



Event Report

**EPPA Regional Workshop on Implementation of the EU Wildlife
Trade Regulations**

16-17 March 2021

Live video conference



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NIRAS **umweltbundesamt^U**

The project implemented by the Consortium of NIRAS (lead)
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1 The event

The EPPA Regional Workshop on Implementation of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations took place on March 16-17, 2021, via live video conference. The workshop was organized in cooperation with TAIEX, and under the EPPA project work programme, namely activity 5.3.3 “Capacity building on CITES for the enforcement authorities”. It targeted the following EPPA beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey.

The participants came from the relevant authorities of the EPPA beneficiaries involved in the implementation of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations. They represented the Ministries with the environment, spatial planning, agriculture, and forestry portfolios, in addition to national environmental management and conservation agencies, state inspectorates, customs, and food and veterinary agencies. Details are available in the list of participants. Civil society was represented by NGOs from the beneficiaries, namely: Institute for Development Policy (Kosovo*), Macedonian Green Centre (North Macedonia), Co-PLAN (Albania), Albanian Ornithological Society AOS. The EU Delegations or Office in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey were also present.

The speakers represented EU Member States’ and EU institutions’ experience. There were experts from the relevant national authorities of Spain, Hungary, Croatia, Portugal, Belgium, and Czechia; and from DG Environment, European Commission. Additionally, the workshop mobilized the contributions from Mr. Jonathan Barzdo, former Chief of Governing Bodies of the CITES Secretariat and former Deputy Secretary General Ramsar Convention, from the North Macedonian State Environmental Inspectorate, and the CITES Secretariat. Details are available in the agenda and the presentations can be downloaded in both the TAIEX website and in the EPPA project website.

The aim of the Workshop was to provide advice and guidance so as to enhance capacity regarding the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations. It improved cooperation between CITES authorities of the EPPA beneficiaries and the EU Member States, in particular in the field of enforcement and combating wildlife trafficking. The Workshop touched upon the European Commissions’ recommendation 2007/425/EC that identifies a set of actions for the enforcement of the CITES regulation. Case studies were provided to highlight the duties and roles of the EU management and enforcement authorities, including how to tackle illegal trade, how to manage problems, management of cross-border cooperation.

2 Proceedings and conclusions

The event provided an occasion for the European Commission to inform the beneficiaries regarding the work of the EU Enforcement Working Group established under (EC) 338/97), the importance and deadlines for implementation reporting under CITES and EUWTR, and to provide an update on the draft Commission Regulation amending the current rules on wildlife trade, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Namely, the Implementing Regulation will be updated to reflect CITES CoP decisions in terms of nomenclature, source codes, tightening ivory trade rules, etc. The EU Enforcement Working Group offers a crucial cooperation and exchange of information venue between Member States. It meets twice a year and it works in tandem with EU-TWIX, a channel for information sharing. That information sharing is seen as a tool to support the work of enforcement authorities in terms of checking permits, control goods in trade including live specimens, validating documents, and fighting illegal trade. The Member States reporting requirements, fed by the permitting systems, is essential to inform the CoP decisions. As such, Member States have to report trade in CITES-species as well as non-CITES species listed in the Annexes. Preference is given to reporting based on actual traded quantities, instead of permitted quantities. Annual reporting on legal trade is mandatory and carries a sanction for Member States, namely trade suspension after three consecutive years of non-compliance.

The CITES Secretariat reviewed the ways in which it supports the Parties implementing the Convention. The Secretariat offers specific enforcement and reporting tools (available on CITES website), maintains Task Forces, and studies illegal trade. Reporting to the Convention takes place through an annual legal trade report, an annual illegal trade report, an implementation report (former biennial report). Ad-hoc reports can be required by the Conference of the Parties, Standing Committee and the



Animals and Plants Committees on specific issues or species. Guidelines for reporting are available through the CITES website. The annual legal trade reports monitor the implementation of the Convention and the level of international trade. The illegal trade reports cover actions taken in the previous year. This information is being used to create a CITES illegal trade database, which will provide the basis for the design of sustainable solutions to fight such trade in terms of law enforcement and decision making. CITES illegal trade data will also support the implementation of the SDG Framework. It was noted that Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia have not submitted illegal trade reports since 2016. Additionally, the same countries are missing most of the required CITES biennial implementation reports. The International Consortium in Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICWC) also supports implementation by providing capacity building tools and services.

In addition, CITES maintains several task forces, including the Task Force on illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species. The Task Force aims to develop strategies to combat illegal trade, including measures to promote and further strengthen international cooperation. It also makes available online tools to assist the Convention's implementation, such as a CITES virtual college, train-the-trainer materials, etc.

