

ban ivory trade in the EU



Elephant calves playing together in their herd at Amboseli National Park, Kenya. © IFAW/B. Hollweg

Global ivory trade is a threat to elephants wherever they are. Trade in ivory, even when it is legal, causes consumer and enforcement confusion, and potentially provides a cover for the laundering of illegal ivory.

The European Union (EU) is widely considered the third largest destination for illegal wildlife, and is a crucial transit hub for ivory trade.

Contrary to the public perception that commercial ivory trade has been fully banned in 1990, significant legal trade in ivory continues, within and from the EU. In fact, EU Regulations allow trade under prescribed conditions for antique ivory (pre-1947) and pre-convention ivory (acquired before 1990). New ivory is also being illegally sold under this exemption, which fuels demand and encourages poaching. The fact is

elephant poaching and ivory trafficking will not stop until legal domestic markets are closed.

In addition to traditional sales, wildlife cybercrime is fast growing, and tens of thousands of protected wildlife specimens, including ivory items, are available for sale on online marketplaces across Europe.

Several European Member States, including France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the United Kingdom, have passed stricter laws on ivory trade, and so did other countries around the world such as China and the United States.

IFAW supports clear and strict legislation, with limited exemptions, that would simply make ivory trade illegal, along with vigorous penalties to deter consumer demand for ivory.

400,000
current African elephant
population, compared
with over 1.3 million in the
1970s, with the decline
primarily due to poaching

20,000
elephants killed each
year, at least, for their
ivory

1,288
ivory and suspected ivory
specimen recorded for
online sale over six weeks
in 2018, in France, UK,
Germany and Russia

Source: The Great Elephant Census (August 2016), the first-ever continental-scale survey of African elephants

stricter ivory legislations in EU countries

United Kingdom:

passed a total ban on both raw and worked ivory, with minor exceptions, making it one of the toughest bans in the world

France/Luxembourg:

banned the trade of raw ivory and of worked ivory items produced after 1975; restricted the trade of worked ivory items produced before 1975

Belgium:

banned the domestic sale of worked ivory dating after 1st July 1975 and raw ivory; banned the import/export of worked items with some restrictions

Netherlands:

banned the trade of raw ivory

Austria/Czech Republic/ Germany/Slovakia/Sweden:

banned the exports of raw ivory



On April 30th, 2016, over 100 tonnes of ivory were burned in Nairobi, Kenya, as one of the largest ivory burns in history.

our approach

To address the issue of wildlife crime, IFAW championed the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking. Released in 2016 by the European Commission, this 32-point blue print aims at eliminating wildlife crime in Europe, including by limiting trade in raw ivory.

To encourage swift implementation, we launched a campaign in 2017 to encourage the EU to close its domestic markets and we actively work with other NGOs and diverse stakeholders in advocacy efforts. We also polled citizens across the EU and found that 65% would support a ban on ivory trade.

All of this work is beginning to pay off. The European Parliament passed two resolutions calling for an end to the ivory trade in the EU and, in 2017, the Commission issued a non-binding guidance document that recommended suspending (re)export of raw ivory items.

In May 2018, more than 90 Members of the European Parliament called for a total ban on ivory trade and imports in the EU, and a public consultation released by the European Commission showed that more than 90% of the 90,000 respondents were in support of an EU ban on ivory trade.

IFAW also started working with companies, law enforcement agencies and other organisations to curb wildlife cybercrime including ivory sales. Together, we helped launch the Global Wildlife Cybercrime Action Plan in 2018, aiming to collectively reduce online wildlife trafficking.

To date, the EU is currently reviewing its policies but has not taken proper action yet.

how you can help

encourage your country to support policies that would shut down domestic ivory markets

urge the European Union to pass an EU-wide ban on ivory trade

never purchase ivory products, and encourage others to do the same

► explore more at ifaw.org