

Overview of important international seizures in the European Union

January to December 2015

Compiled by TRAFFIC
April 2016 (updated in March 2017)

1. INTRODUCTION

This briefing aims to provide an overview of the most important CITES-related seizures reported by Member States of the European Union¹ (EU) for the twelve-month period January to December 2015 inclusive so that these can be shared with key trade partners of the EU and selected third countries, as deemed necessary by EU Member States. Therefore, the focus of this briefing is on seizures having taken place at EU borders (airports, maritime ports, land boundaries and also postal centres). Intra-EU trade and trade internal to Member States are excluded.

The quantitative analysis of seizures (in **Section 2**) is based on reports of significant seizures taking place at EU borders submitted by EU Member States to the European Commission (EC) for 2015. Although a total of 23 Member States provided information for this year, Section 2 is based on reports provided by 20 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom)². Some of the 20 reporting EU Member States provided information for only a part of the reporting period.

It is noted that EU Member States determine (and report) the seizures they consider to be significant according to their own criteria. To allow a quantitative analysis of data in Section 2, seizures that involved several species were separated and treated as distinct records. Therefore, this briefing refers to “seizure records” as opposed to seizures. This also means that the actual number of seizures was lower than the number of seizure records in Section 2.

In addition to the significant seizures reported by EU Member States, this briefing also includes information from seizure news items shared by EU Member States via restricted channels for information exchange in the EU (see **Section 3**).

2. OVERVIEW OF REPORTED INTERNATIONAL SEIZURES INVOLVING THE EU

A total of 3190 seizure records were reported by 20 EU Member States³ in 2015. Of these, 2497 seizure records could be classified as “international”, i.e. relating to shipments involving external or third countries and so took place at EU external borders (i.e. excluding seizures made internally, such as following investigations or inspections at shops/markets). Austria, the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Denmark, and the Netherlands together reported 97% of the international seizure records in 2015⁴.

¹ The Member States of the EU in 2015: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

² The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia reported significant internal seizures in 2015, but did not report any seizures at their borders.

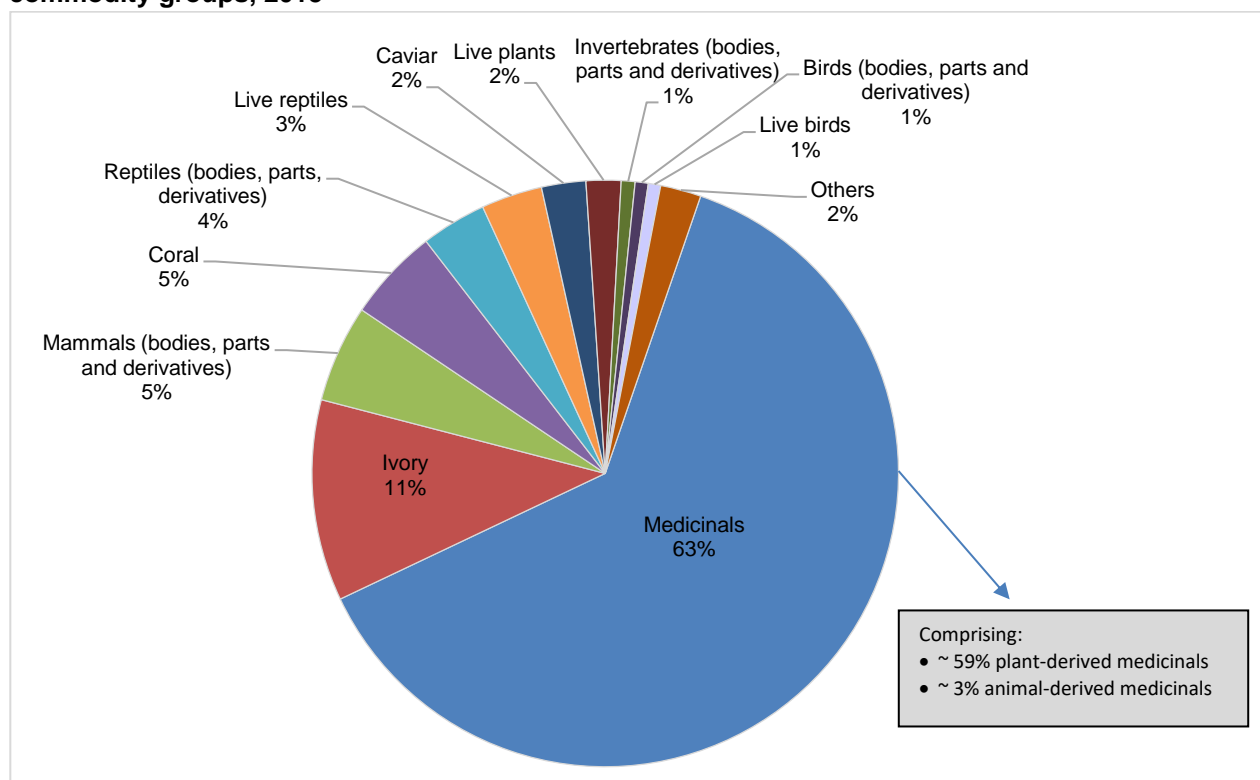
³ The 20 Member States reporting seizures at borders in 2015 (international seizures).

