



Smuggling of Animals and Animal Products

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**Workshop Biological Threats
and
Regional Preparedness in Europe**

23-25th March 2026



Source: Eurogroup for Animals (2021). Illegal Pet Trade: Findings and EU Enforcement Action Plan



Source: INTERPOL & World Customs Organization (WCO) coordinated global operation,

Source: Le Dauphiné – Switzerland – France (Haute-Savoie) – Sheep in the trunk – 2014



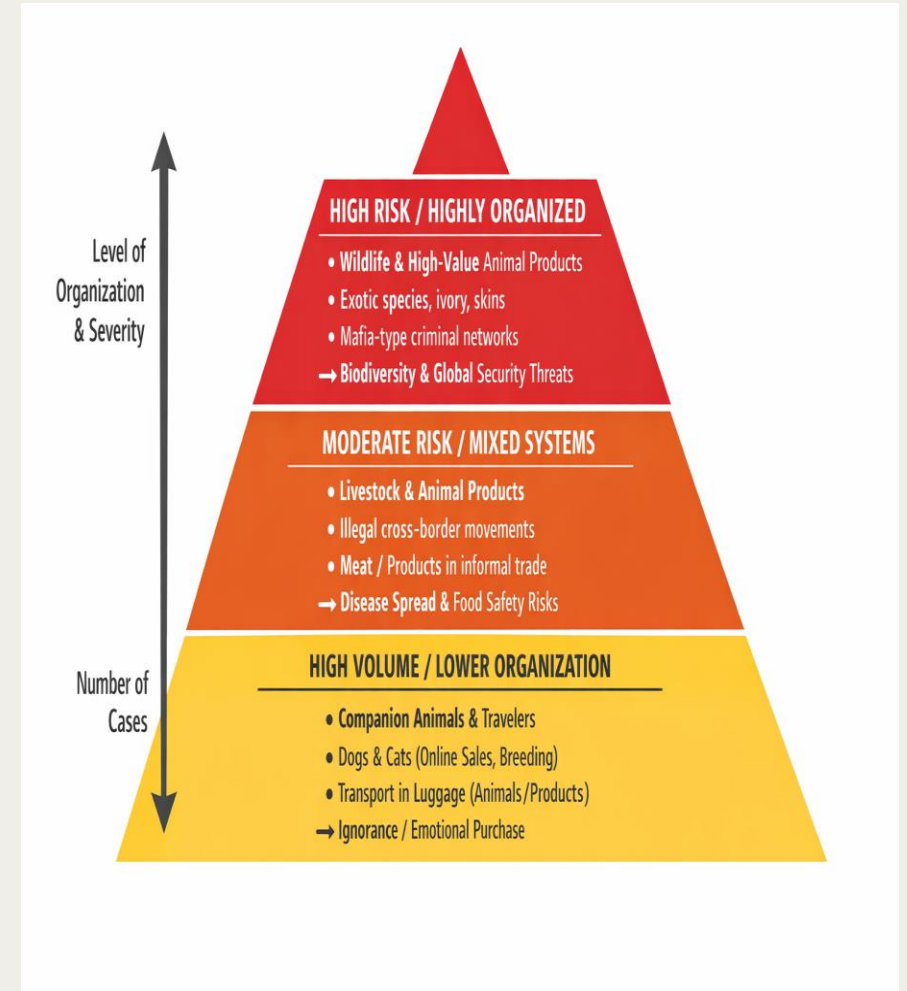
Context and background - Smuggling of Animals and Animal Products

❖ **Smuggling of animals and animal products** refers to any movement and trade that bypasses :

- Animal and human health regulations
- Animal welfare standards
- Biodiversity protection measures

❖ **It includes :**

- Organized criminal networks
- Professionals who ignore sanitary regulations
- Informal actors, travelers, or buyers who may act unknowingly



Source: pyramid generated by WOA-H-March 2026



Scale of the Global Problem – Smuggling of Animals and Animal Products

❖ **Animal smuggling** involves a wide range of species and commodities

- **Wildlife** : animals such as wild boar
- **Livestock** : cattle, sheep, pigs
- **Pets**: cats and dogs or exotic pets
- **Animal products** : meat/bushmeat, skin, ivory, and other commodities



Source: Eurogroup for Animals (2021). Illegal Pet Trade: Findings and EU Enforcement Action Plan



