

On the implementation of CITES in Central and Eastern Europe

Between 7 and 9 December, 2011 in Poznań, on invitation by the State Council for Nature Conservation and the Polish Ministry of the Environment, a meeting was held of state authorities and non-governmental organisations from Central and Eastern Europe, involved in ensuring the implementation and enforcement of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe share similar problems with effective enforcement of CITES. Due to their localisation along the eastern EU border, many of them bear special responsibility for controlling import of protected animals and plants and their products from Asia. For this reason, within its current presidency in the Council of the European Union Poland decided to launch a seminar to exchange experience and ideas, and start closer cooperation in this area. The seminar was financially supported by the European Union and the network of nature conservation NGOs, the CEEweb for Biodiversity. The Polish Society for Nature Conservation "Salamandra" was made responsible for organisation of the meeting.

For 3 days, 35 representatives of CITES scientific and management authorities and non-governmental organizations from 9 countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine) presented issues such as national legal instruments concerning registration of ownership of protected animals and documents required for their commercial use. They also discussed possibilities of more effective fight with illegal trade in specimens of protected species on the Internet. A separate session was devoted to the problem of reptile populations exploitation in Southeastern Asia, which is the origin of many specimens that are brought to Europe (e.g. as pets or as leather products).

The meeting may help develop common proposals for unification of requirements for certificates of legal origin to be used in the national and EU trade. A special European Commission Working Group is now developing a draft of these requirements. All participants agreed that the seminar should be held on a regular basis. The next meeting is planned for the next year.

PHOTOGRAPHS available for use in materials reporting the event (author: PTOP "Salamandra"):

<http://www.salamandra.org.pl/images/stories/CITES/p1040511-kw.jpg>

A representative of Hungary presents types of official Hungarian documents stating legal origin of animals from protected species.

<http://www.salamandra.org.pl/images/stories/CITES/p1040565-kw.jpg>

During the seminar participants visited the Poznań's Greenhouse, which has an extensive collection of plants and animals protected within CITES.

<http://www.salamandra.org.pl/images/stories/CITES/p1040540-kw.jpg>

Seminar participants in the Wilson Park in Poznań.