⁴ Member States listed here in order of importance (number of reported seizure records for 2015).

The main types of commodity seized at EU borders in 2015 were, in order of number of reported seizure records (see **Figure 1**):

- (i) **medicinals**⁵, including both medicinal products⁶ (medicinal products are also understood to include herbal health/food supplements) and parts/derivatives for medicinal use⁷ (over 904 723 items (e.g. pills, packets, etc.) and an additional 1464 kg). This included 880 367⁸ plant-derived medicinal items (and 717 kg) and 24 356 animal-derived medicinal items (and 747 kg);
- (ii) **ivory** (1043 specimens and approximately 554 kg);
- (iii) **mammal bodies, parts and derivatives** (306 specimens and approximately 188 kg);
- (iv) **corals** (1706 specimens and approximately 79 kg);
- (v) **reptile bodies, parts and derivatives** (288 specimens and approximately 92 kg);
- (vi) **live reptiles** (1829 specimens);
- (vii) **caviar** (approximately 61 kg); and
- (viii) **live plants** (3747 specimens and approximately 268 kg).

Figure 1: Distribution of 2497 international seizure records reported by EU Member States across commodity groups, 2015



Source: seizure reports by 20 EU Member States

Important individual seizures reported by Member States across key commodity groups are set out in **Section 3**.

Figure 2 depicts the main countries/territories of export or of departure of illegal trade as reported by the 20 EU Member States.

⁵ Units used to report medicinals are not consistent across EU Member States: some reported units as packs of tablets others as individual tablets; sometimes no unit was specified.

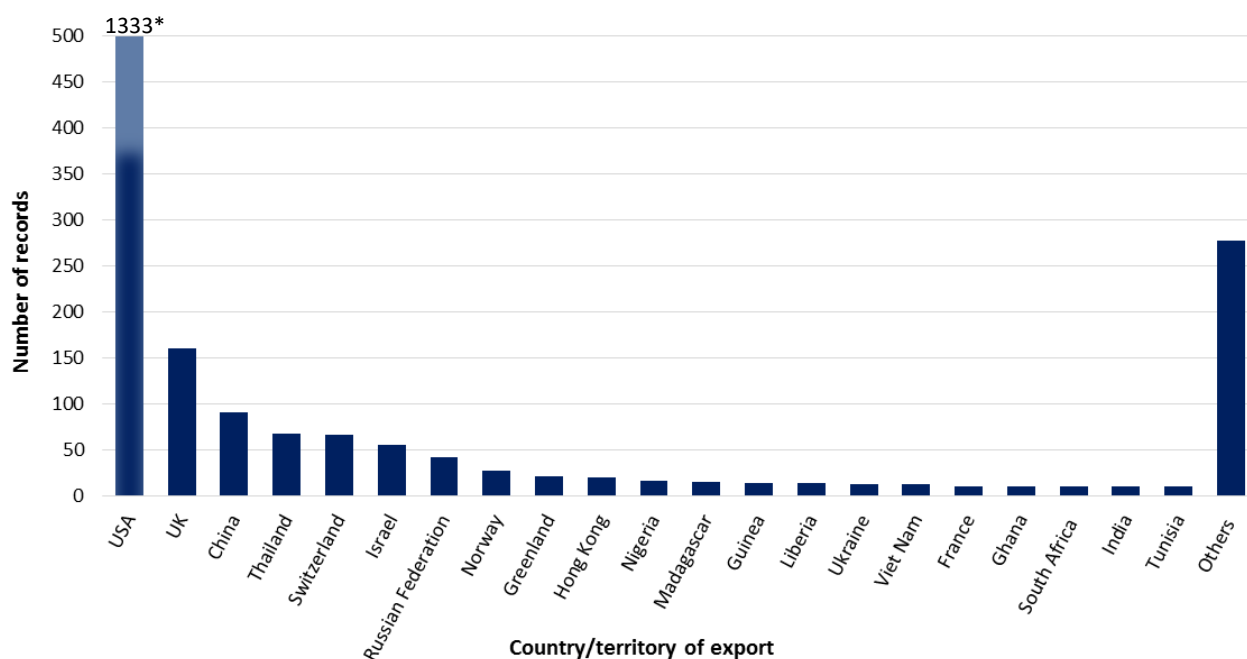
⁶ It is important to note that whilst medicinal products were labelled as containing CITES-listed species, checks are not always conducted to prove this is the case.

