

Don't kill the bee!

Legal insights to combat the biodiversity crisis

VIII Tarragona International Environmental Law Colloquium (TIEC)

1-2 June 2023

www.tiecolloquium.com



PANEL 3. Towards a species and ecologically just society

Wildlife crimes and law enforcement: the importance of public direct involvement in environmental criminal proceedings.

A Carpathian perspective.

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In recent years, the change in nature and scale of wildlife crime and illegal logging has triggered a global response and the political and high-level attention is now higher than ever before. Yet environmental crime continues to undermine both the environment and development, such as in the Danube-Carpathians of Eastern Europe: one of Europe's last remaining biodiversity hotspots. Despite being protected and covered by numerous policies, conventions, and organizations, the Danube-Carpathian region remains under increased threat and pressure from illegal logging and wildlife crimes. The mountainous Danube-Carpathian region is known to contain environment-related illegal trafficking routes, including wood, animals, animal parts, and wastes. National enforcement and compliance with legislation addressing and/or banning wildlife crime and illegal logging through criminal law ex post enforcement procedures need to be complemented by preventive measures that fill the gaps and strengthen the knowledge, capacity, and cooperation between institutions and actors in the field. Engage local communities in the management and conservation of wildlife is needed, but especially their involvement in investigations and court proceeding will be crucial. The new EU Environmental Directives, even if improving the previous one, seem to lack a clear overview in this regard. Participation of the public concerned in proceedings should be guaranteed in all Member States according to specific legal provisions. Furthermore, information about judgments and the state of proceedings should be made available to the public concerned too. This contribution will investigate the benefit of proactive law enforcement tools (e.g. situational crime prevention), awareness raising targeting all relevant stakeholders (public, private sector, national authorities, etc.), and anti-corruption activities as fundamental preventive tools against wildlife crimes. It aims also at addressing the effectiveness and impact of the legal, institutional and technical arrangements and collaboration in place to combat illegal logging and wildlife crime in the Danube-Carpathian region.