



Wildlife Crime Academy strengthens regional enforcement with new training of third cohort

As cross-border wildlife crime continues to escalate, undermining biodiversity, public health, and security, the Wildlife Crime Academy (WCA) has taken another step forward in strengthening Europe's collective response.

A new group of 37 professionals from nine countries has just completed a specialized training course focused on tackling illegal wildlife killing, poisoning and trapping.

Held from 10–12 June 2025 at the International University of Andalucía in La Rábida, Spain, this session marked the first training under the WildLIFE Crime Academy LIFE project (2024–2028) — an EU LIFE Programme initiative led by the Vulture Conservation Foundation.

A proven model, scaled for regional impact

The Wildlife Crime Academy was originally launched in 2021 under the BalkanDetox LIFE project and developed through the collaboration of the Vulture Conservation Foundation, Junta de Andalucía, Spain's Ministry for Ecological Transition (MITECO), and the Spanish Guardia Civil.

The Academy is built on a simple premise: empower professionals to tackle wildlife crime with the same seriousness and capacity applied to other forms of crimes.

The model works — and Andalusia is living proof. Over the past two decades, the region has reduced poisoning incidents by 90%, thanks to strategic enforcement, forensic expertise, and coordinated responses. The WCA is now sharing this success with the rest of Europe and beyond.

Between 2021 and 2024, the WCA ran five international training courses — two Level I, two Level II and one Level III — involving 66 professionals from 13 countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, Lebanon, Italy, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia and Spain.





The results speak for themselves. Thanks to trained alumni leading their own national courses, over 650 additional professionals have now been trained.

New cohort, new momentum

The most recent Level I course, titled Foundations of Forensic and Police Investigation in Wildlife Crime, trained 37 professionals from Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, and Spain.

Participants included enforcement officers, prosecutors, forensic veterinarians, and NGO representatives. Over three intensive days, they were trained in securing crime scenes, conducting forensic necropsies, collecting toxicological evidence, and managing wildlife crime investigations. The Junta de Andalucía, internationally recognized for its leadership in this field, again delivered the course, sharing insights grounded in decades of expertise.

WildLIFE Crime Academy 2.0 (2024-2028)

With its second phase now underway, the WildLIFE Crime Academy project expands the reach and ambition. This phase is supported by the EU LIFE Programme and a range of complementary projects, including LIFE Aegyptius Return, BalkanDetox LIFE, LIFE GypAct, and LIFE Rhodope Vulture.

Over the next four years, the project will:

- Train 100 new wildlife crime experts through four international cohorts
- Deliver national training programmes in at least 15 countries across Europe, North Africa and the Caucasus, reaching 1,000+ professionals
- Establish formal working groups connecting enforcement and environmental authorities
- Promote cross-border collaboration and intelligence-sharing through platforms like Europol and CMS/MIKT

Target countries include Slovenia, Montenegro, Romania, the northern part of Cyprus, Portugal, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Georgia, Turkey, France, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Spain.



Co-funded by
the European Union



The Wildlife Crime Academy is not only training professionals — it's helping reshape how institutions think about and respond to wildlife crime. Each participant, whether trained by the Academy or through national courses, will be better prepared to act, collaborate, and protect wildlife from one of today's most pressing threats.

Acknowledgements

This initiative is made possible through the collaboration of the Vulture Conservation Foundation, Junta de Andalucía, and the EU LIFE Programme, with strategic support from:

- Spain's Ministry for Ecological Transition (MITECO)
- Guardia Civil – Spanish Police
- Europol
- CMS/MIKT – Convention on Migratory Species
- IKB - BirdLife International
- International University of Andalucía
- MAVA Foundation
- EuroNatur
- The governments of all participating countries

Resources

More information available at the WildLIFE Crime Academy's [project website](#)

Photographs available for download below:

- [Group photo with professors and participants © Vulture Conservation Foundation](#)
- [Practical workshops © Iñigo Fajardo](#)
- [Theory session © Iñigo Fajardo](#)
- [Practical exam © Iñigo Fajardo](#)
- [Closing ceremony with the police and ministry © Vulture Conservation Foundation](#)



- [Wildlife Crime Academy logo](#)
- [WCA partner logos](#)

Contact

Jovan Andevski

Conservation Director, Vulture Conservation Foundation

+ 34 618 48 31 48 | j.andevski@4vultures.org

