

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



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OVERVIEW OF IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL SEIZURES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

This document has been submitted by the European Union and its Member States*.

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

Overview of important international seizures in the European Union

January to December 2011

Compiled by TRAFFIC
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1. INTRODUCTION

This briefing aims to provide an overview of the most important CITES-related seizures reported by Member States of the European Union¹ (EU) for the twelve-month period January to December 2011 so that these can be shared with key trade partners of the EU and selected third countries, as deemed necessary by EU Member States. Therefore, the focus of this briefing is on seizures having taken place at EU borders (airports, maritime ports, land boundaries and also mail centres). Intra-EU trade and trade internal to Member States are generally excluded.

The quantitative analysis of seizures (in Section 2) is based on reports of significant seizures submitted by EU Member States to the European Commission (EC) for 2011. Although a total of 20 Member States reported seizures for this year, Section 2 is based on reports provided by 14 EU Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom)². Some of the 14 reporting EU Member States provided information for only a part of the reporting period.

It is noted that EU Member States determine (and report) the seizures they consider to be significant according to their own criteria. To allow a quantitative analysis of data in Section 2, seizures that involved several species were separated and treated as distinct records. Therefore, this briefing refers to “seizure records” as opposed to seizures. This also means that the actual number of seizures was lower than the number of seizure records in Section 2.

In addition to the significant seizures reported by EU Member States, this briefing also includes information from seizure news items shared by EU Member States via restricted channels for information exchange in the EU as well as from open sources (see Section 3).

2. OVERVIEW OF REPORTED INTERNATIONAL SEIZURES INVOLVING THE EU

A total of 667 seizure records were reported by 14 EU Member States in 2011. Of these, 486 seizure records could be classified as “international”, i.e. relating to shipments involving external or third countries and so took place at EU external borders. Germany, Italy and the UK together reported over 75% of the international seizure records in 2011.

In terms of numbers of seizure records, the main types of commodity seized at EU borders in 2011 were (see **Figure 1**):

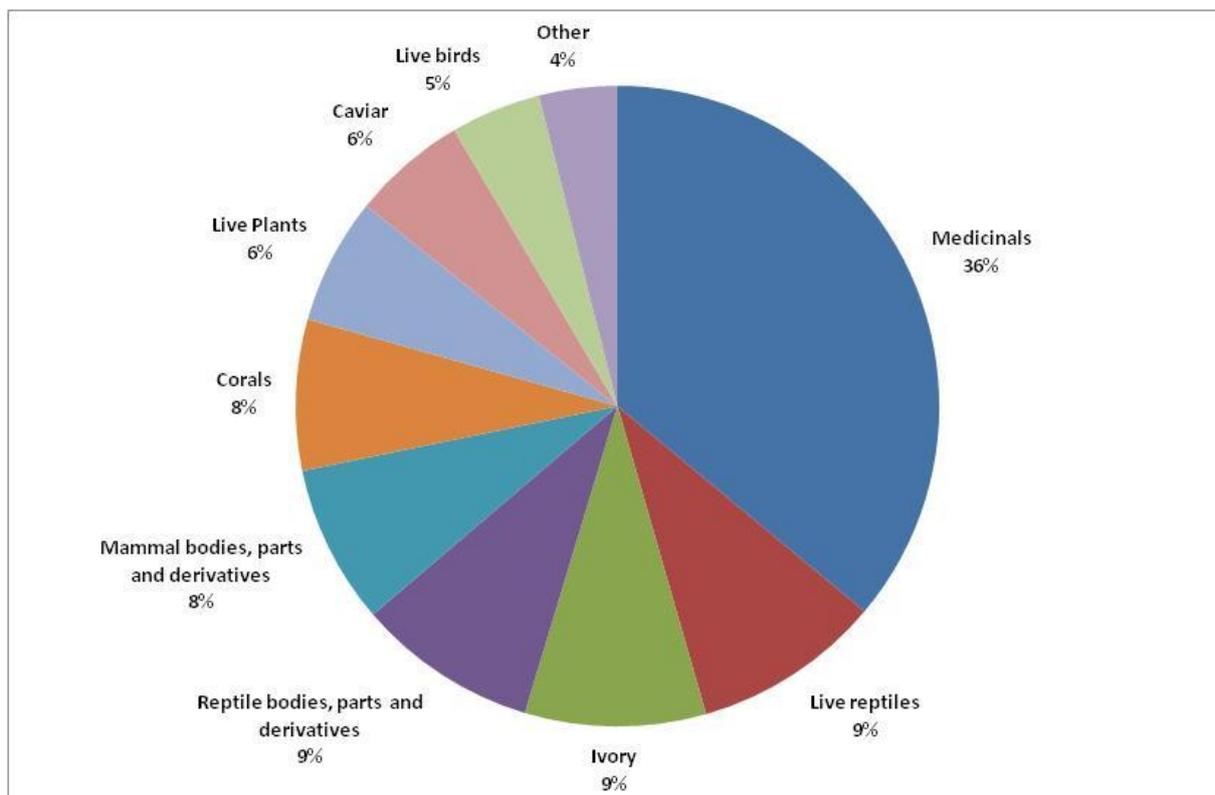
- (i) **medicinals**³, including both medicinal products and parts/derivatives for medicinal use (over 2 million items (e.g. pills, packets, etc.)),
- (ii) **live reptiles** (461 specimens),
- (iii) **ivory** (354 specimens and approximately 100 kg),
- (iv) **reptile bodies, parts and derivatives** (987 specimens),
- (v) **mammal bodies, parts and derivatives** (192 specimens), and
- (vi) **corals** (347 specimens and approximately 1600 kg).

