EUTWIX

TRADE IN WILDLIFE INFORMATION EXCHANGE

AN INTERNET TOOL TO ASSIST THE EU IN THE FIGHT AGAINST WILDLIFE TRADE CRIME

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS EU-TWIX
WHY IS IT NEEDED

Chameleon, Andapa, Madagascar © WWF / Martina Lippuner

The European Union Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange is a tool developed to facilitate information exchange and international co-operation between law enforcement officials across the European Union (EU). It consists of two complementary components: a database and a mailing list.

The EU is one of the largest and most diverse markets for wildlife and wildlife products, whose international trade is controlled by CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). The removal of internal border controls in the EU's single market in the early 1990s provided new avenues for transboundary wildlife trade crime. New smuggling methods and routes are actively sought out by offenders to avoid detection, making countries with weak border controls ideal targets. International co-operation between all EU Member States and neighbouring countries is therefore vital.

WORKING ON WILDLIFE TRADE

€7-3 billion
annual estimated value of global illegal wildlife trade

€100 billion
annual estimated value of legal wildlife trade in the EU alone

55000+ wildlife seizures
are held within the EU-TWIX database

1000+
European enforcement officials connected

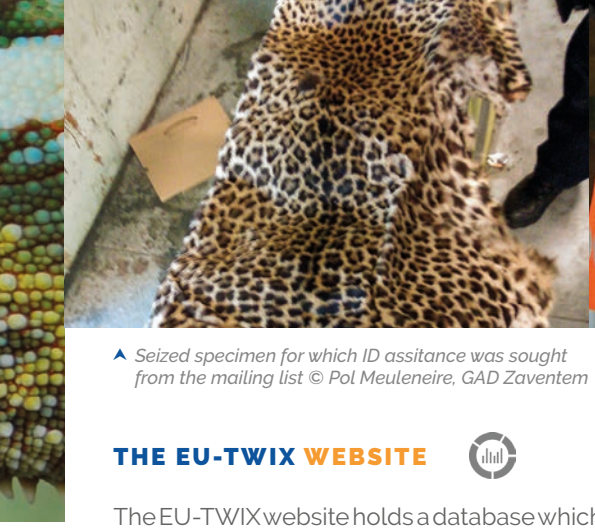
all EU member states
and various additional European countries actively participating in EU-TWIX

EU-TWIX MEMBERSHIP

Due to the sensitive nature of the information collected, the EU-TWIX database and mailing list are accessible only to European enforcement and management officials responsible for implementation of EU Widlife Trade Regulations (EUWTR) and CITES.

Agencies who are eligible to participate include Customs, CITES Management Authorities (MA), police, environmental inspection services, veterinary and phytosanitary services and the judiciary. Several international/regional organisations working on illegal wildlife trade issues are also connected.

If you meet these criteria and wish to gain access, please contact:
contact@eu-twix.org



Seized specimen for which ID assitance was sought from the mailing list © Pol Meuleneire, GAD Zaventem

Officials inspect a shipment of dried shark fins at Brussels airport © Pol Meuleneire, GAD Zaventem

THE EU-TWIX WEBSITE

The EU-TWIX website holds a database which centralises information on wildlife trade seizures submitted by European enforcement agencies including the police, Customs, environmental inspection services and CITES MAs. Access to the website is exclusively granted to designated enforcement and management officials who are provided with access codes.

Each agency has a Focal Point, who is the only official eligible to submit data. For Customs data, transfer takes place via the World Customs Organisation (WCO) for the majority of EU Member States. The EU-TWIX website also holds information on European laboratories, rescue centres and wildlife (identification) experts, as well as current prices of wildlife specimens in trade. Each country maintains ownership of the data, and its use has to be approved by a country's representative.

crime/seizure alerts
enforcement communicate on latest seizures

connectivity
400 enforcement-related messages exchanged/year

identification
officials can seek advice on identifying specimens

THE EU-TWIX MAILING LIST

The electronic mailing list allows quick and efficient sharing of information between designated enforcement officials on seizures, and to exchange experience and expertise on illegal wildlife trade matters. The mailing list connects almost 1000 enforcement officials from all EU Member States and EU neighbouring countries, as well as from the European Commission and several international/regional organisations: the CITES Secretariat, Eurojust, the EU Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL), EU Forum of Judges for the Environment (EUFJE), the European Judicial Network (ENJ), the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment (ENPE), Europol, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the WCO.

