

EN

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Answer given by Ms Roswall
on behalf of the European Commission
(27.8.2025)

1. The Zoos Directive¹ requires that Member States adopt measures for the licensing and inspection of zoos to ensure that zoos falling under Article 2 respect the specified conservation measures, including appropriate accommodation and care of the animals. Member States may exempt entities from the Directive's requirements, provided this will not jeopardise its objectives. If an inspection indicates that licencing conditions are not met, the authority must close the zoo or part thereof or impose requirements addressing the identified deficiencies within an appropriate time not exceeding two years.

2. The EU Wildlife Trade Regulation² lays down the overall provisions for international and internal EU trade in specimens of protected species. For lions and panthers an import and export permit must be obtained from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)³ Management Authority of the country of destination and origin. The CITES authority in the EU Member State must also ensure that the intended accommodation for the live specimen at the place of destination is adequately equipped to conserve and care for it properly. Moreover, in accordance with Article 8 of the Regulation, Member States may prohibit the holding of specimens covered by that Regulation.

The new Environmental Crime Directive⁴, which entered into force in May 2024 and must be transposed by all Member States in May 2026, strengthens the definition of wildlife criminal offences – such as wildlife trafficking – and the related penalties.

In line with the revised EU action plan against wildlife trafficking⁵, the Commission is exploring ways to tighten legislation on the holding and trade of wild animals from outside the EU⁶.

¹ Council Directive 1999/22/EC of 29 March 1999 relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos, OJ L 94, 9.4.1999, p. 24–26.

² Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 of 9 December 1996 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein, OJ L 61, 3.3.1997, p. 1–69.

³ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora: <https://cites.org/eng>.

⁴ Directive (EU) 2024/1203 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on the protection of the environment through criminal law and replacing Directives 2008/99/EC and 2009/123/EC, OJ L, 2024/1203, 30.4.2024, to be transposed by all Member States in May 2026.

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/env/items/773992/en>.

⁶ The Commission is currently conducting a study on a 'positive list' of exotic pets, and recently concluded a study to assess the potential to criminalise all trade in illegally sourced wildlife <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/3f466d71-92a7-49eb-9c63-6cb0fadf29dc/library/13062c04-a41e-434a-837b-65e5ed2bda9f/details>.