National Hunting Federation-2015



Source: INTERPOL & World Customs Organization (WCO) coordinated global operation,



Global trade flows and trafficking routes- Smuggling of Animals and Animal Products⁴

❖ Wildlife

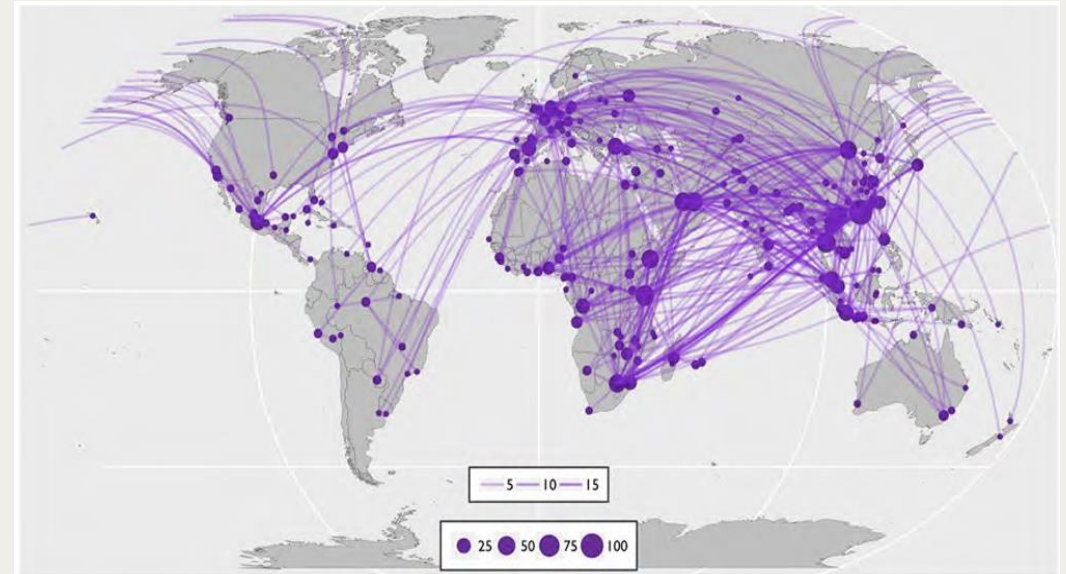
- Air routes: Africa → Middle East → Europe → East & Southeast Asia
- Maritime routes: South America, Africa → East Asia & Europe
- Overland corridors : Africa → Europe & Asia

❖ Livestock

- Major routes are overland and maritime, connecting production hubs to importing regions

❖ Pets

- EU overland routes: Eastern EU countries → Western EU Member States
- Air routes: Non-EU countries → EU airports



I. All air trafficking routes recorded in the C4ADS Air Seizure Database (2016 – 2018)

Source: All air trafficking routes recorded in the C4ADS Air Seizure Database (2016 – 2018)



Caption: Graph 7 - Main transport routes observed in IRASFF

Source: Eurogroup for Animal (2021). Illegal pet Trade; finding and enforcement Action plan

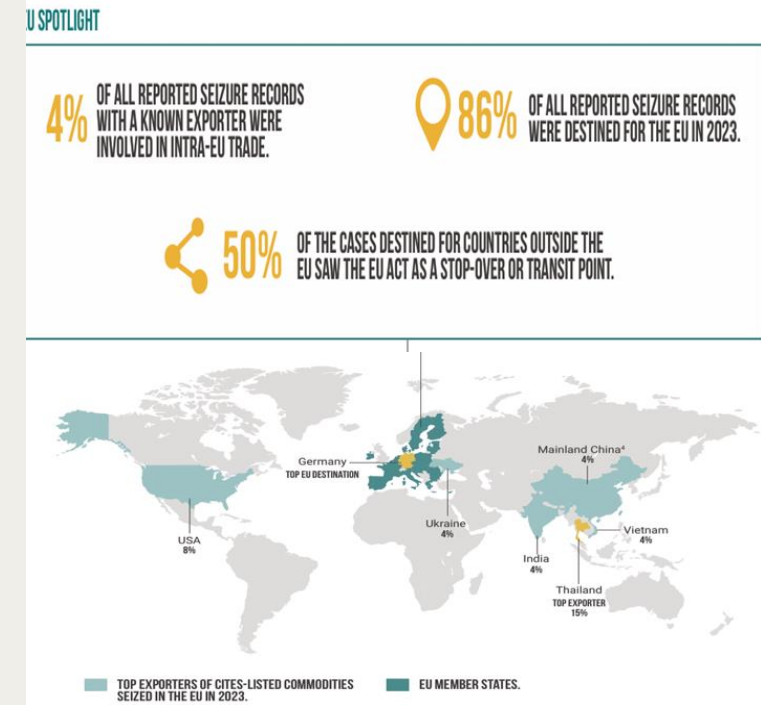
EU Action plan against wildlife and pet trafficking-Smuggling of Animals and Animal Products

