

[Commission introduces new measures to fight poaching and to end trade in raw ivory](#)

Is the Commission banning ivory exports?

The export of raw ivory is banned. The Commission guidance document recommends that EU Member States cease issuing export documents for **raw ivory**. Without an export document, no export of ivory can take place. Between 2013 and 2016, around 1900 old ivory tusks were exported legally from the EU to Asia, marking a sharp increase compared to previous years. Such exports will no longer be possible under the new guidance document.

The **export of worked ivory** will only be possible under very strict conditions. Only items acquired before 1976 can be exported and it is for the person wishing to export the items to demonstrate that they were acquired before that date. If such evidence cannot be provided by the applicant, then no export document will be delivered by the exporting EU Member State.

The legal export of worked ivory from the EU has also increased in recent years, reaching several thousand items annually. The most commonly exported products are small items made of ivory or containing ivory, musical instruments (especially pianos with ivory keys), carvings and antiques. The Commission guidance document recommends that EU Member States exercise a high level of scrutiny before authorising any export of worked ivory. It details, in particular, what type of evidence demonstrating the legality of the items can be accepted.

What are the international and EU rules on ivory trade?

International ivory trade is banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), with narrowly defined exemptions (for example for items acquired before elephants became protected under CITES).

EU rules on ivory trade are more restrictive than the CITES regime in many instances, notably as they regulate domestic trade in ivory, which is not required under CITES.

Can I import ivory into the EU? Can I purchase ivory goods and bring them in to the EU?

Import of ivory is prohibited, except for very narrow exemptions. Most of the ivory traded into the EU consists of hunting trophies and of old carvings or musical instruments imported as personal belongings (for example as part of a removal). These imports can only take place with the relevant export and import documents and are subject to very strict controls at the borders by customs agencies.

What is the EU doing against illegal ivory trade in the EU?

The Commission is fully committed to fight illegal ivory trade. Tackling ivory trafficking is a priority for the EU. Under the EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking, the Commission, enforcement agencies in the Member States and Europol have stepped up action against ivory trafficking. This is already delivering first results. Member States seized more than 2.5 tonnes of ivory in 2016, the biggest volume in recent years. Most of this ivory was seized in the EU on its way to Asia.

Why is the EU not banning all intra-EU trade in ivory?

Intra-EU trade in ivory is limited and strictly regulated. Domestic ivory is authorised only for ivory items imported into the EU before elephant species obtained maximum protection under the CITES Convention (18 January 1990 for the African elephant and 1 July 1975 for the Asian elephant) and subject to strict controls. Domestic EU trade can only take place if a certificate has been issued to this effect by the relevant EU Member State, except for “worked items” acquired before 3 March 1947 – , which can be traded in the EU without a certificate.

Since the international ban on ivory trade came into effect, the demand for ivory in Europe has fallen considerably. Intra-EU trade consists mostly of antiques and EU Member States have not been identified as important destination markets for ivory of illegal origin. However, there have been some instances of illegal trade in ivory items within the EU, and there are differences between Member States in applying EU rules on ivory trade. Therefore, the new guidance document sets out criteria and recommendations for Member States to further strengthen vigilance and controls.