wildlife illegally** and the related **use of small-parcel services** have created new challenges for detecting and investigating this type of crime, calling for new solutions and increased resources. The increase in seizures of trafficked wildlife in the EU since 2016 has not translated into a proportional increase in prosecutions and convictions. A lack of specialised staff, resources and training in many of the Member States and non-EU countries remains a major issue. There is also scope for improving cooperation: (i) within EU Member States; (ii) among EU Member States; (iii) between the EU and non-EU countries; and (iv) with stakeholders and civil society.

Way forward

This revised action plan aims to guide EU action against wildlife trafficking in the period until 2027. Building on the 2016 action plan, it aims to **respond to the current challenges in a comprehensive way**. While the focus of the action plan is on wildlife trafficking, it makes necessary links with the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations and other related policies.

Addressing wildlife trafficking requires a comprehensive approach and a range of measures at the intersection of the wildlife trade and wider wildlife conservation policy, all with the aim of allowing only sustainable trade in wildlife to occur.

The action plan is structured around four main priorities, set out below.

Priority 1: Preventing wildlife trafficking and addressing its root causes

Priority 2: Strengthening the legal and policy framework against wildlife trafficking

Priority 3: Enforcing regulations and policies to fight wildlife trafficking effectively

Priority 4: Strengthening the global partnership of source, consumer and transit countries against wildlife trafficking

Each priority has several objectives, and for each of the objectives, a number of actions have been identified. These actions are not exhaustive and may be complemented by additional measures. The objectives and related actions have been detailed in the Annex.

Through these priorities, the new action plan:

- focuses on **multi-agency cooperation and coordination** to effectively prevent, detect, prosecute and sanction wildlife crime¹². Under the action plan, **cooperation will be strengthened: (i) between the law-enforcement authorities of EU Member States; and (ii) between the EU, its Member States and non-EU countries.**
- encourages EU Member States and non-EU countries to treat wildlife trafficking as a serious crime, **and to build capacity and specialisation along the enforcement chain** with a view to making proportionate and dissuasive sanctioning the norm.
- **explores the need for, added value of, and feasibility of new legislative and policy initiatives** to ensure that EU action against wildlife trafficking remains sufficiently strong and proportionate to the threat posed by wildlife trafficking.
- **harnesses the momentum of the adoption of the Digital Services Act to strengthen action against online wildlife trafficking.** Online trade in wildlife has grown rapidly in recent years, making it easier for criminals to operate with lower risk and across a wider market. The general boom in e-commerce has led to increased volumes of international parcel traffic in recent years. The adoption of the Digital Services Act will equip the EU and Member State authorities with new tools to address the challenges linked to online trade, including in wildlife. The skills and capacities of law-enforcement, customs, and other relevant authorities will be strengthened. Cooperation with the private sector, such as the cooperation undertaken as part of the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online¹³ or the ROUTES partnership¹⁴, will be encouraged. New tools will be developed to monitor legal trade in wildlife and to detect and investigate wildlife crime. These tools include **databases, mobile apps, scanners**, etc.
- continues to treat wildlife trafficking as a global issue, ensuring international cooperation and **coherence between action against wildlife trafficking within the EU and support to action against wildlife trafficking globally.** Cooperation with non-EU countries will be strengthened through bilateral exchanges, regional networks, enforcement networks, trade deals, and multilateral programmes.
- increases **transparency** in EU decision-making and promotes stronger partnerships between the EU and its Member States on the one side and non-governmental organisations, international organisations and the private sector on the other. The contribution of non-governmental organisations, international organisations and the private sector to the fight against wildlife crime will be recognised and facilitated, including by involving them in policy discussions¹⁵.

¹² This need for cooperation and coordination applies to: CITES management; enforcement and scientific authorities; customs agents; the police; public prosecutors; the judiciary; health authorities; animal welfare and veterinary authorities; financial intelligence units; ministries of foreign affairs; and diplomatic missions amongst others.

¹³ See the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online.

¹⁴ See Welcome to Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species (routespartnership.org).