❖ Wildlife

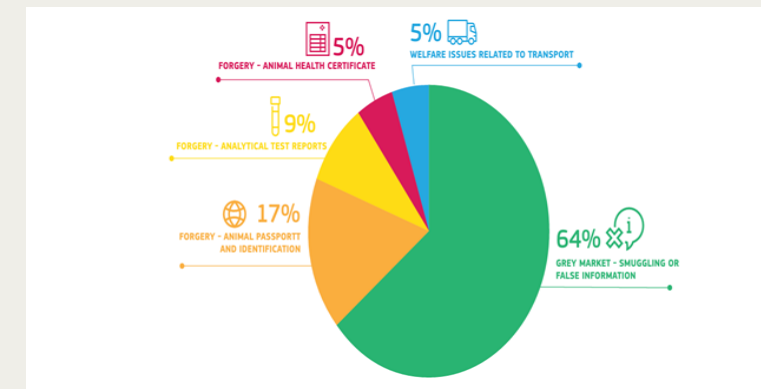
- EU is a major destination and transit hub for smuggled wildlife from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas.
 - Around 86 % of intercepted illegal wildlife is seized in 2023
 - Approximately 50% of intercepted shipments were in transit to other regions (UK)
- EU Action: strengthened enforcement cooperation, joint operations, shared data platforms and digital tools

❖ Pets

- EU pet markets is large and heavily sold online
 - Notifications in 2023 involved fake passports, falsified health certificates and incorrect information
- EU action: stronger traceability, harmonized EU rules and supporting long-term enforcement



Source: TRAFFIC EU TWIX seizures (2025), European Commission wildlife trade overview (2025), Humane World for Animals (2025)



Source: Europgroup for Animal (2021). Illegal pet Trade; fining and enforcement Action plan



Impacts - Smuggling of animals and animal products

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❖ Animal and human health :

- Spread of transboundary animal diseases : ASF, PPR, FMD, SGP, LSD
- Zoonotic disease: Rabies

❖ Welfare :

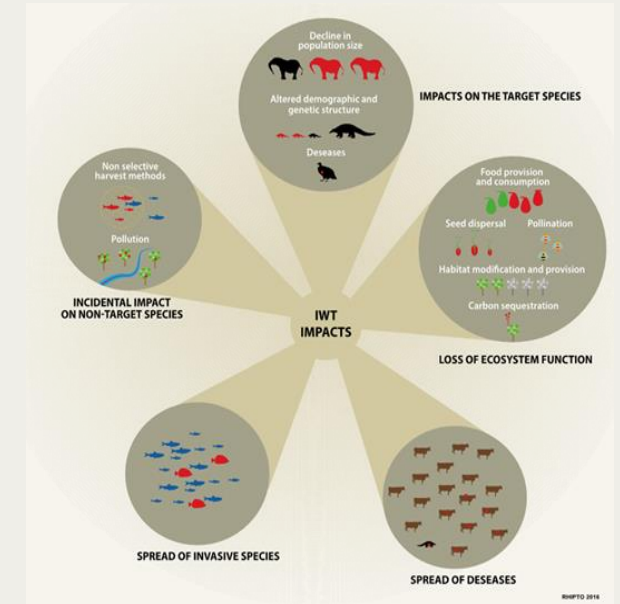
- A serious animal welfare concern during the transport
- Sick animals could amplify the spread of diseases