The mailing list has already facilitated many investigations; its major benefit is in stimulating a level of international information exchange and co-operation that would not otherwise take place.

APPLICATIONS

EU-TWIX AND CITES
EU-TWIX IN ACTION

African Elephant Loxodonta Africana © *naturepl.com / Jeff Vanuga / WWF*

SUPPORTING CITES IMPLEMENTATION

As EU membership has expanded, the magnitude of the EU market for wildlife products has also increased. Estimated to be worth over €100 billion, the trade includes live animals, ornamental plants, tropical woods, food, leather, ivory, curios and wildlife-based medicines.

A significant proportion of the wildlife trade is illegal and threatens the survival of species in the wild. CITES is implemented in the EU through a common legal framework, the EUWTR, which are applicable in all Member States. Each Member State is responsible for enacting national legislation, appointing CITES Management and Scientific Authorities, enabling seizure and confiscation of illegal specimens and laying down the penalties for illegal wildlife trade.

More information about the European Wildlife Trade Regulations and the application of CITES in the EU can be found at www.ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/index_en.htm.

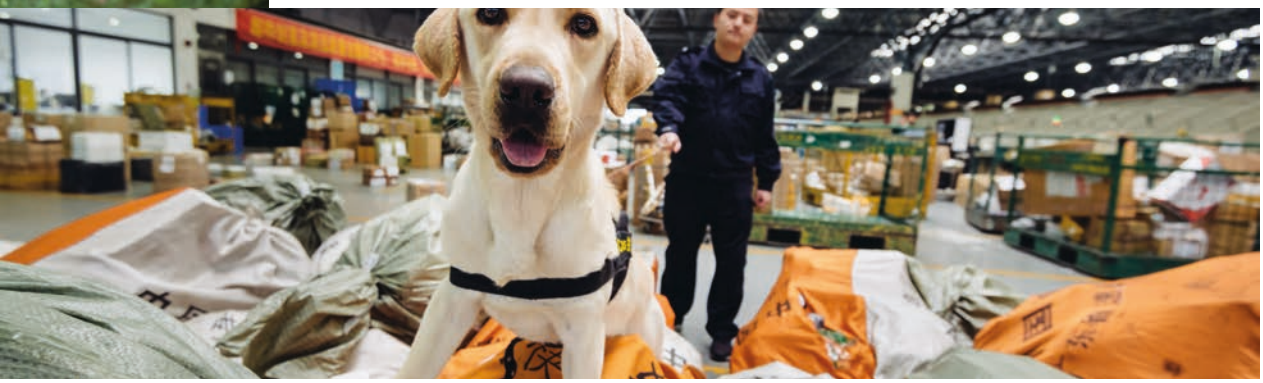
SUPPORTING LAW ENFORCEMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION

With over 400 enforcement-related messages exchanged every year, the EU-TWIX mailing list is used daily by enforcement officials to communicate quickly and efficiently with their colleagues across Europe.

Types of information exchanged are numerous and varied: sharing seizure news, seeking/providing help with identification of specimens/products or advice with the implementation of EUWTR/CITES legislation, sharing of 'stolen specimen alerts' (used to warn the network about live specimens or valuable goods stolen from animal parks, museums or private collections), amongst others.