¹⁵ All the points described in this paragraph also form the core objectives of EMPACT, a security initiative driven by EU Member States to identify, prioritise and address threats posed by organised and serious international crime. EMPACT runs in four-year cycles, and is a multidisciplinary cooperation platform of Member States supported by all EU institutions, bodies and agencies. Non-EU countries, international organisations and other public and private partners are also associated to it.

Sufficient financial and human resources

No real progress can be made in the fight against wildlife crime if no sufficient funding is available to support the accompanying actions, both at the EU level and in EU Member States. It is crucial that funds dedicated to monitoring the wildlife trade and addressing wildlife crime are: (i) identified in advance; (ii) made accessible to the relevant implementing actors; and (iii) used in the most effective and coherent way.

The wildlife trade should be fully integrated in the relevant EU funds addressing: (i) security and organised crime; (ii) the environment; and (iii) international cooperation/partnerships. In particular, it should be a priority under: EMPACT; the Internal Security Fund; the LIFE programme; and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument.

Tracking progress

To regularly measure progress, a system for monitoring the implementation of the action plan will be set up by the Commission in cooperation with Member States in the first year following the adoption of the plan. The system will include a light reporting mechanism for the EU Member States and stakeholders, based on existing reporting frameworks. A number of indicators will be identified to measure, as far as possible, the results achieved in terms of the overall impact of the action plan on the wildlife trade.

Conclusion

The revised EU action plan against wildlife trafficking strengthens the ambitions of the 2016 action plan, underlining the continued dedication of the EU to the fight against wildlife trafficking. If equipped with appropriate resources, the action plan will serve as a blueprint for ambitious and comprehensive action and cooperation – within the EU and across the world – to put an end to illegal trade in wildlife.

ANNEX – Table of actions (2022-2027)

Priority 1 – Preventing wildlife trafficking by addressing its root causes

Objectives	Actors	Actions	Indicative timing
1. Reduce consumer demand for illegally traded wildlife	COM, MS, EU networks of practitioners and expert groups ¹⁶	Promote the effective implementation of CITES Resolution Conf. 17.4 on demand-reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species.	Continuous
		Implement awareness-raising activities and well-targeted, social science-based demand-reduction activities, targeting in particular behavioural change by consumers in the EU. Support such activities in other major destination markets. Give priority to activities that address demand for wild-sourced reptiles, amphibians, birds, glass eels, African elephants, rhinoceros, pangolins and medicines/supplements containing illegally harvested wild plants. Raise consumer awareness on how to distinguish between legal and illegal trade.	From 2023
		Implement initiatives at all levels, within the EU and beyond, that support livelihoods and the sustainable use of wildlife and wildlife products by encouraging and facilitating the legal and sustainable sourcing of wildlife products. This should include promoting transparent and traceable supply chains for timber¹⁷ and other wildlife products, and enforcing existing traceability requirements, such as those in the fishery sector¹⁸.	From 2023

¹⁶ For example, the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment, the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law, the European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment, and regional networks.

¹⁷ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the making available on the Union market as well as export from the Union of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation and repealing Regulation (EU) No 995/2010, COM/2021/706 final.

¹⁸ Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, amending Regulations (EC) No 847/96, (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 2115/2005, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007, (EC) No 676/2007, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008, (EC) No 1342/2008 and repealing Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1627/94 and (EC) No 1966/2006.