The former Chief of Governing Bodies of CITES Secretariat explained CITES compliance procedures, assured by its Secretariat, and whose objective is to promote, facilitate and achieve compliance with obligations under the Convention. In case there is a sustained compliance breach by a Party, the case goes to the Standing Committee who takes decisions on the best course of action, which can include: provide advice, information and facilitate assistance, such as capacity-building support, request special reporting or recommend suspension of commercial or all trade in specimens of one or more CITES-listed species (among others). This reflects an international system of governance, built into the Convention, that applies to all parties.

After the experiences and tools shared by the international bodies, the participants had the opportunity to learn from the experiences of EU Member States regarding the verification of CITES permits and certificates, the dissuasive sanctions applied in case of non-compliance being, experiences of inter-institutional coordination between CITES authorities and customs officers, risk-based border controls, and concrete examples of successful enforcement and investigation actions.

The Czech Republic, for instance, developed a national action plan against wildlife crime. It is based on the input of CITES Enforcement Authorities. It was the first strategic document concerning wildlife crime on the national level, and it reflects priorities of the EU Action Plan and it is adjusted to national needs. It contains 14 measures to meet 7 objectives by 2023. The objectives are:

- Increase the importance of wildlife crime at government level
- Strengthen cooperation between Enforcement Authorities
- Improve International cooperation in wildlife crime investigation
- Improve the education system and raise awareness of the seriousness of wildlife crime in Environmental Law enforcement authorities
- Improve and Streamline the Working Conditions of Environmental Law Enforcement Authorities in Terms of Investigations
- Improve care for seized and confiscated specimens
- Raise public awareness of wildlife crime

The Czech Republic also uses IT tools to support enforcement, including a CITES database. The database enables online check of issuing and validity of all Czech CITES permits and certificates to all competent Enforcement Authorities; it records offences, offenders and confiscated specimens; it allows reporting the annual illegal trade reports; and it provides analytical services to prioritize activities of Enforcement authorities to prevent and reveal wildlife crime. The country's experience on validating and checking authenticity of CITES permits was also shared, as well as public awareness and education campaigns.

Portugal and Spain shared their experience with effective and dissuasive sanctions, including seizure and confiscation of specimens, seizure of funds and assets from illegal activities, seizure of equipment involved in illegal wildlife trade, suspension of business licences, and temporary closure of commercial business. Provisions for the seizure and forfeiture of specimens are of particular importance since - beyond the degree of deterrence provided by fines and prison sentences alone - forfeiture of



specimens, equipment and profits can act as an effective deterrent for commercial businesses involved in wildlife trade offences. Specific examples were provided regarding trafficking of the European glass eel, which included seizure and confiscation of the specimens, cash and vehicles confiscated, 34 Bank Accounts blocked, Promissory notes for 4.000.000 euros, and Seizure of 6 real estate properties in Spain alone.

The procedures to determine penalties and monetary compensations were also discussed using multiple criteria: the market value of the species concerned (e.g. Italy, Spain, Portugal), the threat or conservation status of the specimens involved (e.g. Austria, Germany, Portugal), the estimated cost of measures necessary to compensate for the environmental damage done (e.g. Finland, Serbia), and the financial situation of the offenders (e.g. Austria, Sweden).

Portugal and Spain identified the following challenges to the enforcement of wildlife trade regulations:

- Illegal wildlife trade operations conducted by non-residents,
- lack of access to relevant technical and legal information for prosecutors and judges,
- legislation that protects those who purchase smuggled goods from seizure and confiscation. "Good faith" acquisition.
- general lack of resources for enforcers.
- Seized specimens might enter the market by being used for commercial purposes, whether Annex B (Varanus) or Annex A (captive bred offspring sold legally)
- Market values varies widely and an updated data base is needed as well as what the value is based on