⁷ Including animal parts/derivatives, e.g. bear, seahorse, big cats, and crocodile.

⁸ It is noted that this total includes one large seizure of 480 000 pills containing Costus Root *Saussurea costus* (App. I/Annex A) reported by Germany. The pills were exported from Mongolia in September 2015 and Poland was the reported country of destination.

- The **USA** was the reported exporter for 1333 seizure records: as in 2014, 96% of these exports (1288 records) involved medicinals⁹ (236 550 items and an additional 229 kg) containing derivatives of plant taxa such as **Aloe**¹⁰ *Aloe* spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B), **orchids** *Orchidaceae* spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B), and **Hoodia** *Hoodia* spp. (App. II/Annex B), and **African Cherry** *Prunus africana* (App. II/Annex B).
- **The United Kingdom** (UK) was the reported exporter for 161 seizure records: 98% of these records (157 records) involved small pieces of ivory (a total of 64 kg of carvings) of **African Elephant** *Loxodonta africana* (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in postal parcels. The items were sold mainly via the internet, and destined for China. These were targeted in mail centres based on a risk assessment.
- **China** was the reported exporter for 91 seizure records: as in 2014, most of these records involved medicinals (65 seizure records involving 59 158 items and an additional 1107 kg) containing parts and derivatives of taxa such as **Hoodia**, **orchids**, **Musk Deer** *Moschus* spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B), **Saiga Antelope** (App. II/Annex B), **Leopard** *Panthera pardus* (App. I/Annex A), **Seahorses** *Hippocampus* spp. (App. II/Annex B) and **Costus Root** *Saussurea costus* (App. I/Annex A).
- **Thailand** was the reported exporter for 68 seizure records, primarily involving **live plants**: all 30 records concerned **orchids** (13 specimens and additional 67 kg) and **stony corals** of the order Scleractinia (App. II/Annex B) (10 records).
- **Switzerland** was the reported exporter for 67 seizure records: as in 2014, the majority of these exports (63 records) concerned medicinals containing **Costus Root**, half of the records were reported by Germany and **Aloe** reported by Austria (22 records) and Germany (9 records).

Figure 2: Main countries/territories of departure of illegal trade as reported by 20 EU Member States (international seizures), according to number of seizure records, 2015



*Note: The number of records indicating the USA as a country of export was actually higher than shown by the bar: 1333. (The US bar is shown disproportionately lower to allow for the visualization of other countries/territories of export.)

Source: seizure reports by 20 EU Member States in 2015.

Abbreviations: UK – United Kingdom, USA – United States of America

⁹ When it is stated that a medicine contains a CITES-listed species, this refers to the packaging which lists the species as one of the ingredients.

¹⁰ 1104 of the 1288 “medicinals” seizure records involved medicinal and cosmetic products containing Aloe exported from the USA without CITES documentation.

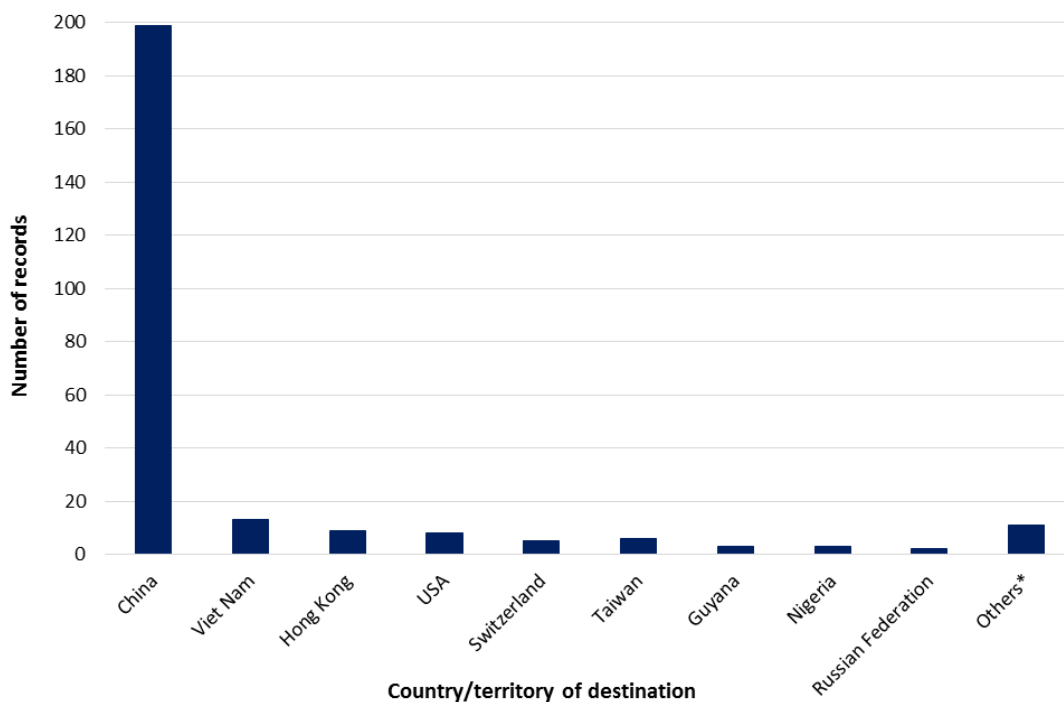
Figure 3 shows that mainland **China** was the leading destination for commodities seized upon (re-) export from the EU/while in transit in the EU, in terms of number of seizure records in 2015. Mainland **China**, **Hong Kong SAR**¹¹ and **Taiwan** were together the destination in 214 records, 86% of these records (185 records) involved **elephant ivory**, were seized upon export from EU Member States (mostly in the UK (159 records), Germany and France), and exported from **Africa** (Nigeria, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, and Mali – in order of importance). As in 2014, mainland China and Hong Kong were also important destinations for **rhino horn** *Rhinocerotidae* spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B), **dried seahorses** *Hippocampus* spp. (App. II/Annex B), and **pangolin scales** *Manis* spp. (App. II/Annex B), exported from **West and Central Africa** (Guinea, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Mozambique and Madagascar), transiting through the EU (France and Germany).