Objectives	Actors	Actions	Indicative timing
2. Strengthen engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities in the management and conservation of wildlife, including through support for the development of sustainable livelihoods in source countries	COM, MS	Implement land-based initiatives such as NaturAfrica, the flagship EU initiative to support biodiversity conservation in Africa. NaturAfrica supports key landscapes for conservation and development. This will help to create jobs and improve security and sustainable livelihoods, while preserving the critical ecosystems and wildlife that are vital to all.	Continuous
		Apply a human-rights-based approach to wildlife conservation and management, with the participation of local communities and indigenous peoples (for example, through: (i) community-based natural-resource-management approaches; (ii) ensuring the free, prior and informed consent processes; (iii) effective grievance mechanisms; and (iv) guaranteed access to information).	Continuous
		Promote the participation of women and young people in the management and conservation of wildlife, and ensure a gender-sensitive approach to analysing and combating the illegal wildlife trade.	Continuous
		Address the wildlife-security nexus by supporting actions in non-EU countries that: (i) promote social and economic stability; (ii) strengthen the rule of law; and (iii) encourage cooperation between law enforcement, local authorities, conservation partners, local communities, and indigenous peoples.	Continuous
3. Prevent and counter corruption associated with wildlife trafficking at national, regional and international levels, involving source, transit and destination countries	COM, MS	- Promote the effective implementation of: - CITES Resolution Conf. 17.6 on Prohibiting, preventing, detecting and countering corruption, which facilitates activities conducted in violation of the Convention; and of - United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/311 on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, in particular its paragraph 30, taking into account the G20 High-Level Principles on Combating Corruption Related to Illegal Trade in Wildlife and Wildlife Products.	Continuous

Objectives	Actors	Actions	Indicative timing
		Streamline anti-corruption measures in programmes aiming to strengthen the capacities of relevant actors against wildlife crime, both within the EU and outside the EU (including among: seaport and airport officials; transport companies and financial intermediaries/the financial sector; enforcement authorities; and administrative authorities), in line with the UN Convention Against Corruption and in close cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).	From 2023
4. Take a ‘One Health’ approach into account in the context of regulating wildlife trade in source, transit and destination countries	COM, MS	Examine the risks of the spread of zoonotic diseases related to trade in wild animals and products derived from wild animals such as bushmeat.	From 2023
		Implement targeted measures to reduce these risks throughout supply chains, in line with the four guiding principles of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management¹⁹, including through projects such as the EU-funded ‘Safety across Asia for the Global Environment’ project implemented by the UNODC, and the sustainable wildlife management programme implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations²⁰.	From 2024

¹⁹ See Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (fao.org).

²⁰ See Sustainable Wildlife Management, Policy Support and Governance Gateway and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (fao.org).

Priority 2 – Strengthening the legal and policy framework against wildlife trafficking

Objectives	Actors	Actions	Indicative timing
5. Set up a framework for the effective implementation of the EU action plan against wildlife trafficking at national and EU levels	MS, COM	Define and assign clear responsibilities for implementing actions at national and EU levels, and ensure coordination between the relevant actors (for instance: (i) through the creation of inter-agency committees or memoranda of understanding; (ii) through the adoption of national action plans; or (iii) through the appointment of a national focal point).	2023
		Set up a reporting, monitoring and evaluation framework for the action plan at the EU and national level. This framework should align with existing reporting obligations and structures in order to avoid additional administrative burden at EU or Member State level.	2023/2024
		Use EMPACT as a key instrument to implement the EU action plan against wildlife trafficking, and involve national EMPACT coordinators in the implementation of the action plan.	Continuous
6. Ensure that EU and national policy on the wildlife trade and wildlife trafficking is comprehensive and aligned with international commitments, standards and best evidence	COM, MS	Actively support and work with international institutions and experts to undertake research and develop/update guidance and identification tools (technical tools including forensic science and identification guidebooks) on key issues related to the wildlife trade.	Continuous
		Introduce and impose proportionate, effective and dissuasive sanctions for wildlife crime in line with the revised Environmental Crime Directive (once it is adopted) and exchange information and good practices to ensure consistency in the application of these sanctions.	From 2023
		Implement the updated EU guidelines on trade in ivory and monitor their implementation and results.	Continuous

