

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

Today's decision, foreseen in the [EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking](#), will help to prevent that legal ivory trade fuels international ivory trafficking, which has risen significantly over the last decade.

The European Commission will also grant new financial support of € 2.25 million to the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to help with the implementation of the decisions on international wildlife trade agreed at the [CITES Conference of Parties](#) in October 2016.

Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella** said: *"Fighting international ivory trafficking is a battle we can't afford to lose. By ending the export of ivory tusks and other raw ivory we are living up to our responsibility. And we are delivering on the next commitment in our Action Plan against wildlife trafficking. Our financial support for developing countries will strengthen their capacity to implement the CITES Convention. This is essential to achieve progress in the fight against poaching and for sustainable wildlife trade."*

The legal export of old ivory items from the EU to Asia has risen since 2012 to a level where it could fuel the global demand for ivory and be used as a cover for illegal ivory trade. This is especially the case for ivory tusks, which represent the largest share of trafficked ivory. To address this problem, the Commission has adopted today's guidance document recommending that, as of 1 July 2017, EU Member States stop issuing export documents for raw ivory. In practical terms this means an end to the export of raw ivory, except for scientific and educational specimen. In addition, the guidance document, produced in close collaboration with Member States, sets out that the latter should interpret rules strictly when authorising other trade in ivory ensuring that the ivory items are of legal origin.

The EU has already very strict rules on ivory trade. Under these rules, ivory trade is banned, except for items acquired before 1990, when all African elephants obtained the maximum protection under CITES.

The adoption of guidance on ivory trade corresponds to a commitment taken by the EU and its Member States as part of the Wildlife Trafficking Action Plan adopted in 2016. It also responds to calls from the European Parliament and civil society. In the coming months, the Commission will gather data and consult with stakeholders and the public to see if further restrictions on ivory trade are necessary.

Background

Despite an international ivory ban, elephant poaching and ivory trafficking have reached record levels. It is estimated that between 20 000 and 30 000 African elephants are poached every year. Ivory seizures amount to more than 40 tonnes in 2015. The rising demand for ivory products in Asia is one of the main reasons for this surge in trafficking.

The EU has been a longstanding supporter of the CITES Convention, which regulates international trade in about 35 000 animal and plant species. Important decisions against wildlife trafficking were adopted by the 183 CITES Parties at their last meeting in October 2016. The 2.25 million € to be provided to the CITES Secretariat will help implementing these decisions. The money will be used to help CITES Parties ensure that international trade in endangered marine species (sharks, rays or eels) is legal and sustainable, to address concerns linked to fraudulent trade in animals bred in captivity and improve the capacity of developing countries to fulfil their obligations under the CITES Convention. These funds come in addition to many other programmes supported by the EU against wildlife trafficking, such as the Minimising the Illegal Killing of Elephants and other Endangered Species programme or the [UNODC-CITES Asia Wildlife Enforcement and Demand Management Project](#). The EU plans to step up its financial assistance and capacity-building support against wildlife trafficking in the coming months.

For More Information

[Memo on Ivory Trade](#)

[Guidance document](#)

[The Action Plan and the Staff Working Document](#)

[53/2017 : 16 May 2017 – Judgment of the Court of Justice in Case C-682/15](#)

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[54/2017 : 16 May 2017 – Judgment of the General Court in case T-122/15](#)

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52/2017 : 16 May 2017 – Opinión 2/15

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Commission welcomes European Parliament vote on extension and reinforcement of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Juncker Plan

The European Commission welcomes the vote by Members of the European Parliament's Budgets and Economic and Monetary Affairs committees to agree their position on extending, expanding and reinforcing the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the so-called "EFSI 2.0".

The Commission now calls on the Parliament and Member States to continue working towards the final adoption of the EFSI 2.0 proposal as quickly as possible to the benefit of public and private promoters driving investment projects in Europe.

European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"The European Fund for Strategic Investments has already proven to be an important tool to boost investment, support jobs and spur growth across all 28 Member States. The extension of the EFSI represents an opportunity to build on that success. I look forward to continue working with Members of the European Parliament and Member States in the weeks to come to secure a final agreement."*

Given its success so far, President Jean-Claude Juncker announced a proposal to extend and reinforce the EFSI in his [State of the Union](#) address in September 2016. The proposal seeks to extend the EFSI's duration and enhance its financial capacity. The plan is to extend the EFSI's initial three-year timeline (2015-2018) to 2020, the end of the current Multiannual Financial Framework. The target of investment mobilised is to be increased from EUR 315 billion to at least half a trillion euro by 2020. The proposal also seeks to place a greater emphasis on additionality – the concept that a project should only be selected if it would not have been realised at all, to the same extent or within the same timeframe without the support of the EFSI – and enhance the EFSI's transparency and geographic balance.

The EFSI's extension is among President Juncker's top priorities. EU Finance Ministers already gave their backing to the EFSI 2.0 at a [meeting of the](#)

[Economic and Financial Affairs Council](#) (ECOFIN) in December 2016, a decision that was later [endorsed by the European Council](#).

Background

The Investment Plan for Europe, the so-called “Juncker Plan”, consists of three pillars:

- First, the European Fund for Strategic Investments which provides an EU guarantee to mobilise private investment.
- Second, the European Investment Advisory Hub and the European Investment Project Portal which provide technical assistance and greater visibility of investment opportunities and thereby help investment projects reach the real economy.
- Third, removing regulatory barriers to investment both nationally and at EU level.

Under the first pillar, the operations approved under the Juncker Plan now represent a total financing volume of EUR 33.9 billion. They are located in all 28 Member States and are expected to trigger total investment of around EUR 183.5 billion (state of play as of 5 April 2017).

Under the EFSI’s Infrastructure and Innovation Window, the European Investment Bank (EIB) has approved 206 infrastructure projects for financing, representing a financing volume of over EUR 25 billion. Under the EFSI’s SME-window, the European Investment Fund (EIF) has approved 271 SME financing agreements, with total financing under the EFSI of over EUR 9 billion. Some 427,000 small and medium-sized businesses and midcaps are expected to benefit from improved access to the finance they need to expand, create jobs and innovate.

Three evaluations were prepared in line with the requirements of the original EFSI Regulation. The [Commission published its evaluation](#) on 14 September 2016, the [EIB published its evaluation](#) on 5 October 2016 and EY published its [independent evaluation](#) on 14 November 2016. These three evaluations allowed stakeholders to gain a comprehensive overview of the functioning of the EFSI and have fed into the legislative discussions on the extension of the EFSI. The [Commission published a Communication](#) taking stock of these evaluations which concluded that they gave grounds to support the reinforcement of the EFSI.

More information

The Communication: “*Strengthening European Investments for jobs and growth: Towards a second phase of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and a new European External Investment Plan*” is available [here](#).

For more information about the proposal to extend the EFSI, see this [Memo](#).

The Commission’s evaluation of the first year of the EFSI is available [here](#).

The EFSI’s results so far including a break-down of operations by country are available [here](#).