

Eurojust Report on Environmental Crime



Cornelia Riehle

News

On 29 January 2021, Eurojust published a [Report on Eurojust's Casework on Environmental Crime](#). The report provides an overview of the legal and operational challenges that arise in such cases and is based on experiences encountered in nearly 60 cross-border environmental criminal law cases that were referred to Eurojust in the period from 2014 to 2018. The case-work report is primarily aimed at members of public prosecution services and the judiciary in EU Member States that deal with cross-border environmental crime.

In the aforementioned period, a total of 57 environmental law criminal cases were registered by Eurojust. The types of environmental crimes that were registered included:

- Trafficking in waste;
- Trafficking in wildlife species;
- Air pollution;
- Illegal trade in hazardous chemicals;
- Hazardous contamination of food;
- Illegal construction works and related issues.

Furthermore, environmental crimes are often accompanied by other forms of crime, e.g., organised crime, fraud, document forgery, and money laundering.

In addition to these statistical data, the report also identifies a number of legal and operational challenges when combating environmental crime, such as insufficient specialised knowledge and practical experience, different legislative and investigative approaches in different jurisdictions, as well as the multidisciplinary nature of environmental investigations (where a diverse range of specialised national administrative authorities are in charge).

Following its findings, the report recommends the following:

- Competent administrative, law enforcement, and judicial authorities should strive for multidisciplinary cooperation;
- Environmental crime should be recognised as organised crime;
- Environmental crime cases should be prioritised;
- International coordination and cooperation tools such as Joint Investigation Teams and early involvement of Eurojust should be increasingly used;
- Key concepts of environmental criminal law need to be further harmonised and more consistently interpreted across the EU Member States;

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ISSN: 1862-6947

<https://eucrim.eu>



The penalties for environmental crime should also be more uniform and dissuasive.

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The project is co-financed by the Union Anti-Fraud Programme (UAFP), managed by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).



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the European Union**