¹ The Member States of the EU in 2011: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

² This is due to various reasons, for example, some countries (e.g. Belgium) are not included in the quantitative analysis due to problems with the format of the data provided; other EU Member States (e.g. Cyprus, Estonia and Malta) reported that no seizures or no significant seizures took place during the period they reported on; other countries (e.g. France) only reported on internal seizures.

³ Units used to report medicinals are not consistent across EU Member States: some reported units as packs of tablets others as individual tablets; sometimes no unit was specified.

Figure 1: Distribution of 486 international seizure records reported by EU Member States across commodity groups, 2011



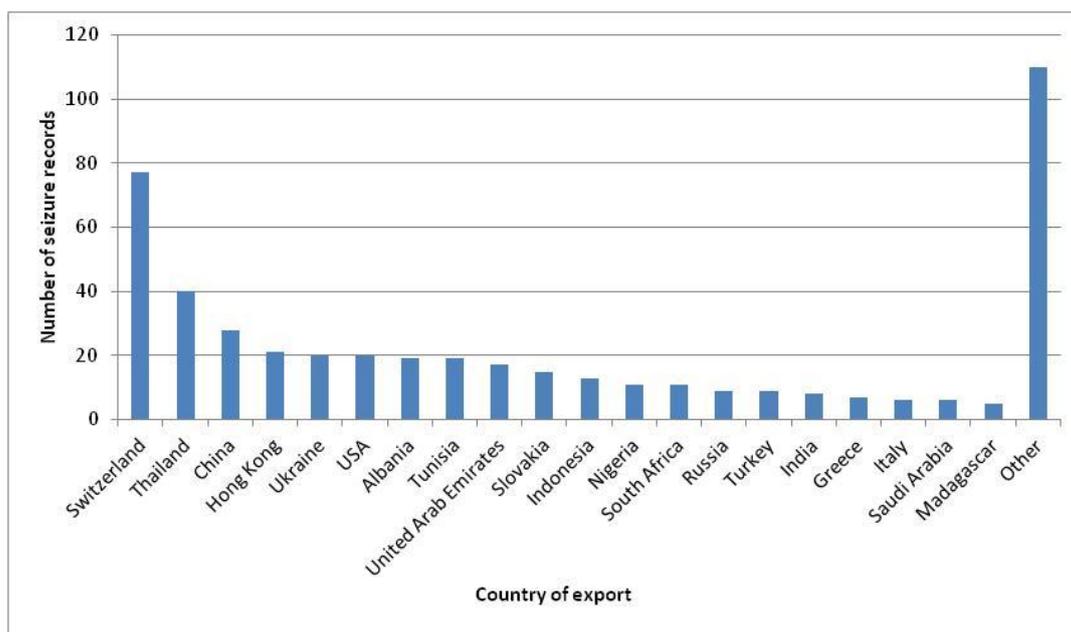
Source: seizure reports by 14 EU Member States

Important individual seizures reported by Member States across key commodity groups are set out in **Section 3**.

Figure 2 depicts the main countries/territories of export or of departure of illegal trade as reported by the 14 EU Member States. **Switzerland** was the reported exporter for 77 seizure records: all except two of these exports were seizures reported by Germany and concerned medicinals containing/derived from **Costus Root** *Saussurea costus* (App. I/Annex A). **Thailand** was the reported exporter for 40 seizure records, most of which consisted of seizures of live plants (199 specimens of orchids and cacti in 14 seizure records) and reptile commodities (14 seizure records involving a total of 21 bodies and leather products). **China** was the reported exporter for 28 seizure records: most of these involved medicinals (18 seizure records involving 537 items containing parts of species such as seahorses *Hippocampus* spp. (App. II/Annex B), Leopard *Panthera pardus* and Tiger *Panthera tigris*, both listed on App. I/Annex A). **Hong Kong**⁴ was the reported exporter for 21 seizure records: all except two of these exports were seizures reported by the UK and concerned medicinal products containing Hoodia *Hoodia* spp. (App. II/Annex B) (a total of 208 350 items seized). The data in Figure 2 also include seizures made upon export from EU Member States (e.g. Slovakia, Greece, Italy).