Objectives	Actors	Actions	Indicative timing
		Apply increased scrutiny to imports of hunting trophies (for example by: (i) exploring extending the requirement for an import permit for hunting trophies of additional species covered by Annex B of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97; (ii) work with international partners to update available evidence on the impacts of trophy hunting on wildlife; and (iii) making opinions of the Scientific Review Group on country-species combinations for importing hunting trophies more transparent).	From 2023
		Explore the need for, added value of, and feasibility of revising existing measures or creating new tools to reduce unsustainable trade in wildlife (e.g. a ‘positive list’ of species whose specimens taken from the wild can be traded and kept as pets; criminalising all trade in illegally sourced wildlife; or requiring the registration of all animals and plants brought to the EU).	From 2023
7. Involve relevant stakeholders in the development and implementation of action against wildlife trafficking at the EU and national levels	COM, MS	Hold regular stakeholder meetings at national and EU levels, including with international organisations; relevant law-enforcement and judicial authorities; civil society; the private sector; academia; and national governments.	From 2023
		Organise thematic sessions of the EU Wildlife Trade Enforcement Group with the participation of relevant civil-society groups, businesses, and academia.	From 2023
		Support the organisation of multidisciplinary EMPACT action days as part of EMPACT.	Continuous
8. Engage with business sectors involved in the wildlife trade	COM, MS	Organise sessions of the EU Wildlife Trade Enforcement Group with relevant business representatives to address specific issues (e.g. traditional medicine, exotic/wildlife sourced pets, the luxury industry, hunting tourism, timber, the fishing and fish-product-trade industries, transport, courier companies, and online trade).	From 2023

Objectives	Actors	Actions	Indicative timing
		Ensure effective cooperation between CITES management authorities and the national administrative authorities responsible for supervising and enforcing the rules set out under the proposed directive on corporate sustainability due diligence²¹.	From 2023
		Develop guidelines on how companies should fulfil their due-diligence obligation under the proposed directive on corporate sustainability due diligence with regard to the wildlife trade.	2024

Priority 3 – Enforcing regulations and policies to fight wildlife trafficking effectively

Objectives	Actors	Action(s)	Indicative timing
9. Improve rate of detection of illegal activities within the EU, and address priority risks	MS, COM, Europol	Ensure that the process of developing serious and organised crime threat assessments (SOCTAs) also includes an assessment of the threat of wildlife trafficking, based on data and – where possible – national threat assessments provided by Member States. Streamline data on illegal trade.	2023
		Regularly discuss priority risks (and measures to address these risks) in the EU Wildlife Trade Enforcement Group.	Continuous
		Develop and use state-of-the-art tools and methods to facilitate the work of law-enforcement authorities and detect illegal wildlife activities, for instance including mobile apps for frontline staff. Report on best practices at the Enforcement Group.	Continuous

²¹ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence and amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937, COM/2022/71 final.

Objectives	Actors	Action(s)	Indicative timing
		Implement an EU CITES e-permitting system to: (i) facilitate legal trade; (ii) facilitate the sharing of data; (iii) facilitate the identification of false permits; and (iv) encourage non-EU countries to develop compatible systems.	2023/2024
		Connect the EU CITES e-permitting system with the EU Customs Single Window Certificate Exchange (EU CSW-CERTEX) system (the central module of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs) to facilitate the checks of EU CITES e-permits by EU customs authorities, thus improving the enforcement of CITES provisions at the borders.	2024
		Consider expanding the marking obligation to live species covered by Annex B of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97.	2024
10. Ensure that law enforcement (including criminal-law-enforcement authorities and the courts) have the necessary sectoral expertise to address wildlife trafficking	COM, MS, Europol, CEPOL, Eurojust, EJTN, ERA	Organise cross-professional and cross-border training sessions for law-enforcement authorities, judicial authorities, and criminal judges where appropriate, including targeted training on: (i) how to improve the quality of investigation into financial flows; (ii) how to target online wildlife trafficking; and (iii) how to make better use of modern forensic methods.	From 2023
		Integrate training on wildlife crime into the national curricula of relevant training academies/schools.	2025
		Share data, training materials and case law between Member States, using tools such as the case-law database of the European Union Network of Prosecutors for the Environment, the EU Trade in Wildlife Information Exchange (TWIX), etc.	Continuous
		Cooperate closely with relevant organisations, associations, and networks, and contribute to projects that work on tackling and prosecuting environmental crimes²².	Continuous

²² Including the European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment, the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment, the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law, EnviCrimeNet, and the Successful Wildlife Crime Prosecution in Europe project.