Taiwan was an important destination for live birds such as **Yellow-headed Amazon** *Amazona oratrix* (App. I/Annex A), **Red-and-green Macaw** *Ara chloropterus* (App. II/Annex B), and **Scarlet Macaw** *Ara macao* (App. I/Annex A); all birds were (re-)exported from the Netherlands.

In addition, **Viet Nam** and the **USA** were important destinations for the following commodities:

- (i) As in 2014, **Viet Nam** for shipments of raw and worked **African Elephant ivory** (App. I/II, Annex A/B), for example, pieces of tusks, seized in transit in France from the luggage of a Vietnamese citizen, exported from **Angola**; and carvings exported from **Nigeria**, **Ivory Coast**, and the **Democratic Republic of Congo** (seized by Germany);
- (ii) **USA** for shipments of mammal bodies, parts, and derivatives (8 records), such as skulls (**primates** *Primate* spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B)), foot (**African Elephant**), and garments (**Geoffroy's Cat** *Leopardus geoffroyi* (App. I/Annex A)) exported from **Cameroon**, **South Africa** and **Greece**.

Figure 3: Main countries/territories of destination of illegal trade from the EU (to non-EU countries only) as reported by 20 Member States, according to number of seizure records, 2015



*Others include the following countries (1 seizure record reported by each country): Cuba, Chile, French Polynesia, Iraq, Nepal, Panama, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Singapore, and United Arab Emirates. Source: seizure reports by 20 EU Member States in 2015.















3. DETAILS OF KEY INDIVIDUAL INTERNATIONAL SEIZURES REPORTED BY EU MEMBER STATES IN 2015

¹¹ Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China

Table 1 contains details of key individual seizures reported by EU Member States for the period January to December 2015. Again the focus is on international as opposed to intra-EU trade. Seizures were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (i) seizures involving particularly large quantities of a commodity type; and (ii) seizures highlighting important illegal trade trends involving the EU (e.g. in terms of countries or species involved).



















