

# BALKAN DETOX LIFE

## Report from the International Workshop: PROSECUTORS AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL AND WILDLIFE CRIME

BALKAN DETOX LIFE: STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITIES TO  
FIGHT WILDLIFE POISONING AND RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE  
PROBLEM ACROSS SEVEN BALKAN COUNTRIES  
(LIFE19 GIE/NL/001016)

Prepared by: Vulture Conservation Foundation

Project Partners:

Funded by:



VULTURE  
CONSERVATION  
FOUNDATION



ALBANIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY



UDRUGA / ASSOCIATION



BIRD PROTECTION AND  
STUDY SOCIETY OF SERBIA



ΦΑΦΦ  
FEDERATION OF  
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Ornithological  
SOCIETY



MACEDONIAN  
ECOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY



NASE  
PTICE



PPNEA  
Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania



MAVA  
FONDATION POUR LA NATURE



EURONATUR

## **Subject and purpose of the report**

This document is prepared within the framework of the BalkanDetox LIFE project (LIFE19GIE/NL/001016) and relates to the deliverable "Workshops report for the international event organised in Spain", defined under *Action B.6: Workshops for prosecutors and judges about the severity of wildlife poisoning and discouragement of poison baits use*. This report is produced to provide an overview of the implemented programme and main conclusions from the international event organised in Spain.

## **Date of production**

May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

## **About the project**

The BalkanDetox LIFE project is a five-year endeavour with a €1.8 million budget, which aims to raise awareness and strengthen national capacities to fight the problem of wildlife poisoning across Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia. It received funding from the EU's LIFE Programme with a contribution of 1.004.792€ (54,82%) to the total project budget, and it is co-financed by the Vulture Conservation Foundation, the MAVA Foundation and Euronatur, as well as by the Whitley Fund for Nature and Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund for specific actions. Project partners are the Vulture Conservation Foundation as the coordinating beneficiary, and the Albanian Ornithological Society, Association BIOM, Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia, Fund for Wild Flora and Fauna, Hellenic Ornithological Society, Macedonian Ecological Society, Ornitološko društvo NAŠE Ptice and the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania as associated beneficiaries. Furthermore, this project is based on Spanish best practice experience and counts with the support from the Junta de Andalucía and the Spanish Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge.

Learn more at [www.balkandetoxlife.eu](http://www.balkandetoxlife.eu)



## INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The international workshop “Prosecutors against environmental and wildlife crime” was organised within action B.6 of the BalkanDetox LIFE project (LIFE19 GIE/NL/001016), which focuses on addressing the perception and capacities of public prosecutors and judges towards wildlife poisoning and wildlife crime in general, which are crucial stakeholders for successful prosecutions of poisoning incidents. The workshop was carried out on November the 8<sup>th</sup> 2023. in Madrid, Spain, thanks to the established collaboration with the Public Prosecutor's Office for Environment and Urbanism of Spain. Hosted in Madrid by the Chief Prosecutor, Mr Antonio Vercher Noguera, the international workshop was an opportunity to learn first-hand the key drivers for the judicial success of wildlife crime cases in Spain.

Wildlife poisoning is a complex conservation issue that requires active involvement of multiple sectors (law enforcement, forensics, veterinary medicine, toxicology, judiciary system) in order to be able to effectively investigate and sanction this criminal activity, and ultimately to reduce the mortality that it has on numerous species of wildlife. The BalkanDetox LIFE project strives to address the issue of wildlife poisoning in the Balkans through a multi-stakeholder involvement process by providing a comprehensive, regional and coordinated approach and applying best-practice experience from Spain, which has achieved impressive results in combating this type of environmental crime.

In 2021 the Vultures Conservation Foundation, in close collaboration with the Regional Government of Andalucía and the Spanish ministry for the ecological transition, established the Wildlife Crime Academy (WCA). The WCA is set on providing the necessary conditions for the improvement of law enforcement efficiency in combating wildlife crime in a sustainable framework, based on the exchange of knowledge and best practice experiences of the environmental services and enforcement services agencies from Spain. The specialised courses of the WCA are tailored to cover all the different aspects of wildlife crime (illegal killing, trapping, poisoning, illegal trade) and to suit the different professional profiles of the attendees of the training courses. After completing the three level training courses, the attendees become experts in wildlife crime investigation, fully capable of implementing wildlife crime investigation and organising similar training courses in their respective countries.

This experience has also proved the importance of the judicial sector in terms of coordination of the investigation process and its successful submission to the court. Hence, as a follow-up or scaling-up action closely related to the Wildlife Crime Academy, we have approached the public prosecutors from the Balkan countries with this meeting.



As for the WCA, we have again approached the relevant Spanish authorities in order to benefit from the Spanish best practice experience in prosecution of wildlife crime.

## OBJECTIVES & TARGET AUDIENCE

The overall goal of this workshop was to gather relevant public prosecutors from the countries of the Balkan Peninsula that have some experience, or interest primarily with prosecuting cases of wildlife crime, but also with other types of environmental crime, and demonstrate to them how environmental prosecutors from Spain operate when prosecuting cases of this type of criminal activity.

The meeting provided a platform for participants to share successful prosecutions of criminal cases and explore the nuances of environmental crime, including wildlife poisoning, poaching, illegal trade, and collisions and electrocutions with energy infrastructure. Participants from (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia and Serbia) were invited to share their countries’ legislation and procedures to fight wildlife crime and map out best practices.