Stripped tree bark in Cameroon © TRAFFIC / A. Walmsley

> **EU–TWIX is the first (and in some cases, the only) tool for identification of specimens, which is the basis for our enforcement actions**
>
> *Croatian Nature Protection Inspection*



A wildlife sniffer dog trained to detect illegal wildlife products © Wayne Wu / TRAFFIC

The EU-TWIX website allows users to:

- ✓ Access the seizures database
- ✓ View European laboratories and rescue centres
- ✓ Contact experts in fauna and flora
- ✓ Access identification tools
- ✓ Review wildlife training materials
- ✓ Browse an archive of the mailing list

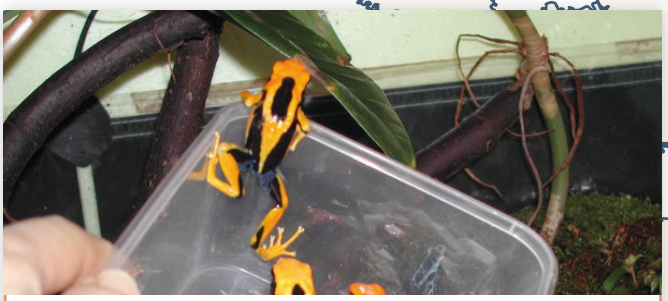
> **The ability for enforcement officers to receive accurate, trusted information quickly often makes the difference in detecting wildlife crime and stopping the criminals in their tracks**
>
> *Pol Meuleneire, GAD, Belgian Customs*

EU-TWIX
SUCCESSES

BELGIUM
IDENTIFICATION OF NEW COMMODITIES

Belgian Customs became aware of illegal trade of pangolin scales in 2012 thanks to photos of seizures involving this product exchanged via the EU-TWIX mailing list. As a result, a total of 26 seizures involving pangolin scales have taken place at Brussels airport since, equivalent to close to one tonne of products.

Photo © Keith Connelly
Photo © TRAFFIC / A. Walmsley



FRANCE
INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

A joint investigation by the Belgian Federal Police and French Gendarmerie led to a seizure of dendrobate frogs at Paris-Orly airport, where seven people were arrested upon arrival from French Guyana. The chief officers involved met through EU-TWIX and this speeded up the collaboration process and enabled a level of international co-operation that would not have taken place otherwise.

Photo © Gendarmerie / OCLAESP

LATVIA

SHARING RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE

The Latvian CITES MA discovered a trade in cosmetics claiming to contain Brown Bear extracts in Latvia and warned other EU Member States about it via the mailing list. Documents seized along with the products suggested bear extracts were present, but no laboratory analysis could be carried out due to a lack of resources. UK Customs has offered to carry out forensic tests on the products for the Latvian CITES MA.

Photos © WWF-Indonesia/ Saipul Siagian, © Latvian CITES MA

THE NETHERLANDS

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION LEADING TO A SEIZURE

A large-scale investigation into the illegal bird trade in the Netherlands, which has connections to several other European and non-European countries, was triggered by a seizure alert shared by the Hungarian authorities via the EU–TWIX mailing list. Important seizures have been made of approx. 500 of specimens of birds, as well as of money and properties. Three defendants were sentenced to prison for illegal trade in exotic birds and involvement in a criminal organisation.

CROATIA

SPECIES IDENTIFICATION AND REHOMING

In 2016, Croatian Customs officers seized close to 700 tortoises (189 *Testudo hermanni,* 414 *T. marginata* and 79 *Mauremys rivulata*) concealed in a truck travelling from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia. As the distribution of these species is wide-ranging, Croatian authorities could not identify the countries of origin to return the tortoises to the wild. As a result, rescue centres were urgently needed to rehome these specimens, and the EU-TWIX Directory of Rescue Centres helped Croatian authorities identify suitable facilities

Photo © stanze / CC Generic 2.0

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Federal Public Service FINANCE

Politie Police

federal public service HEALTH, FOOD CHAIN SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT

TRAFFIC
the wildlife trade monitoring network