Table 1: Details of selected seizures reported by EU Member States for 2015 arranged by commodity type (reporting country in bold)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
MEDICINALS				
China	⇒	UK	6000 pills containing Hoodia <i>Hoodia gordonii</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in air freight. One of several similar seizures that took place in the UK in 2015, also exported from Hong Kong SAR.	Detected at an airport as a result of targeting based on intelligence (Jan 2015)
China	⇒	UK	60 packages containing medicinal products derived from bear <i>Ursus</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in the luggage of a passenger.	Detected at an airport following a random control (Jan 2015)
Madagascar	⇒ France ⇒	China	18 688 dead seahorses <i>Hippocampus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected at an airport.	Targeted at an airport (Jan 2015)
China	⇒	UK	720 kg of medicinal products containing tortoise Testudinidae spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in sea freight.	Targeted at a maritime port based on a risk assessment (Jan 2015)
Equatorial Guinea	⇒ Germany ⇒	China	655 scales of pangolin <i>Manis</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected in personal luggage of a Chinese national.	Detected at an airport following a random control (Jan 2015)
Russian Federation	⇒	Estonia	Three cases involving a total of 6 tubes, containing extract of Brown Bear <i>Ursus arctos</i> (App. I/II, Annex A) detected under the traveller's clothes.	Detected at a land boundary based on risk assessment and random control (Jan, Mar 2015)
Egypt	⇒	Austria	200 products derived from Tiger <i>Panthera tigris</i> (App. I/Annex A) detected at an airport.	Targeted at an airport (Feb 2015)
Sudan	⇒	UK	9.76 kg of Agarwood <i>Aquilaria</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) chips detected in the luggage of a passenger.	Detected at an airport following a random control (Feb 2015)
USA	⇒	UK	4800 packets containing Desert Cistanche <i>Cistanche deserticola</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in air freight.	Detected at an airport as a result of targeting based on intelligence (Mar 2015)
USA	⇒	UK	1 shipment of 8640 packets containing extract of African Cherry <i>Prunus africana</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected in a postal parcel. One of several such seizures that took place in the UK in 2015, exported from the USA.	Targeted at a mail centre based on a risk assessment (Mar 2015)
China	⇒	UK	600 packets of products containing Saiga Antelope <i>Saiga tatarica</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in personal luggage.	Detected at an airport following a random control (Mar 2015)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
USA		Slovakia	One seizure case involving 2000 pills containing Hoodia <i>Hoodia gordonii</i> and 1000 pills – Hoodia <i>Hoodia</i> spp. (both species App. II/Annex B) detected in a postal parcel.	Detected at a mail centre as a result of a Customs documentary check (Apr 2015)
China		UK	208 kg of products containing Costus Root <i>Saussurea costus</i> (App. I/Annex A) detected in sea freight. The UK also reported several seizures of pills/packets containing Costus Root from the USA, Malaysia and Hong Kong SAR.	Targeted at a maritime port based on a risk assessment (Apr 2015)
Serbia		Bulgaria	One seizure case involving 10 kg of live Medicinal Leech <i>Hirudo medicinalis</i> and 10 kg of Southern Medicinal Leech <i>Hirudo verbena</i> (both species App. II/Annex B) detected inside a vehicle.	Detected at a land boundary following a random control (Apr 2015)
China		Germany	200 items of medicinal products containing Leopard <i>Panthera pardus</i> (App. I/Annex A). One of four similar seizures of big cats (also involving Tiger <i>Panthera tigris</i> (App. I/Annex A)) that took place in Germany in 2015.	Detected at an airport following a random control (May 2015)
Thailand		UK	157 packets containing medicinal products derived from seahorses <i>Hippocampus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected in personal luggage.	Detected at an airport following a random control (May 2015)
Madagascar		France	1 kg of oil derived from crocodile <i>Crocodylus</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected at an airport. One of several such seizures that took place in France in 2015, also exported from Madagascar.	Targeted at an airport (May 2015)
Switzerland		Germany	1080 tablets containing Costus Root <i>Saussurea costus</i> (App. I/Annex A). One of several such seizures that took place in Germany in 2015. Four commercial seizures of Costus Root also reported by Austria in 2015.	Detected at a postal centre as a result of a Customs documentary check (Jun 2015)
USA		UK	24 000 packets containing Hoodia <i>Hoodia gordonii</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in air freight. One of several such seizures that took place in the UK in 2015, exported from the USA.	Targeted at an airport based on a risk assessment (Jun 2015)
China		UK	23 040 bottles containing extract of orchid <i>Dendrobium</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected in sea freight.	Targeted at a maritime port based on a risk assessment (Jun 2015)
Russian Federation		Latvia	576 tubes containing medicinal products derived from Medicinal Leech <i>Hirudo medicinalis</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected inside a vehicle.	Detected at a land boundary following a random control (Jun 2015)
USA	 Netherlands	 Luxembourg	Five shipments involving a total of 2253 bottles of nutritional supplement containing African Cherry <i>Prunus africana</i> (App. II/Annex B) ¹² .	(Jul-Dec 2015)
Ukraine, Russia	 Estonia, Latvia, Poland	 Czech Republic	A combination of shampoos, face masks, gels, body mousses and foodstuffs containing orchids <i>Orchidaceae</i> spp., Octopus Plant <i>Aloe arborescens</i> and caviar of Stellate Sturgeon <i>Acipenser stellatus</i> (all species App. II/Annex B) ¹³ .	Targeted at the headquarters and the shops of the importing company (July 2015)

¹² NL Alert - 10/2015 (shared via EU-TWIX)