Specific objectives of the workshop were:

- Increase awareness on wildlife crime among the judicial sectors.
- Reflect on the need and effectiveness of the Wildlife Crime Academy.
- Enhance international cooperation in wildlife crime investigation and prosecution.
- Exchange experience about successfully prosecuted wildlife criminal cases (wildlife poisoning, poaching, illegal trade, and collision and electrocution with energy infrastructure).
- Identify gaps and propose solutions for better investigation and prosecution of wildlife crime incidents.
- Declare commitment to wildlife crime prosecution and define the next steps.



## WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

The workshop was attended by a total of 11 participants from 6 countries.

Name	Country	Professional occupation	Institution
Spasenska Andonova	North Macedonia	public prosecutor	Basic Public Prosecutor's Office
Suzana Mircheska-Kuzmanovska	North Macedonia	public prosecutor	Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecuting Organised Crime and Corruption
Nena Miloradović Bjelica	Serbia	higher prosecutor associate	First basic public prosecutor's office in Belgrade
Jelena Samuilov	Serbia	public prosecutor	Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Pančevo
Milimir Pojužina	Bosnia and Herzegovina	public prosecutor	County prosecutor's office Trebinje
Aida Turić	Bosnia and Herzegovina	public prosecutor	Cantonal Prosecutor's Office of Sarajevo Canton
Eloida Goxhi	Albania	public prosecutor	High Prosecutorial Council of Albania
Esmeralda Cami	Albania	public prosecutor	High Prosecutorial Council of Albania
Iva Arapović	Croatia	Deputy state attorney	County Attorney's Office in Pula
Tomislav Ivanović	Croatia	Deputy state attorney	Municipal Attorney's Office in Osijek
Miroslav Ovcharov	Bulgaria	public prosecutor	District Prosecutor's Office in Veliko Tarnovo



Photo 1. Participants of the international workshop “Prosecutors against environmental and wildlife crime”

## WORKSHOP AGENDA

The Workshop agenda was produced in English and previously circulated by email to all participants (Annex I). The programme was divided into the blocks of presentations, which were implemented by the representatives of the Public prosecutor’s office for the protection of environment and land planning from Madrid.

The first presentation focused on representing the general structure, operations, duties and responsibilities of the Public Prosecutor's Office for Environment and Land Planning of Spain and was presented by the Chief Prosecutor for Environment and Urbanism of Spain, His Excellency Mr. Don Antonio Vercher Noguera.

The second presentation endeavoured to present to the participants the scope and frequency of environmental crime in Spain, as well as the different types of national and EU legislation that is used to prosecute these types of crime.

The third presentation focused on presenting the complex issue liability related to electrocution and collision of bird fauna, which is regarded as a type of environmental crime in Spain.



Photo 2. Presentation of the Prosecutor for Environment and Urbanism of Spain - Illustrous Mrs. Carmen de la Fuente Méndez. "Tackling the electrocution and collision of birdlife in Spain".



## MAIN MESSAGES FROM THE WORKSHOP

### COLLABORATION IS INSTRUMENTAL.

The high-level meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November brought together 13 European prosecutors in the Spanish Prosecutor’s Office for Environment and Urbanism and provided a platform for participants to share successful prosecutions of criminal cases and explore the nuances of environmental crime, including wildlife poisoning, poaching, illegal trade, and collisions and electrocutions with energy infrastructure. Participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia and Serbia were invited to share their countries’ legislation and procedures to fight wildlife crime and map out best practices.

### ADVANCING LAW ENFORCEMENT THROUGH BEST PRACTICES.

An integral part of the discussion in the workshop was dedicated towards identifying gaps in investigating and prosecuting wildlife crime incidents in the countries represented. Through collaborative brainstorming, participants sought to propose effective solutions for addressing these gaps.

Acknowledging that wildlife crime transcends borders, fostering collaboration between countries is fundamental to tackling this menace effectively. Notably, the high-level meeting with prosecutors recognizes the critical role of the judicial sector in coordinating investigations and ensuring successful legal proceedings. Building on Spain's best practice experiences in prosecuting wildlife crime, the meeting sought to amplify the impact of these efforts on a European scale.

### BUILDING CAPACITY TO TACKLE ENVIRONMENTAL AND WILDLIFE CRIME.

Combating wildlife crime requires active governmental engagement, capacities, and a multi-sectoral approach. Led by national judicial and enforcement authorities and strengthened through partnerships and collaboration with intergovernmental organisations, bolstering collective efforts to tackle wildlife crime comprehensively is fundamental.



## Annex 1. Workshop agenda



Fiscal de Sala de  
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### PROSECUTORS AGAINST ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE CRIME

*The chief Prosecutor for Environment and Urbanism of Spain and Prosecutors from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, North Macedonia, Serbia and Morocco specialised in environment and wildlife crime will gather in Madrid to share experiences and increase judicial cooperation.*

WORKING DAY SPECIFICATIONS DATE: 8 NOVEMBER 2023

HOURL: 10:00 – 14:00

PLACE OF CELEBRATION: C/ FORTUNY 4, MEETING ROOM, MADRID, SPAIN

### PROGRAM

**10:00: Reception.**

**10:30 – 11:30 - Presentation of The Chief Prosecutor for Environment and Urbanism of Spain His Excellency Mr. Don Antonio Vercher Noguera. “The public prosecutor’s office for the protection of environment and land planning”.**

**Question time**



**11:30 – 12:15 - Presentation Prosecutor for Environment and Urbanism of Spain**  
**Illustrious Msr. Cristina Zurdo Garay – Gordovil. "Crimes against spanish artistic and historical heritage".**

**Question time**

**12:30 – 13:15 - Presentation Prosecutor for Environment and Urbanism of Spain**  
**Illustrious Msr. Carmen de la Fuente Méndez. "Tackling the electrocution and collision of birdlife in Spain".**

**Question time**

**14:00 - End of workday.**

**14:30 - Work lunch.**

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