⁴ Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (China)

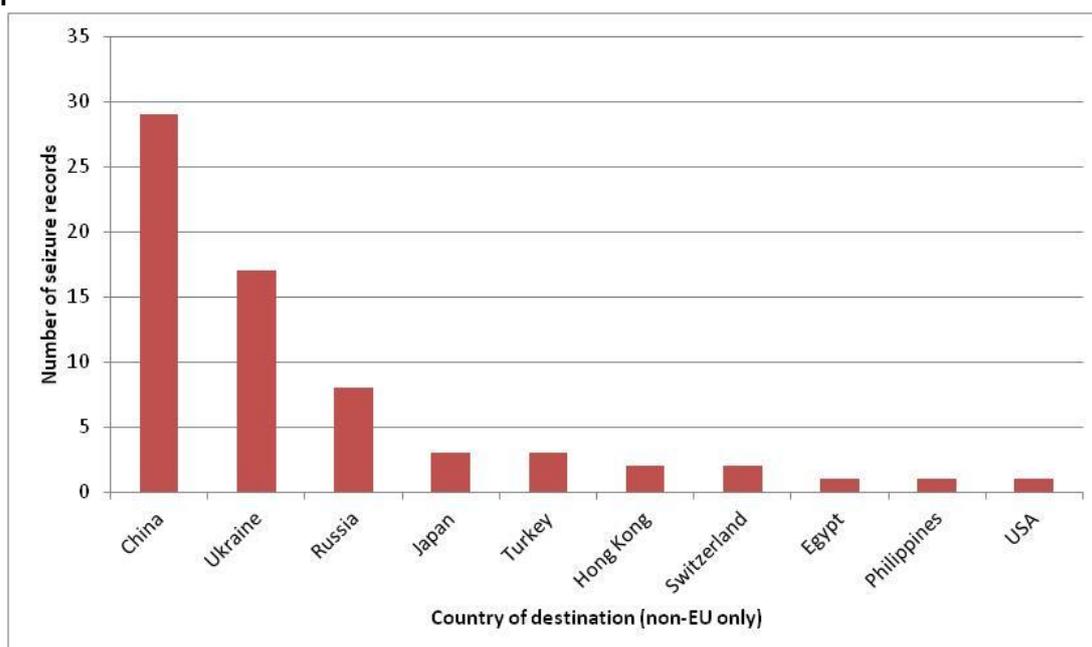
Figure 2: Main countries/territories of departure of illegal trade as reported by 14 EU Member States (international seizures), according to number of seizure records, 2011



Source: seizure reports by 14 EU Member States

Figure 3 shows that **China** was the leading destination for commodities seized upon (re-)export from the EU/while in transit in the EU, in terms of number of seizure records in 2011. The majority of these records involved **elephant ivory** seized by German authorities while in transit between **Africa** (Nigeria, Namibia, Ghana, Burundi, Tanzania and Malawi) and **China**. Belgium reported a number of similar seizures of elephant ivory, in transit en route from **Guinea** to **China** (see **Section 3**). Controlled deliveries of ivory were arranged between Belgian and Chinese authorities.

Figure 3: Main countries/territories of destination of illegal trade from the EU (to non-EU countries only) as reported by 14 Member States, according to number of seizure records, 2011



Source: seizure reports by 14 EU Member States

3. DETAILS OF KEY INDIVIDUAL INTERNATIONAL SEIZURES REPORTED BY EU MEMBER STATES IN 2011

Table 1 contains details of key individual seizures reported by EU Member States for the period January to December 2011. Again the focus is on international as opposed to intra-EU trade. Seizures were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (i) seizures involving particularly large quantities of a commodity type; and (ii) seizures highlighting important illegal trade trends involving the EU (e.g. in terms of countries or species involved).