¹³ CZ CITES Alert - 115/15 (shared via EU-TWIX)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
Ghana		UK	330 bottles containing extract of Cape Aloe <i>Aloe ferox</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in a container. One of several similar seizures that took place in the UK in 2015, exported from Ghana.	Detected at a maritime port based on a risk assessment (Sep 2015)
Mongolia	 Germany 	Poland	480 000 pills (approx. 80 kg) containing Costus Root <i>Saussurea costus</i> (App. I/Annex A) detected in air freight.	Targeting at an airport based on a random control (Sep 2015)
USA		Austria	900 tablets containing Aloe <i>Aloe</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B). One of over a 1000 such seizures that took place in Austria in 2015, exported from the USA, and also from Israel.	Detected at a mail centre (Nov 2015)
China		UK	150 kg of medicinal products containing Goldenseal <i>Hydrastis canadensis</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in air freight.	Targeted at an airport based on a risk assessment (Dec 2015)
IVORY				
Kenya		Netherlands	50 pieces of worked ivory of African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in a postal parcel.	Detected at an airport as a result of targeting based on an investigation (Feb 2015)
Democratic Republic of Congo	 Germany 	Viet Nam	10 ivory carvings (approx. 14.22 kg) of Elephant Elephantidae spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in a postal parcel and concealed among other goods. One of several such seizures that took place in Germany in 2015, destined for China and Hong Kong SAR.	Detected at a mail centre as a result of a Customs documentary check (Apr 2015)
Democratic Republic of Congo	 France 	Viet Nam	135.8 kg of worked African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) ivory detected at an airport.	Targeted at an airport (May 2015)
Mozambique		Romania	239 pieces of worked ivory of African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) weighing 2 kg, detected in a personal luggage of a Chinese national.	Targeting at an airport based on a random control (May 2015)
UK		China	22 kg of ivory carvings of African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in a postal parcel. One of over a 150 such seizures that took place in the UK in 2015, destined for China.	Detected at a mail centre based on a risk assessment (Aug 2015)
Kenya	 Netherlands 	South Korea	Two packages containing a total of 100 ivory pieces of African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in a postal parcel ¹⁴ .	Targeted at an airport (Sep 2015)
Nigeria	 Germany 	China	112 ivory carvings of African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in a postal parcel. One of several such seizures that took place in Germany in 2015, destined for China.	Detected at an airport as a result of a random control (Oct 2015)
Angola	 France 	Viet Nam	29.06 kg of ivory carvings of African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in personal luggage. One of several such seizures that took place in France in 2015, destined for Viet Nam.	Detected at an airport as a result of a random control (Date not reported)
MAMMAL BODIES, PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				














