



# LIFE SWIPE Recommendations on the revision of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking. December 2021

The LIFE Successful Wildlife Crime Prosecution in Europe (SWIPE) project welcome the commitment of the European Commission to revise and improve the EU Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking (EU WAP) and contribute to the implementation of the goals of the European Green Deal and the 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy. Building on the current Action Plan, the revision can further increase the effectiveness of EU policy and actions against wildlife trafficking.

The EU WAP can build on important steps like the Council conclusions setting the EU's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime for EMPACT 2022–2025 where environmental crime is remaining a priority, and within that trafficking of endangered species. Furthermore, the revised Environmental Crime Directive sets the premises for clarifying the scope of environmental crime offences, providing more precision with regard to sanctioning and facilitates the use of effective investigative tools and promoting cross-border cooperation and information sharing. It is important to have the Action Plan and the new Environmental Crime Directive reinforce one another, to have interservice coordination.

Hereafter are outlined the main recommendations from LIFE SWIPE for the future EU WAP:

- **Identify and allocate the needed financial and human resources**

The success of the EU Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking will depend on the financial and human resources allocated to its implementation and the EU institutions and the EU Member States should identify dedicated budgets both at EU and Member States levels for its implementation. The success of the future EU WAP will largely depend on the allocation of resources.

- **Translate the EU WAP at national level**

The implementation of the EU WAP was very uneven among EU Member States (MS). Thus, EU Member States should commit to translate/implement the EU plan at national level as some EU MS did e.g. Spain's TIFIES. Furthermore, national law enforcement agencies need to be fully mobilised,

trained and specialised to tackle this type of crime and follow clear law enforcement targets set at the national level to measure efforts in tackling wildlife trafficking, such as controls, investigations, operations etc.

- **Set-up a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system**

The future Action Plan should be supported by a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system with baseline and target indicators, in order to measure progress and ensure accountability towards its implementation.

- **Include gender and human rights dimensions within the EU WAP**

The revised EU WAP needs to include gender and human rights dimensions within its scope as both are interlinked with wildlife trafficking (for reference WWF has developed a report on gender and illegal wildlife trade and Fauna & Flora International has published a position on rangers and human rights). The Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) that focuses on gender and human rights issues too, has produced an Action Plan, White Papers and other resources to improve recognition of the important role of rangers and the standards on capacity, employment, equality and conduct around this work. Furthermore, the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights (CIHR) provides great general resources on the topic as well.

- **Expand the species it covers, in tune with other regulations**

SWIPE considers that the future EU WAP should not only encompass the species protected by the CITES and the EU Wildlife Trade regulations but should also apply to wild species covered by other regulations such as the EU Timber Regulation and the Illegal, and the Unreported and Unregulated fishing regulation.

- **Stimulate financial investigations and asset recovery**

The future Action Plan should stimulate financial investigations and asset recovery for wildlife, timber, and fisheries trafficking cases. In this sense, "follow the money" approaches could allow authorities to identify and dismantle wider networks involved in organised criminal activities. Currently, the Directive 2014/42/EU on the freezing and confiscation of instrumentalities and proceeds of crime in the EU is under revision and we consider that wildlife, timber and fisheries trafficking should be included within the scope of the revised Directive.

- **Continue training and specialisation of authorities on wildlife crime**

Another important element that SWIPE is committed to is the need to continue training and specialisation on wildlife crime within enforcement and judicial authorities (prosecutors and judges) both within and outside the EU. In this sense, Civil Society, Organizations should be acknowledged and supported.

- **Set stronger cooperation with Civil Society Organizations**

It is important that the future EU WAP acknowledges the role that Civil Society Organizations play in its implementation and be supported in this sense. They act as drivers of awareness raising, community engagement, capacity building, and training of authorities.

- **Increase the involvement of key private sectors**

It is important to acknowledge that the largely unregulated online market allows criminals to sell illegally obtained wildlife products across the globe and in this sense it is worth mentioning the

Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online. Another example is related to the travel and transport sectors where action is needed in order to break the chains of illegal wildlife trade (e.g. the Transport Taskforce - United for Wildlife). These are voluntary initiatives that are able to engage motivated companies and generate success stories. Yet, the future Action Plan should also focus on establishing appropriate legislative frameworks for companies to adopt due diligence procedures.

- **Offer support in developing innovative tools and technologies**

It is important that the new EU WAP will consider developing tools and technologies to support law enforcers in their work. For example, there is a need for tools to detect wildlife trafficking online, scanner technologies at airports or forensics technology, and apply approaches from other related disciplines (e.g. criminology and crime sciences with techniques such as situational crime prevention and restorative justice that have untapped potential for application to wildlife trafficking).

The European Commission has the opportunity to set strong premises for the future of combating wildlife trafficking. In this sense, LIFE SWIPE offers its assistance to support the efforts in addressing wildlife trafficking with relevant know-how and expertise.