Objectives	Actors	Action(s)	Indicative timing
		Promote and support peer-to-peer training.	Continuous
		Encourage and support: (i) the specialisation of law-enforcement bodies, judicial bodies and other competent authorities at the national level; and (ii) the pooling of resources, for example through the establishment of dedicated wildlife-enforcement units within all relevant law-enforcement agencies.	From 2023/2024
		Encourage competent law-enforcement authorities to support and engage in criminal proceedings led by police/prosecutors and provide their expertise.	Continuous
		Promote online public access to case-law and court documents and publicise high-profile cases (with due regard to data-protection and privacy rights) with the dual goals of dissuading criminal actions and promoting best practices in enforcement.	From 2024
11. Improve cooperation, coordination, communication and data flows within and between Member States	COM, MS, EU agencies	Set up communication channels within Member States between: (i) sectoral/administrative national authorities; (ii) national law-enforcement authorities; and (iii) customs.	2024
		Ensure a common approach to collecting and sharing comparable, accurate and complete operational information on wildlife crimes. Ensure, as far as possible, coherence with statistical data collection on environmental crime proceedings (including wildlife crime) by law-enforcement authorities (police, prosecutors).	2024
		Systematically share operational and strategic information on wildlife crime with Europol through the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) to ensure all the necessary data representing a realistic picture of the threat level posed by environmental crime: (i) are available to Europol; and (ii) feed into the EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment.	Continuous

Objectives	Actors	Action(s)	Indicative timing
		At national level, issue risk-information forms to be shared via the EU Customs Risk Management System for wildlife commodities to improve risk profiling for customs checks/information exchange with EU frontline enforcement officers.	Continuous
		Ensure effective cooperation and information sharing between the relevant CITES authorities, the Europol national units, Eurojust, OLAF and the Interpol Wildlife Crime Working Group.	Continuous
		Establish regular and structured collaboration and information sharing between the EU Wildlife Trade Enforcement Group and the relevant actors under EMPACT.	From 2023
		Carry out regular joint operations involving cross-border cooperation by EU Member States, the European Commission (OLAF), and relevant EU agencies such as Eurojust, Frontex, Europol and the European Fisheries Control Agency. These operations can also be part of the implementation of EMPACT operational action plans.	Continuous
		Systematically request Europol/Eurojust operational/judicial support on cases related to serious and organised wildlife crime.	Continuous
12. Systematically address links between wildlife trafficking and organised crime, particularly through strengthened action to target illicit financial flows	COM, MS, Europol, Eurojust	Support Member States in strengthening their capacity to: (i) dismantle the organised criminal structures involved in wildlife trafficking; and (ii) investigate financial flows in the context of wildlife crime. This support should include training and raising awareness of crime typologies and risks²³.	From 2023
		In line with the EU strategy to tackle organised crime 2021-2025, systematically launch financial investigations in organised crime investigations and, as soon as the financial environment indicates the presence of criminal assets, systematically launch asset-recovery investigations and procedures.	Continuous

²³ E.g. using tools such as the Wildlife Trade Financial Toolkit, <https://themisservices.co.uk/iwt>.

Objectives	Actors	Action(s)	Indicative timing
		Continue to step up the fight against the laundering of financial flows stemming from wildlife trafficking by supporting and reviewing the implementation by Member States of Directive (EU) 2018/1673 on combating money laundering by criminal law.	Continuous
		Raise awareness of how the directive on asset recovery and confiscation²⁴ (after its adoption and entry into force) and Directive (EU) 2019/1153 laying down rules facilitating the use of financial and other information for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of certain criminal offences²⁵ can be used to fight wildlife trafficking.	From 2023/2024
		Step up the systematic confiscation of the proceeds of wildlife trafficking in criminal cases, raising awareness among enforcement officials of available confiscation tools as a dissuasive measure. Encourage the use of the confiscated assets to contribute to conservation measures and the fight against wildlife trafficking.	From 2023
13. Increase effort in tackling the online aspects of wildlife trafficking, including through implementing the Digital Services Act and working with online platforms	COM, MS	Implement the recommendations of CITES Resolution Conf. 11.3 paragraphs 12 and 13 on wildlife crime linked to the internet.	From 2023
		Ensure effective cooperation between CITES management and enforcement authorities and digital-services coordinators under the Digital Services Act²⁶, including by providing sufficient resources to follow up on detected illegal activities (e.g. by setting up internet task forces to support CITES management and enforcement authorities).	From 2022

²⁴ See Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Single Market For Digital Services (Digital Services Act) and amending Directive 2000/31/EC, COM/2020/825 final.