¹⁴ NL Alert - 09/2015 (shared via EU-TWIX)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
Kazakhstan	➡	Germany	64 parts (genitalia) of Wild Yak <i>Bos mutus</i> (App. I/Annex A) detected in personal luggage.	Targeted at an airport based on a random control (Jan 2015)
Liberia	➡	Belgium ➡ USA	8 skulls and 8 skins of Maxwell's Duiker <i>Cephalophus maxwelli</i> , Bay Duiker <i>Cephalophus dorsalis</i> , and Zebra Duiker <i>Cephalophus zebra</i> (all species App. II/Annex B) detected in air freight.	Detected at an airport as a result of a Customs documentary check (Feb 2015)
USA	➡	UK	20 claws of American Black Bear <i>Ursus americanus</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in a postal parcel.	Detected at a mail centre following targeting based on a risk assessment (Jul 2015)
Nigeria	➡	Germany ➡ Hong Kong SAR	Two cases involving a total of 128 kg of pangolin scales <i>Manis</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected in air freight.	Detected at an airport as a result of a Customs documentary check (Aug 2015)
Greenland	➡	Denmark	9.02 kg of meat of Narwhal <i>Monodon monoceros</i> (App. II/Annex A). One of several such shipments arriving from Greenland, which were intercepted in Denmark in 2015.	(Date not reported)
Cameroon	➡	France ➡ Poland	10 skulls of Colobus <i>Colobus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex A/B) detected in a postal parcel.	Detected at an airport as a result of a random control (Date not reported)
CORALS				
New Caledonia	➡	France	198 specimens of live coral <i>Anthozoa</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected at an airport. One of several such seizures that took place in France in 2015, also exported from Indonesia and the Dominican Republic.	Targeted at an airport (Feb 2015)
Dominican Republic	➡	Austria	90 specimens of live stony coral <i>Scleractinia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected at an airport.	Targeted at an airport (Mar 2015)
Equatorial Guinea	➡	Spain	18 kg of stony coral <i>Scleractinia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected at an airport.	Detected at airport (Jul 2015)
REPTILE BODIES, PARTS AND DERIVATIVES/EGGS				
USA	➡	UK	50 teeth of Alligator <i>Alligatoridae</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected in a postal parcel. One similar case involving teeth of Crocodile <i>Crocodylus</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) was reported by the UK in 2015, exported from Egypt.	Detected at a mail centre following targeting based on a risk assessment (Feb 2015)
Hong Kong SAR	➡	France ➡ Guyana	14 eggs of tortoises <i>Testudo</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) seized from a Surinam national due to the lack of CITES permit.	Detected at a road/highway (Feb 2015)
Cameroon	➡	France ➡ Russian Federation	19 skins of Crocodile <i>Crocodylus</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B). The commercial shipment was not accompanied by a CITES permit.	Detected at an airport (May 2015)
France	➡	Switzerland	48 skins of Alligator <i>Alligatoridae</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B).	Detected at a road/highway (Jun 2015)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
Dominican Republic	→ France	→ Hong Kong SAR	Two cases involving 14 kg of scales of Hawksbill Sea Turtle <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i> (App. I/Annex A) detected in a postal parcel.	Detected at an airport following a random control (Date not reported)
LIVE REPTILES				
Tanzania	→	UK	166 live Turquoise Dwarf Geckos <i>Lygodactylus williamsi</i> (Non CITES/Annex B) detected in air freight.	Detected at an airport as a result of targeting based on intelligence (Feb 2015)
Tanzania	→ Belgium	→ Netherlands	18 live Zanzibar Day Geckos <i>Phelsuma dubia</i> (App. II/Annex B) seized with another 40 live reptiles (species unknown) ¹⁵ .	Seized from an air cargo shipment (Feb 2015)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	→	Croatia	A total of 241 live Spur-thighed Tortoises <i>Testudo graeca</i> (App. II/Annex A) and 71 live Kleinmann's Tortoises <i>Testudo kleinmanni</i> (App. I/Annex A) detected in the vehicle of a Croatian national.	Detected at a road/highway (Mar 2015)
Uzbekistan	→	UK	400 live Horsfield's Tortoise <i>Testudo horsfieldii</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in air freight. Documentation checks revealed that whilst a valid export permit, the importer failed to obtain the UK CITES import permit.	Detected as a result of targeting based on a risk assessment (May 2015)
Togo	→	UK	13 live Bell's Hinged Tortoises <i>Kinixys belliana</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in air freight. Documentation checks revealed that they were shown as "ranché", however the examination showed inconsistencies resulting in the seizure.	Targeted at an airport based on a risk assessment (Jun 2015)
Turkey	→	UK	75 live Spur-thighed Tortoise <i>Testudo graeca</i> (App. II/Annex A) detected in an air cargo ¹⁶ .	Targeting based on a risk assessment (Dec 2015)
Morocco	→	France	13 live Spur-thighed Tortoises <i>Testudo graeca</i> (App. II/Annex A) detected in personal luggage.	Detected during random control (Date not reported)
CAVIAR				
Russian Federation	→	Belgium	38 containers (a total of 4.75 kg), of which 20 Beluga Sturgeon <i>Huso huso</i> (App. II/Annex B) caviar and 18 of sturgeon <i>Acipenseriformes</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) caviar detected in personal luggage.	Detected at an airport following a random control (Feb 2015)
Turkey	→	UK	5.5 kg of sturgeon <i>Acipenseriformes</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) caviar detected in an air cargo.	Detected at an airport based on a risk assessment (May 2015)
Thailand	→	UK	144 items (night cream) containing Siberian Sturgeon <i>Acipenser baerii</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in a container.	Targeting based on a risk assessment (Jun 2015)
Ukraine	→	Croatia	4.5 kg of sturgeon <i>Acipenseriformes</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) caviar detected in personal luggage among other goods.	Detected at an airport based on a risk assessment (Sep 2015)
LIVE PLANTS				
Costa Rica	→	Netherlands	1027 live Cycas <i>Cycas revoluta</i> (App. I/Annex B) detected in a container. No CITES permit accompanied the shipment.	Seized at a river port following a random control (Feb 2015)

¹⁵ Belgian Customs Airport News - 01/2015 (shared via EU-TWIX)

¹⁶ UK Border Force CITES Alert - No.17/15 (shared via EU-TWIX)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details		
Export	Transit	Destination				
Australia		Netherlands	141 live roots of orchids <i>Orchidaceae</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) detected at a mail centre.	Targeting based on a random control (Apr 2015)		
USA		UK	71 kg of live Tillandsia <i>Tillandsia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) detected in a postal parcel.	Targeted at an airport based on a risk assessment (May 2015)		
Indonesia		Sweden	One case involving 223 live orchids <i>Orchidaceae</i> spp., 20 Monkey Cup <i>Nepenthes</i> spp. (species App. I/II, Annex A/B), and 27 Venus Slipper <i>Paphiopedilum</i> spp. (App. I/Annex A,) detected in a postal parcel. Declared as decoration material.	Detected at an airport (May 2015)		
LIVE BIRDS/EGGS						
Brazil		Portugal	12 eggs of Red-lored Parrot <i>Amazona autumnalis diadema</i> (App. I/Annex A) seized. No further details provided ¹⁷ .	Location of detection not reported (Jan 2015)		
Turkey		Bulgaria	10 live African Grey Parrot <i>Psittacus erithacus</i> (App. II/Annex B) seized inside a vehicle ¹⁸ .	Detected at a border crossing point based on a risk assessment (Jul 2015)		
Netherlands		Taiwan	28 live Yellow-headed Amazon <i>Amazona oratrix</i> (App. I/Annex A) specimens detected in air freight. Species appearance were modified.	Targeted at an airport based on an investigation (Dec 2015)		
TIMBER						
Ivory Coast		UK	5062 kg of Spanish Cedar <i>Cedrela odorata</i> (App. III/Annex C) detected in a shipping container.	Seized at a maritime port following targeting based on a risk assessment (Mar 2015)		
EELS						
UK		France		Hong Kong SAR	120 kg of live European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B) seized due to the lack of CITES permits.	Detected at an airport (Jan 2015)
Spain		Bulgaria			37 kg of live European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in personal luggage of a Chinese national.	Targeted at an airport based on a risk assessment (Jan 2015)
China		Germany			24 000 kg of meat of European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in a container.	Targeted at a maritime port based on an investigation (Sep 2015)
China		Germany		Cyprus	100 kg of meat of European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B) detected in a container. DNA testing was conducted by Germany before releasing the shipment to Cyprus.	Targeted at an airport based on DNA testing (Nov 2015)

