



Introduction: Wild for Danube-Carpathian Project

In 2016, the UN Environment office in Vienna and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, in cooperation with the WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River and the Institute of Biology Bucharest, Romanian Academy, and with the support of the EU Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects, carried out an assessment study, with two objectives:

1. To develop an inventory and analysis of international legal regimes addressing illegal logging and wildlife crime in the Danube-Carpathian (DC) region;
2. To produce an overview and analysis of how these regimes are transposed into national legislation and enforcement practices of the State Parties to the Carpathian Convention.

The outcome of the assessment showed implementation gaps and overlaps in (inter)national law and practices. Case studies on illegal logging, illegal fishing of sturgeon and caviar trade, illegal killing of birds and poaching of large carnivores, identified needs for improved cooperation and coordination, capacity building, training and awareness raising. Furthermore, it called for the development of targeted programmes and increased funding for combating illegal logging and wildlife crime in the region.

**UN Environment – Vienna Programme Office
Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention**
Vienna International Centre
P.O. Box 500
1400 Vienna, Austria

Telephone (+43 1) 26060-4545
unep@unvienna.org

Eurac Research
Viale Druso 1
39100 Bolzano, Italy

Telephone (+43) 1 26060 5616
info@eurac.edu

WWF – Danube Carpathian Programme Office
Ottakringer Strasse 114-116
1160 Vienna, Austria

Telephone (+43 1) 52454 70 0
office@wwfdcp.org



Project preparation supported by
the EUSDR's Technical Assistance Facility for
Danube Region Projects



**eurac
research**



Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime in the Danube-Carpathian Region



The Four Case Studies

Illegal Logging

The Carpathian Mountains are home to the continent's greatest remaining reserves of old-growth forests outside Russia, providing habitat to two thirds of Europe's populations of large carnivores. However, these forests are declining and under threat from illegal logging. Today, less than 300,000 hectares remain – a loss for nature and economy.



Recommendations:

The European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR) is in place but secondary legislation and sensitization of local operators, authorities and the public at large are needed to ensure proper use, implementation and application of the Responsible Forest Management Principles. Best enforcement practices should be shared among neighbouring countries to prevent leakage effects and the import of illegal wood to the local market.

Illegal Fishing of Sturgeon and Caviar Trade

Sturgeons (Pisces: Acipenseridae) are one of the world's oldest group of living species, considered nowadays by IUCN as the most critically endangered group of species worldwide.

From the former six native species inhabiting the Danube basin, one species is already extinct, four are critically endangered and one is vulnerable.

Within the EU, no international trade in wild sturgeon products, including meat and roe (caviar) is allowed. Several Danube countries have a sturgeon fishing ban to protect the last remnants of the wild populations. Only trade of sturgeon products from aquaculture is permitted, but requires a label from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Yet, with caviar reaching retail prices amounting up to 6,000 euros per kg, illegal fishery and trade have reached alarming proportions. This adds a new pressure to the existing ones, such as habitat loss and disruption of the spawning migration, and increases the risk of extinction for the remaining species.



Recommendations:

A prioritised action programme is needed for strengthening legal enforcement capacity and for monitoring the impact of measures put in place.

Illegal Killing of Wild Birds

The illegal hunting and trapping of birds is a threat to populations of a large number of bird species, particularly in Southeast and Central Europe. Birds are killed for sport or frozen and smuggled across borders to be served as a traditional delicacy in restaurants.

Bird crime related industry has an estimated turnover of millions of euros per year.



The EU Birds Directive is reportedly 100% transposed into national legislation of many Southeastern European countries, including non-EU member States, but a deeper analysis shows gaps and at times poor implementation.

Recommendations:

There is a need to improve knowledge and strengthen the capacities of institutions responsible for tackling bird crime. Knowledge exchange on methods, techniques and legal procedures for combating bird crime, as well as capacity building on hunting grounds should be given high priority.

Poaching of Large Carnivores

Large carnivores are declining in numbers in the Danube-Carpathian region. Despite being protected under the EU Habitat Directive, the Carpathian Convention and CITES, poaching for trophies and illegal trade continues. A lack of transparency is undermining enforcement organs and results in fear of revealing poachers to the police.



Recommendations:

To increase protection of large carnivores in the region, it is necessary to sensitize the public and private sector, organise actions to raise awareness, enhance training exercises of law enforcement, improve cross-border cooperation and review and/or adapt legislation and prosecution methods.