

## **Description for the general public**

Illegal wildlife trade is a social problem of a wide range, a growing scale and serious, varied consequences. It is a phenomenon that contributes to disruption of the balance in nature. It leads to extinction of species and threatens biodiversity. Introducing foreign species into territories previously uninhabited by them, disrupts harmony in biocenoses through gradual displacement of native species. Uncontrolled wildlife trade leads to transferring diseases to animals and humans. Consequences of this go outside the changes in natural environment. Lack of possibility to make profits from a given territory or the loss of ability to acquire food due to loss of biodiversity may be the reason for migration of people and even whole villages - arising as a result is the problem of the so called eco-refugees.

No part of the world is free from this phenomenon, however, there are certain geographical patterns. The areas characterized by a large biodiversity such as South and Central America, South Africa and South-East Asia are the main sources of acquiring animals. However, countries of lower biodiversity, like Russia, Canada and the USA are populated by species that are in high demand. The main areas of the demand are: China, where there is a strong, culturally determined demand for certain species due to their use in traditional medicine, the USA with a varied demand for house pets, traditional medicine and bushmeat, that is meat of wild animals mostly coming from Africa and Asia; European countries with the similar to the aforementioned demand, Middle East, with a demand for birds of prey for falconry purposes. Other regions of Asia - Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Thailand - show special demand for ivory.

International institutions have noticed the necessity of making increased effort to counteract illegal wildlife trade not only because the threats that it poses to maintaining biodiversity in the world, but also due to its negative long term economic consequences, the threats that it poses for the health of humans and animals, and threats to the safety of countries. Illegal wildlife trade due to high revenue that it generates and because of a low risk of uncovering, detecting the perpetrators and making them to take the consequences, is a source of income for organized crime groups often operating internationally. Hence, in recent years researches have taken interest in the problem of organized crime groups engaged in illegal wildlife trade. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, European Union and Interpol pointed to cross links between crimes against the environment and corruption, money laundering, human trafficking and murders. What is more, this type of crime is also connected to financing terrorist groups and warlords in Africa and Asia. Additionally, the fashion to own exotic wildlife specimens is still on the rise. The growing demand for endangered species is another incentive for poachers, traffickers and dealers of this commodity.

Since Poland has accessed European Union it has become a part of the second, after the USA, biggest market for live specimens of reptiles protected by the Washington Convention. Poland has become a transiting country for a substantial number of species destined for customers in Western Europe. The effectiveness of international actions aimed at counteracting illegal wildlife trade and its global consequences strongly depends on effectiveness of actions of individual countries that export or import endangered and vulnerable species. Therefore it is so crucial to raise the quality of social control of this phenomenon in Poland.

The main aim of the project is therefore the analysis of the state of social control of illegal wildlife trade in Poland in relation to existing legal regulations - domestic and international - in this area, and in relation to postulates formulated by representatives of the so called green criminology, paying special attention to an integrated approach to counteracting the phenomenon, based on achievements of traditional criminology and the newest research devoted to effective measures of control of the phenomenon. To this end, a dogmatically-legal method will be used that will make it possible to gain insight into existing regulations on illegal wildlife trade, detailed analysis of criminological achievements on these measures of social control, which can be used in relation to the discussed phenomenon, and qualitative research method, based on individual in depth interviews (IDI) with specialists in control of illegal wildlife trade.