Abbreviations: UK – United Kingdom, USA – United States of America, App. – CITES Appendix, Annex – Annex of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulation.

¹⁷ Portuguese CITES MA Seizure Report N.01/2015 – 08.04.2015 (shared via EU-TWIX)

¹⁸ BG CITES Alert - 03/15 (shared via EU-TWIX)

4. BRIEF COMPARISON TO 2014

A comprehensive and quantitative comparison of “international” seizures reported in 2014 and 2015 is not possible due to, among other things, the difference in the number of EU Member States reporting seizures in these two years (in 2014 a total of 18 EU Member States reported 1116 seizure records, whereas in 2015 a total of 20 EU Member States reported 2497 seizure records). However, some observations can be made when comparing these two years.

The commodity groups involved in the seizures, and their order of importance (in terms of number of reported seizure records), were broadly similar in 2014 and 2015, with the commodity groups “medicinals”, and “ivory” being included in the top commodity groups in both years.

2015, however, saw a large decrease in the number of live reptiles reported as seized, to almost half the number reported as seized in 2014 (1829 specimens reported as seized in 2015, compared to 3198 specimens in 2014). Nevertheless, 2015 seizure data highlight the continued importance of the EU as a destination for illegal trade in live reptiles, particularly tortoises but also other species (see **Table 1** above).

Furthermore, a significant decrease in the number of items of reptile bodies, parts and derivatives was observed in 2015 (288 items reported as seized in 2015, compared to 1615 items in 2014).

The 2015 seizures data highlighted a significant increase in meat (kg) of **European Eel** *Anguilla anguilla* (App. II/Annex B) reported as seized. A total of 24 100 kg of European Eel meat exported from China and destined for Germany and Cyprus was seized in 2015 compared to no meat seizures reported in 2014 (updated in March 2017) (see in **Table 1** above). However, 175 kg (4 seizure records) of live eel specimens were reported in 2015 compared to 314 kg (3 seizure records) in 2014.

Several important continuing/emerging trends in illegal trade were also noticeable in 2015, in particular:

- The importance of the USA as an exporter of illegal wildlife to the EU, particularly of medicinal products.
- The continued shipment of specimens, derivatives and products of illegal wildlife through the postal system (subsequently detected in mail centres). In 2014, 332 records involved seizures made in mail centres, while in 2015 there were 1594 records.
- EU Member States (France, Germany and the UK) being utilized as transit locations for the smuggling of elephant ivory from Africa, notably Western and Central African countries, to Asia (mainland China, Hong Kong SAR and Viet Nam). In 2014, the same EU Member States reported 27 records involving 741 specimens and an additional 8 kg of ivory seized *en route* from Africa to Asia. In 2015, there were 35 records involving 384 specimens and an additional 241 kg following these same routes.
- The smuggling of live tortoises from Northern Africa (mainly Tunisia and Morocco) into the EU.

The main countries/territories of export or of departure reported for 2014 and 2015 (based on number of seizure records) were broadly similar in the two years, with China and the USA being included in the top countries of export in 2015. The USA featured even more prominently in 2015 due to an increased number of reported seizures of medicinal items (particularly health supplements) exported from the USA (with over a 1000 seizure records reported by Austria).

It is noteworthy to highlight that the UK also featured prominently as the reported exporter in 2015 due to an increased number of reported seizures of ivory destined for China intercepted in mail centres following targeting.

When looking at the countries of destination of illegal trade detected in the EU, China ranked first in both 2014 and 2015. While noted as an important destination country in 2014, Lao PDR¹⁹ was no longer reported

¹⁹ Lao People's Democratic Republic

as a destination for commercial quantities of various wildlife commodities in 2015 (no seizure records reported in 2015).