Croatia highlighted the role of customs in CITES enforcement, and the necessary intra-national cooperation between all institutions involved. Customs has a key role in controlling legality, sustainability and traceability of CITES trade, because it monitors and Regulates legal Wildlife Trade and it detects and interdicts illegal Wildlife Trade. A Customs officer involves in border inspection, is usually the first line (import) or last line of defense (export) in the inspection of shipments of CITES specimens. Therefore, the Croatian customs, by law, controls cross-border trade in specimens of wild species, their parts and derivatives, listed in the Annexes to the EU Regulation and strictly protected indigenous species; supervises the implementation of EU regulations, CITES Convention and Act, and determines whether cross-border trade is carried out with specimens of species listed in Annexes to Council Regulation 338/97 or strictly protected indigenous species in accordance with applicable regulations; participates through its representatives in meetings of committees and working groups of EU bodies and meetings of expert committees and working groups of the Convention; cooperates with the Ministry in preparing views for conferences of the Parties to the Convention and meetings of committees and working groups of the bodies of the EU; participates in the elaboration of instructions and documents for the effective implementation of the Convention, upon request submits data to other state administration bodies on the cross-border movement of wild species; participates in organising and running training programmes for employees and in organising and running programmes for informing and educating the public; checks that, at the time of border crossing, the specimens have valid permits, certificates or other acts issued under EU Regulations, CITES Convention and the Act; checks the specimens in the consignment correspond to the data indicated in the permits and accompanying documentation, assisted by the Ministry, nature protection inspection, border veterinary inspection, phytosanitary inspection or other expert bodies, if necessary; carries out the misdemeanour sentence referred to in the law.

The EU Member States experiences were underlined with the presentation of specific examples of enforcement actions and their outcomes, as well as the cases of specific species and trade flows in different parts of the EU. Additionally, control requirements were discussed, including the establishment of enforcement priorities, strategies, inter-institutional cooperation, staffing and training, outlet for confiscated species, intelligence analysis and reporting, specialized investigation techniques, and raising judicial and public awareness, all in light of several EU member states experience, including Hungary, Czech Republic, Croatia, Belgium, Spain and Portugal.

Building from the experience of the CITES Secretariat and the EU Member States, there was also a discussion on the importance of cross-border cooperation to combat wildlife crime, given the



international system of governance around CITES and the international flows of trade. Similar cooperation was concluded to be needed at national level, between the policy and enforcement sectors involved, to ensure coordination and better outcomes. Finally, the participants engaged in a panel discussion about the enforcement of the CITES regulation in the EPPA beneficiaries. Some of the challenges identified by the countries are:

- Low priority of illegal wildlife trade in most national policies
- Insufficient human resources
- Insufficient enforcement capacity due to lack of specialized departments. Wildlife trade control is an additional task for authorities, such as customs with already strained capacities. Criminal Investigation Police and Public Prosecutors have sporadic cases with wildlife trafficking and limited experience in investigating wildlife crime in general.
- Limited access to enforcement tools, such as DNA and forensic analysis, detector dogs
- Lack of effective sanctions (harmonization and legal issue)
- Lack of infrastructure and other resources to deal with confiscated wildlife
- Insufficient monitoring capacities
- Recent reduction of capacity building programmes due to Covid-19

Workshop outputs

The workshop's main outputs were:

- Strengthened capacity to address the implementation challenges of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations
- Raised awareness on the latest policy developments and tools related to the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations
- Exchanged experiences in the implementation of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations between EU Member States and the EPPA beneficiaries
- Improved cooperation between CITES authorities of the EPPA beneficiaries and the EU Member States, in the field of enforcement and combating wildlife trafficking
- Increased regional dialogue on the implementation of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations
- Identified national obstacles towards the implementation of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations
- Discussion on the needs of the countries

3 Evaluation

The participants were asked to evaluate the workshop by TAIEX using an online survey after the event. The evaluation results are presented below in a summary table.