Table 1: Details of selected seizures reported by EU Member States for 2011 arranged by commodity type (reporting country in bold)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
MEDICINALS				
China		UK	80 kg medicinals containing orchid Dendrobium spp. (App. I/Annex A)	Targeted at a maritime port (Nov 2011)
Hong Kong ⁵		UK (also Hungary)	42 000 tablets containing Hoodia Hoodia goordonii (App. II/Annex B). One of a number of such seizures seized by UK, some of which were destined for Hungary.	Routine seizure of postal parcel at UK airport (Sept 2011)
India		UK	1500 medicinal products containing Early Purple Orchid Orchis mascula (App. II/Annex B)	Targeted at airport (Nov 2011)
Indonesia	 Finland	 Russia	2 040 000 pills containing seahorse Hippocampus spp. (App. II/Annex B) (captive-bred origin)	Seized at maritime port (Apr 2011)
Peru	 Netherlands	 China	Two seizures: 309 and 2994 wild dead seahorses Hippocampus spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Seized at airport (Feb and Mar 2011)
South Africa		UK	65 specimens of rhinoceros Rhinocerotidae spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) including 22 rhinoceros horns imported as personal effects	Targeted at a maritime port (Jun 2011)
Switzerland		Germany	1080 tablets containing Costus Root Saussurea costus (App. I/Annex A)	Seized at a mail centre (Jan 2011)
United Arab Emirates		UK	66.4 kg of derivatives containing Agarwood Aquilaria spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Targeted at a maritime port (Mar 2011)
USA		UK	18 900 tablets containing African Cherry Prunus africana (App. II/Annex B)	Targeted at a maritime port (Sept 2011)
LIVE REPTILES				
Albania		Italy	13 live Hermann's Tortoises Testudo hermanni (App. II/Annex A) of wild origin. (A total of 52 specimens seized in 2011 from Albania.)	Routine seizure at maritime port (Jul 2011)
Tunisia		Italy	51 live Spur-thighed Tortoises Testudo graeca (App. II/Annex A) of wild origin	Seizure at maritime port during random control (Sep 2011)
Turkey		UK	15 live Spur-thighed Tortoises T. graeca (App. II/Annex A)	Routine seizure at airport (May 2011)
Ghana	 UK	 Japan	95 live Graceful Chameleons Chamaeleo gracilis (App. III/Annex B)	Routine seizure at airport (Dec 2011)

⁵ Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (China)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
IVORY				
Guinea	→ Belgium	→ China	3.5 kg (approx. 100 pieces) of African Elephant ivory . One of a number of such seizures reported by Belgium in 2011 ⁶ .	Seizure at airport – double bottom suitcase of a Chinese citizen (Sept 2011)
Nigeria	→ Germany	→ China	110 African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> ivory carvings (App. I/II, Annex A/B)	Detected in air freight shipment during routine control (Apr 2011)
REPTILE BODIES, PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
Indonesia	→	Netherlands	170 large leather products made of Reticulated Python <i>Python reticulatus</i> (App. II/Annex B)	Detected in air freight shipment (July 2011)
Hong Kong ⁷	→	Italy	200 small leather products made of Reticulated Python <i>Python reticulatus</i> (App. II/Annex B)	Routine seizure at airport (May 2011)
CORALS				
Indonesia	→	Netherlands	Two seizures involving 740 kg and 762 kg of stony coral <i>Scleractinia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Seizures at airport (Nov 2011)
Indonesia	→ Germany/Poland	→ Ukraine	750 kg of stony coral <i>Scleractinia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Seized at land boundary following investigation (Nov 2011)
LIVE PLANTS				
China	→	Netherlands	Two seizures: 12 000 live cacti <i>Cactaceae</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) and 6820 Hedge Cacti <i>Cereus hildmannianuscacti</i> (App. II/Annex B)	Seized at maritime port (Aug 2011)
Thailand	→	Germany	17 Living Rock Cacti <i>Ariocarpus furfuraceus</i> (App. I/Annex A)	Random control – arrived by air (Sept 2011)
Thailand	→ Netherlands	→ Russia	160 orchids <i>Orchidaceae</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B)	Seized at airport (Aug 2011)
LIVE BIRDS				
Jamaica	→ Germany/Austria	→ Slovakia	74 eggs of Amazon parrot <i>Amazona</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B)	Seized at airport in personal luggage following tip off from Slovakia (Apr 2011)
Slovakia	→	Ukraine	225 live captive-bred Appendix I- and II-listed (Annex A and B) parrots including 12 New Zealand Parakeet <i>Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae</i> (App. I/Annex A)	Routine seizure on road (Apr 2011)
EELS				
Spain	→ Bulgaria	→ Philippines	120 kg of European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B)	Seized at airport in Bulgaria (Dec 2011). Part of wider operation by Spanish authorities: 14 arrests, approx. 1580 kg of glass eels seized ⁸

Abbreviations: UK – United Kingdom, USA – United States, App. – CITES Appendix, Annex – Annex of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations.

⁶ Source: Seizure news items shared by Belgium via CIRCA (the EC's "Communication and Information Resource Centre Administration")

⁷ Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (China)

⁸ <http://fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?l=e&country=0&special=&monthyear=&day=&id=50962&ndb=1&df=0>