



European Commission

European Green Deal: Strengthening EU law to combat environmental crime

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#EUGreenDeal



“Environmental crimes cause irreversible and long-term damage to people’s health and the environment. Yet, they are hard to investigate and bring before a Court, while sanctions tend to be weak. That is why we need to strengthen our environmental criminal law. A high level of environmental protection is not only important for present but also future generations.”

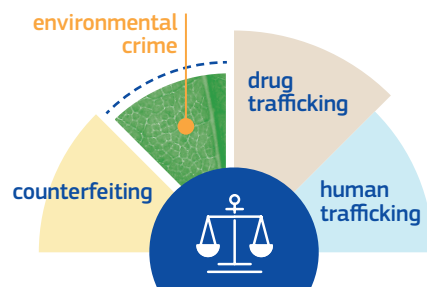
Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries



“There is no time to lose. We must improve our EU rules on fighting environmental crime to protect the environment and ultimately our planet. The proposal today builds on lessons learned and experience gained over the past years and will directly address root-causes that have prevented the protection of the environment from being as effective as it should be.”

Didier **Reynders**, Commissioner for Justice

Environmental crime is the **4th** largest criminal activity in the world, growing at a rate of between **5-7%** per year.



The proposal

Establishes new criminal offences, including:



- illegal timber trade;
- illegal ship recycling;
- serious breaches of EU chemicals legislation causing substantial damage;
- illegal water abstraction causing substantial damage to water resources;
- serious breaches related to dealing with fluorinated greenhouse gases, which contribute to climate change;
- serious breaches of legislation on invasive alien species with Union concern.

Protects environmental defenders with:



Rules to assist and support those who report environmental crimes and enable the public concerned to take part in the action of criminal justice authorities.

Improves processing of criminal cases by:



- national strategies to combat environmental crime;
- resources for crime-fighting authorities;
- training of enforcement professionals;
- coordination and cooperation between enforcers.

Improves sanctions & related provisions with:



- new rules for dissuasive levels of fines and imprisonment reflecting the gravity of the crime;
- new additional types of sanctions such as exclusion from access to public funding.

Why we need a stronger law against environmental crime

Serious environmental crimes harm human health and the environment, cost governments money and undercut law-abiding businesses through unfair competition. Profits help finance other organised crime activities such as trafficking in drugs and human beings. The most serious environmental crimes include:

The annual revenues derived from the **illicit waste market** in the EU range between



Illegal timber trade has global consequences as it leads to deforestation.



are **killed or captured illegally** in the Mediterranean region, many of them while on migration.



Estimated **annual global loss** due to environmental crime.

Wildlife:
€7-9 billion





Estimated annual global value of illicit trafficking in:



Timber:
€6 billion

The measures will:

-  ensure that the **worst environmental crimes are dealt with seriously**, thanks to:
 - a **common approach** to defining environmental crime across the EU;
 - prioritising the **investigation and punishment** of serious environmental crimes;
 - greater **deterrence** of environmental crimes.
-  better protect **air, water, soil, nature and human health**.