				No. Responses	Expert Score	Yes / Excellent	No / Good	Partially / Satisfactory
80560	Workshop - participant - A. Questions	1	Was the workshop carried out according to the agenda?	17	-	17 (100%)	-	-
		2	Was the programme well structured?	17	-	17 (100%)	-	-
		3	Were the key issues related to the topics addressed?	17	-	14 (82%)	-	3 (18%)
		4	Did the workshop enable you to improve your knowledge?	17	-	12 (71%)	-	5 (29%)
		5	Was enough time allowed for questions and discussions?	17	-	15 (88%)	-	2 (12%)
		7	Do you expect any follow-up based on the results of the workshop (new legislation, new administrative approach, etc.)?	17	-	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	-
		8	Do you think that further TAIEX - %pr_c_abbreviation% assistance is needed (workshop, expert mission, study visit, assessment mission) on the topic of this workshop?	17	-	14 (82%)	3 (18%)	-
		Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings	-	Mr. Dimovski, Mihail - Other speakers	16	92.18%	12 (75%)	3 (19%)
	-		Mr. Galilea Jimenez , Antonio - Speaker MS	16	89.06%	10 (63%)	5 (31%)	1 (6%)
	-		Mr. Korosi, Levente - Speaker MS	16	90.62%	11 (69%)	4 (25%)	1 (6%)
	-		Mr. Loureiro, Joao Jose - Speaker MS	16	92.18%	12 (75%)	3 (19%)	1 (6%)
	-		Ms. Pokrovac Patekar, Anita - Speaker MS	16	85.93%	8 (50%)	7 (44%)	1 (6%)
	-		Ms. Legotinic, Ljiljana - Speaker MS	16	87.5%	9 (56%)	6 (38%)	1 (6%)
	-		Mr. Barzdo, Jonathan - Other speakers	16	90.62%	10 (63%)	6 (38%)	-
	-		Mr. Blinkov, Darko - Speaker CC	16	92.18%	12 (75%)	3 (19%)	1 (6%)
	-		Mr. Kloucek, Ondrej - Speaker MS	16	89.06%	10 (63%)	5 (31%)	1 (6%)
	-		Ms. Jonsson, Pia - Other speakers	16	90.62%	11 (69%)	4 (25%)	1 (6%)
-	Ms. Malfait, Elke - Speaker MS	16	93.75%	13 (81%)	2 (13%)	1 (6%)		
80560	Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings	-	Ms. Rihova, Pavla - Speaker MS	16	92.18%	12 (75%)	3 (19%)	1 (6%)
-	Ms. Van - Looy, Miet - Speaker EU	16	92.18%	11 (69%)	5 (31%)	-		
Workshop - participant - C. Logistic Ratings	1	Conference venue	9	-	5 (56%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	
	2	Interpretation	12	-	3 (25%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)	
	3	Hotel	4	-	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	-	
	4	Flight	4	-	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	-	
	5	Catering	4	-	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	-	
	6	Was the communication leading up to the event satisfactory?	11	-	9 (82%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	
	7	Was the pre-event test useful?	10	-	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	-	
	8	Did you find the virtual event platform easily accessible?	13	-	9 (69%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	
	9	Was the platform user-friendly?	13	-	9 (69%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	
	10	Did the host provide adequate instructions during the event, on the use of the platform and in problem solving?	14	-	13 (93%)	1 (7%)	-	
	11	Was the IT support provided adequate?	14	-	13 (93%)	1 (7%)	-	
Workshop - participant - D. Comments	-	/	-	-	-	-	-	
Workshop - speaker - A. Questions	1	Did you receive all the information necessary for the preparation of your contribution?	8	-	8 (100%)	-	-	
2	Has the overall aim of the workshop been achieved?	8	-	7 (88%)	-	1 (13%)		
3	Was the agenda well structured?	8	-	6 (75%)	-	2 (25%)		
80560	Workshop - speaker - A. Questions	4	Were the participants present throughout the scheduled workshop?	8	-	8 (100%)	-	-
		5	Was the beneficiary represented by the appropriate participants?	8	-	8 (100%)	-	-
		6	Did the participants actively take part in the discussions?	8	-	3 (38%)	-	5 (63%)
		7	Do you expect that the beneficiary will undertake follow-up based on the results of the workshop (new legislation, new administrative approach etc.)	8	-	5 (63%)	-	-
		8	Do you think that the beneficiary needs further TAIEX - %pr_c_abbreviation% assistance (workshop, expert mission, study visit, assessment mission) on the topic of this workshop?	8	-	8 (100%)	-	-
		9	Would you be ready to participate in future TAIEX - %pr_c_abbreviation% workshops?	8	-	8 (100%)	-	-
		Workshop - speaker - C. Logistic Ratings	1	Conference venue	5	-	5 (100%)	-
2	Interpretation	5	-	5 (100%)	-	-		
6	Was the communication leading up to the event satisfactory?	7	-	7 (100%)	-	-		
7	Was the pre-event test useful?	7	-	6 (86%)	-	1 (14%)		
8	Did you find the virtual event platform easily accessible?	7	-	7 (100%)	-	-		
9	Was the platform user-friendly?	6	-	5 (83%)	-	1 (17%)		
10	Did the host provide adequate instructions during the event, on the use of the platform and in problem solving?	7	-	7 (100%)	-	-		
11	Was the IT support provided adequate?	7	-	7 (100%)	-	-		
Workshop - speaker - D. Comments	-	The workshop has been brilliantly undertaken by the organization. Participants, due to being an online training, might not participate actively had it been a face to face meeting. The workshop was very good prepared (content , experts and speakers , IT support etc.) and I think that will be useful for BC counties. Too much time spent for the introduction of the participants at the beginning of the workshop affecting that there was then less time for the presentation delivered by the speakers.	-	-	-	-	-	

Endnotes

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Annexes

Annex 1: Agenda (provided as a separate document)

Annex 2: List of Participants (provided as a separate document)

Annex 3: Presentations (provided as a separate document)





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