❖ Biodiversity

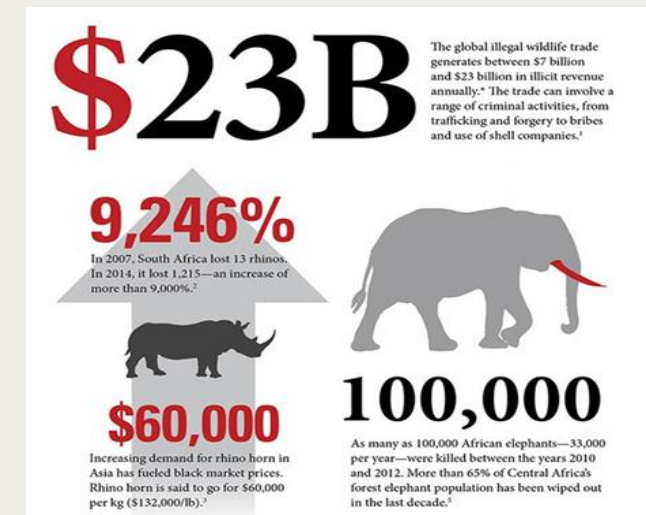
- Environmental and biodiversity threats
- Introduction of invasive species,
- Loss significant species

❖ Economic

- **Wildlife:** multi-billion-dollar illicit trade, around \$7–23 billion USD per year
- **Livestock:** few global estimates exist, but regional figures illustrate the scale: Mali – \$6.4M, Nigeria – \$86.4M per year
- **Pets:** EU reports highlight the scale of unregulated trade, around €3.3 billion
- **Money Laundering:** injects illicit funds and fosters corruption



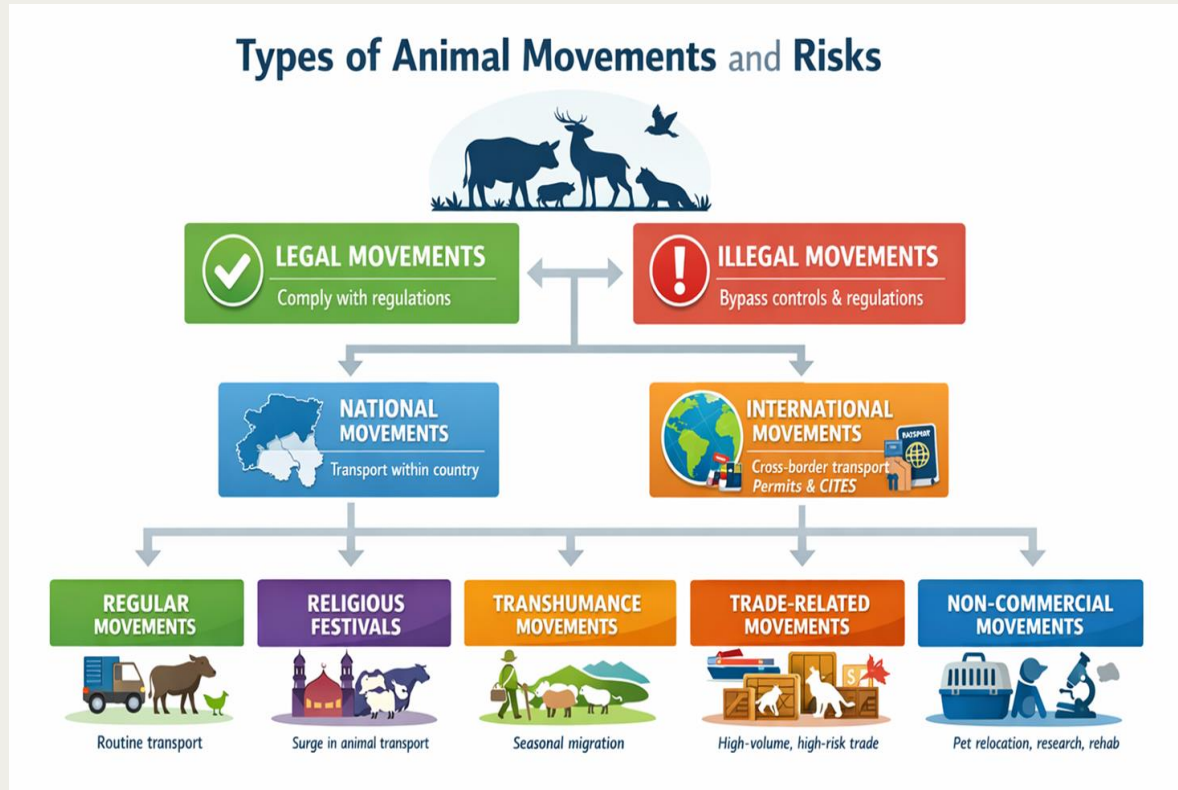
Sources: United Nations Environment Programme (PNUE). Analysis of the environmental impacts of illegal trade in wildlife