²⁵ Directive (EU) 2019/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 laying down rules facilitating the use of financial and other information for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of certain criminal offences, and repealing Council Decision 2000/642/JHA, PE/64/2019/REV/1.

²⁶ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Single Market for Digital Services (Digital Services Act) and amending Directive 2000/31/EC, COM/2020/825 final.

Objectives	Actors	Action(s)	Indicative timing
		• Ensure coordination between CITES enforcement and expert groups and the European Board for Digital Services.	From 2024
		• Develop EU-specific guidelines on the online trade in wild species, in line with the Digital Services Act.	2025
14. Improve access to care for seized or confiscated live animals or plants	MS, COM	• Follow CITES guidelines for the disposal of confiscated live animals, as contained in CITES Resolution Conf. 17.8 on the disposal of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species, ensuring that all options for disposal/care are adequately considered and that final decisions are well-justified.	From 2023
		• Expand networks of specialised rescue centres at the national level, and share information about the centres at EU level.	2025
		• Promote cooperation between relevant authorities to reduce unnecessary delays in investigation and litigation in order to minimise further harm to the trafficked specimen.	Continuous
		• Increase efforts, where appropriate, to effectively reintroduce seized live specimens to the wild.	Continuous

Priority 4 – Strengthening the global partnership of source, consumer and transit countries against wildlife trafficking

Objectives	Actors	Leading action(s)	Indicative timing
15. Raise the profile of the fight against wildlife trafficking globally	COM, HRVP, MS	Regularly include wildlife trafficking on the agenda of high-level bilateral and multilateral meetings.	Continuous
		Continue dialogue with priority countries and regions at technical and political level, including as part of Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade and forest partnerships.	Continuous
		Ensure that wildlife trafficking is treated as a serious crime, including through implementation of the EU strategy to tackle organised crime 2021-2025, promoting the adoption of a protocol covering wildlife trafficking under the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.	From 2023
16. Ensure that EU trade policies and instruments support action against wildlife trafficking	COM, MS	Include wildlife trafficking on the agenda of: (i) trade dialogues with key partners; and (ii) the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment.	Continuous
		Propose ambitious commitments to combat wildlife trafficking in future free-trade agreements, including in the EU's ongoing support to the strengthening of the African Continental Free Trade Area.	Continuous
17. Strengthen the capacity of key source, transit and market countries outside the EU to combat wildlife trafficking and improve cooperation on enforcement between the	COM, MS, Europol	Train the EU's wildlife-enforcement agents on international cooperation and the instruments available for this purpose.	From 2023
		Build capacity and provide scientific and technical training to relevant enforcement agencies, prosecutors and judiciaries in key non-EU countries affected by the illegal wildlife trade, including the upgrading of national legal frameworks to enable cross-border investigative collaboration and collaboration between national judiciaries.	Continuous

Objectives	Actors	Leading action(s)	Indicative timing
Member States, EU enforcement actors and key non-EU countries		Encourage bilateral contacts, peer-to peer training and exchanges. Support informal and formal regional networks outside of Europe such as the Jaguar network in Latin America or the TWIX networks in Africa²⁷, and encourage their cooperation with European counterparts.	Continuous
		Engage with and support the work of: (i) the relevant global networks, such as the International Consortium for Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC²⁸) and the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE); and (ii) civil-society organisations and networks, such as the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online.	Continuous

²⁷ E.g. AFRICA-TWIX.

²⁸ Comprising Interpol, the CITES Secretariat, the World Customs Organization, UNODC and the World Bank.