

JIT 'Jungle': Close cooperation to stop illegal trafficking in protected wildlife species



Working within a JIT significantly facilitated cross-border police and judicial cooperation but could not fully overcome certain legal and operational challenges:

- difficulties with gathering evidence to meet national legal criteria of an OCG, to be able to **prosecute for organised crime**;
- absence of a methodology **to evaluate the damage caused by environmental crime**, for the purpose of calculation of the illicit profit and recovery of illegal assets.



On a request by the Czech prosecutor, Eurojust assisted the national authorities of Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia in negotiating and drafting the joint investigation team (JIT) agreement, to coordinate the execution of investigative measures (house searches, arrests, seizure of illegal proceeds), share evidence, prosecute the OCG members in a coordinated manner and recover illegal assets.

Exchange of information via customs, police, Eurojust and Europol confirmed that the Czech, Hungarian and Slovak investigations were linked and concerned the activities of an international organised crime group (OCG). The OCG engaged in illegal hunting of protected species (tigers, elephants, rhinoceros, bears, wolves, etc.) and trafficking of ivory, bones, skins and extracts from the bodies of the illegally killed animals, as well as laundering of significant illegal profits.



2018: Slovakia started investigating illegal business activities involving regular organisation of hunting on protected animal species and illegal trade with hunting trophies.

2017: Czechia started criminal proceedings on preparations that were detected to illegally hunt, in Czechia, tigers breed in captivity. In the same year, Hungary opened an investigation into suspected illegal trafficking in rhinoceros horns.