Source: UNODC, World Wildlife Crime Report 2024

Animal movement control system - Smuggling of animals and animal products 7

- ❖ Effective control begins by recognizing the diversity of animal movements and requires to integrate multi factors



Source: picture generated by WOA March 2026

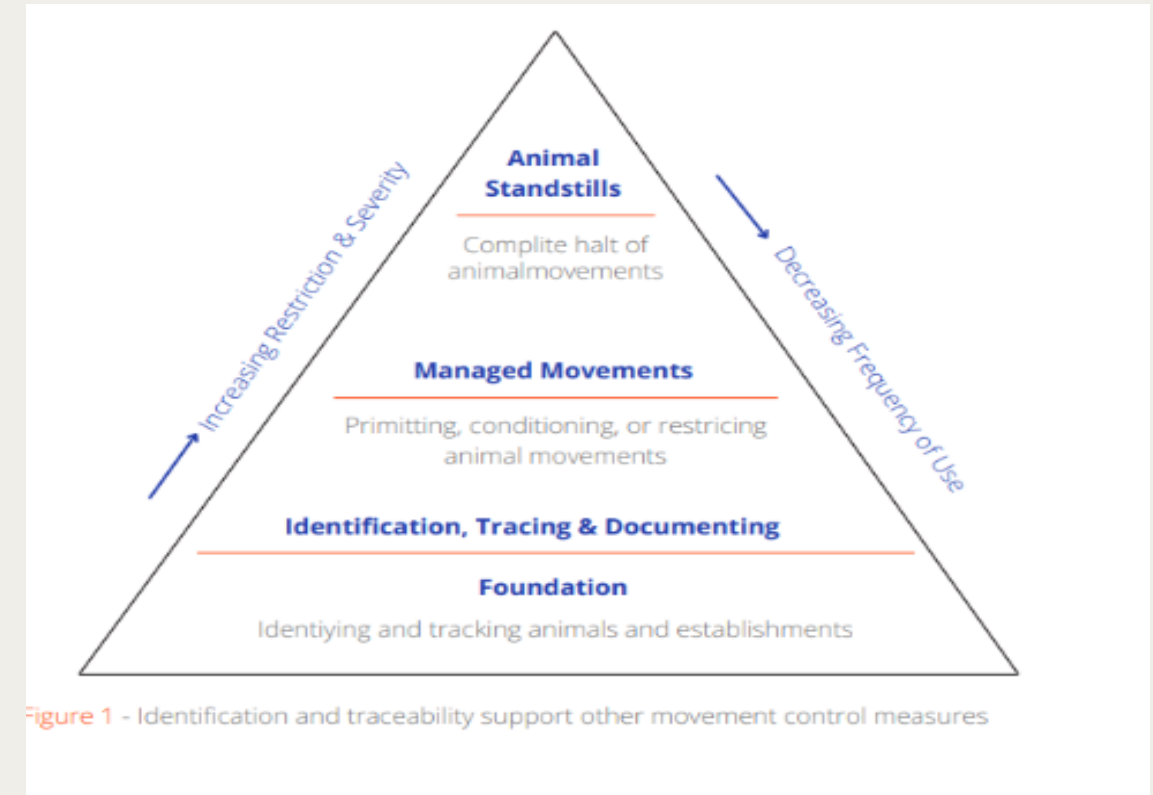


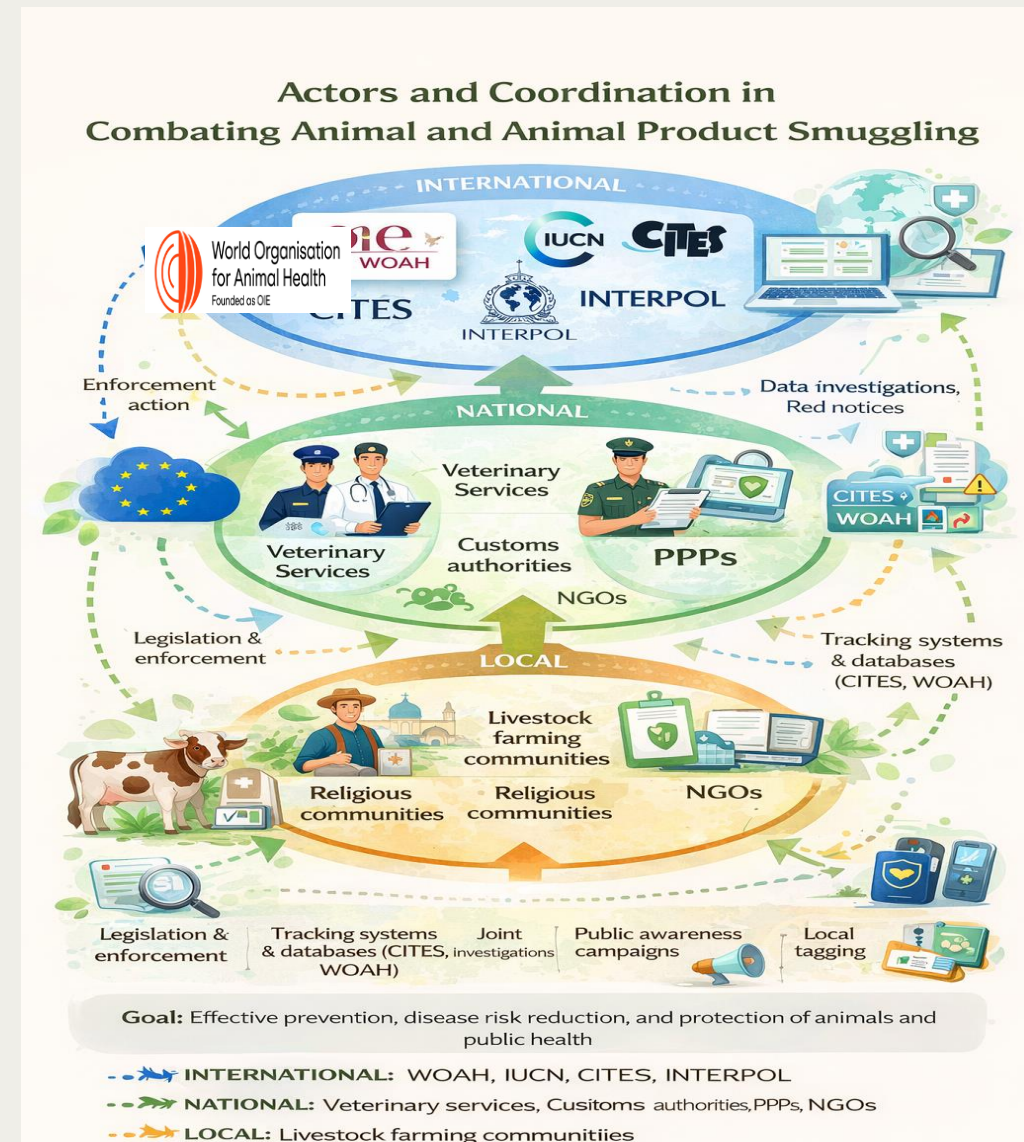
Figure 1 - Identification and traceability support other movement control measures

WOAH overarching framework-animal movement control system draft-2026

- ❖ WOAH is developing an overarching framework for animal movement control system
- ❖ Side event on this new WOAH initiative will be presented on May, during the General session

Global Governance and Key Actors -Smuggling of Animals and Animal Products

- ❖ Smuggling of animals and animal products is a complex, transboundary issue.
- ❖ Fragmented law enforcement is insufficient for an effective response
- ❖ Systemic and adaptive governance integrate multi-sectors, tools, and international cooperation are crucial
 - Operation Thunder, which mobilized key actors, led to the seizure of nearly 30,000 animals in 2025
- ❖ Political actions, regular awareness campaigns and strict sanctions are also essential



Source: picture generated by WOAAH-March 2026



Conclusion

- ❖ Smuggling of animals and animal products poses serious threats to human and animal health, biodiversity, animal welfare, national and global economies.
- ❖ This is a global challenge that demands cooperation, coordination, and international action.
- ❖ The EU and other key actors play a central role by harmonizing regulations, strengthening border controls, and supporting cross-country collaboration.
- ❖ Effective action also requires anthropological insights to understand the drivers of smuggling, strong political commitment, sustained awareness campaigns, and strict sanctions for those involved.
- ❖ Only through a collective effort combining these measures can reduce animal smuggling, limit the spread of diseases, protect human and animal health, ensure animal welfare, and preserve biodiversity.



THANK YOU!



World Organisation
for Animal Health
Founded as OIE