

For actions against trade with endangered species

The illegal trade of endangered species is the fourth biggest illegal trade in the world. If alive, animals can be moved all across the world to be sold as exotic pets. If dead, their parts and derivatives are sold as everything from ingredients in traditional medicines and food to clothing and accessories.

In 1973 the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild flora and fauna (CITES) was created. The stated goal was to ensure that the trade of wild animals and plants weren't the driving force behind their extinction. To this date 180 countries have ratified the convention.

In order for trade to be legal it needs to be traceable and sustainable, with different criteria based on the classification of the species. The classifications are laid out in appendices to the convention, which at the European level is translated as follows:

- Appendix A lists species which are the most endangered and which must not be part of generalised trade, with some exceptions made in certain circumstances;
- Appendix B lists species which are not necessarily endangered at the moment, but are at a significant risk if trade is not regulated;
- Appendix C lists species where the country of origin has requested the inclusion of a species to ensure cooperation with other member states with monitoring programmes;
- Appendix D lists species which aren't included in the previous appendices but are imported to the EU to the extent that monitoring is justified.

In 2022 a new Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) was adopted by the European Commission to guide Member States' actions towards ending wildlife trafficking. This plan has [four main priorities](#):

- Preventing wildlife trafficking and addressing its root causes;
- Strengthening the legal and policy framework against wildlife trafficking;
- Enforcing regulations and policies to fight wildlife trafficking effectively;
- Strengthening the global partnership of source, consumer and transit countries against wildlife trafficking.

We believe that these priorities are the right way forward, but need to be followed up with sufficient national implementation.

Transparent database over CITES-listed species:

Not all of these animals are collected or hunted in the wild. Quite a few are instead bred in private hands. At first glance, this might seem a good thing. It could mean that natural populations aren't put under pressure by collectors or hunters, and therefore make a positive contribution towards having healthy populations.



However, the problem with this trade is that it creates a demand for these animals or products derived from them. A demand which drives up prices and makes illegal collection and hunting more profitable. Therefore, it is imperative that European countries seek to abolish the trade and sale of live animals of endangered species and goods derived from them. As European Greens we support animal rights in every corner of the world and need to acknowledge and make use of the cumulative effects stemming from cracking down on the trafficking of endangered species.

It's imperative that each country knows how many endangered and CITES-listed animals there are in private hands. Each animal in private hands needs to be identifiable by authorities, whether it be by ID-chips, photos or DNA. This information also needs to be widely accessible and kept up to date across jurisdictions and borders. This entails regular inventory checks as well as cooperation with relevant authorities.

Records should be kept for all listed species in CITES, in order to make sure that parts from the animals don't end up on the black market.

In addition, it is imperative that all European countries, including non-EU countries, adopt legislation encompassing a "positive list for companion animals", which limits the keeping and trade of live animals to those species that are suitable from an animal welfare-, conservation- as well as human- and animal health perspective. Several EU Member States have already developed such positive lists or are in the process of doing so. Moreover, recognising that Europe is amongst the major consumers of wildlife and that only a fraction of the species in trade are currently listed in CITES, it is imperative that European countries, including non-EU countries, at least monitor the import and export of all wildlife. Moreover, the EU and European countries, including non-EU countries, need to adopt legislation criminalising the commercial import, export, trade and regulating the possession of species that are not CITES-listed but protected nationally in their country of origin.

Collaboration and coordination

Today there is a huge variety in the type of agencies, the level of legislation and the strength of different countries' laws related to animal trafficking. This creates loopholes which criminal organisations can use, especially combined with the lack of oversight that countries have over private owners of CITES-listed animals. To combat this, the new Wildlife Action Plan needs to be better translated into national legislation and implemented by Member States. A comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system should also be implemented and law enforcement agencies on all levels should deepen the cooperation with CSOs.

Member States, when implementing the Action Plan should also make use of financial investigations and asset recovery, using approaches which could allow authorities to identify organised criminal networks. This also includes working towards creating legislation enabling authorities to recover or freeze the assets of persons associated with wildlife trafficking.

Banning imports and exports:

Today, one of the main ways in which exemptions from CITES is given is to hunting trophies. As the most desired trophies tend to be the distinguishing features of a healthy animal (an elephant's tusk

e.g.), this leads to a reverse evolutionary pressure where the weaker animals are left alive. As such, the acquisition of these trophies hampers the chances of long-term survival of the species in question.

The import and export of trophies, for any use, from CITES-listed animals should therefore be banned in all European countries.

Adequate resources:

The relevant agencies will need to have the resources that they require, both in terms of financial as well as human resources. This goes for agencies involved in the investigations and prosecution leading to convictions, as well as agencies tasked with closing farms.

EU institutions and the EU Member States should make efforts to identify and allocate budgets dedicated to implement the [Action Plan](#).

Training:

National law enforcement agencies need to be fully mobilised, trained and equipped with specialised personnel to investigate and prosecute this type of crime. This goes for customs officials as well as actors in the traditional legal system. CSOs should also be acknowledged and supported in these efforts.

Therefore, the European Green Party:

- Calls upon every European country to create a register of each CITES-listed animal kept in private hands, including those owned by farming, zoo, circus and private ownership and ensure that said register remains accessible and transparent to prevent animals or their parts and derivatives ending up on the black market;
- Calls upon every European country to ban the farming and breeding of CITES-listed animals in all cases except for the conservation of populations. Responsible commercial farming and breeding of otherwise extinct CITES-listed animals that contribute to the conservation of populations could be exempt from the ban. Calls upon the EU, and all Member States and European countries, including non-EU countries, to 1) adopt legislation encompassing a "positive list", which limits the keeping and trade of companion animals to those species suitable from an animal welfare, conservation, as well as human and animal health perspective 2) adopt legislation criminalising the commercial import, export, trade and regulating the possession of species that are not CITES-listed but protected nationally in their country of origin. 3) monitor the import and export of all wildlife and products derived from them;
- Calls upon every European country to identify and allocate dedicated budgets to ensure that sufficient funds and human resources are available to the relevant authorities to ensure the successful implementation of the EU WAP;
- Calls upon every European country to promote the cooperation and coordination between different levels of authorities as well as with CSOs in order to combat animal trafficking;



- Calls upon every European country to ban the import and export of trophies, for any use, from CITES-listed animals;
- Calls upon every European country to promote the training and specialisation of national law enforcement to combat animal trafficking;
- Calls upon every European country and all relevant EU authorities for an ambitious implementation of all Actions of the Wildlife Action Plan.