

International

Fighting environmental crime in the EU

The European Network against Environmental Crime (ENEC) Project is fighting for nature across the continent.

Apart from causing economic losses, environmental crime is a serious problem which affects both the environment and human health.

Effective, proportional and dissuasive penalties should apply for environmental crimes such as illegal killing of wildlife, use of poisoned baits, habitat destruction, illegal trade, illegal emissions or dumping of substances into the air, water or soil, illegal trade of substances that deplete the ozone layer and illegal trafficking of wastes.

The RSPB and its Spanish partner Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO/BirdLife) have launched a project funded by the Support Programme to Criminal Justice in the EU to create a European Network against Environmental Crime (ENEC). BirdLife International partners, the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS) and the Czech

Society for Ornithology (CSO) are Associate partners of this project.

The project's aims are:

- to carry out a study to assess the degree of implementation of Directive 2008/99/CE (the "Environmental Crime Directive") related to the protection of the environment through criminal law in the EU Member States (MS)
- to bring together legal and other practitioners who work in the fight against environmental crime
- to integrate with the activities of other networks and international institutions involved in the protection of the environment
- to create a platform to facilitate data storage and the exchange

of information between ENEC members

- to strengthen the application of criminal law in the fight against wildlife crime in the EU through three concrete lines of action: tackling illegal bird killing and capture, poisoning, and habitat destruction.

In February 2015, ENEC members met in Madrid to take part in a workshop on the illegal killing and taking of birds. The event, organised by SEO/BirdLife, gathered 35 experts from 18 EU Member States as well as representatives from the International Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), from the European Union Action to Fight Environmental Crime (EFFACE) project and from the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

The workshop produced legal recommendations to reduce the illegal killing and taking of birds. Proposed actions include implementation of protections for birds under the Environmental Crime Directive in national criminal legislation and a need to harmonise the criminal sanctions in the different Member States.

The ENEC also stressed the important role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the fight against wildlife crime as well as the importance of their legal standing in criminal cases.

Two more workshops are planned: Wildlife Poisoning in Brussels in September 2015 and Habitat Destruction in Cambridge in February 2016. For further details, visit lawyersfornature.org

David Tipling (rspb-images.com)



Illegal bird trapping is one of the major issues facing EU countries