

LIFE project - FIGHT4WILDLIFE

“Urgent actions to prevent and combat poaching against three species in critical danger of extinction in Italy: European eel, Egyptian Vulture and Marsican Brown Bear”

Funding Programme

LIFE Programme – Call 2024 – Nature and Biodiversity

Call name: Nature & Biodiversity – Standard Action Projects (SAP) Call identifier: LIFE-2024-SAP-NAT

Background and threats

Despite a regulatory framework consisting of several international conventions and EU legal instruments, **wildlife crime** is a growing concern in Europe. Environmental crime is the **fourth largest criminal activity in the world** and the progressive worsening of the situation can be seen at a global level, as recorded in the reports of many institutions. Poaching or Wildlife crime is currently one of the factors that **most affects the conservation of a large number of species**, many of which have an unfavorable conservation status.

The LIFE FIGHT4WILDLIFE project will contribute to significantly increasing the potential for **identifying, preventing and prosecuting crimes against wildlife** through capacity building actions and through the provision and use of practical, **innovative** and effective tools. The project will significantly contribute to reducing the threat posed by poaching for 3 target species at **high risk of extinction in the wild**:

- **European eel** (*Anguilla anguilla*) – Critically endangered in IUCN Red List.
- **Egyptian vulture** (*Neophron percnopterus*) - species considered a priority by the Committee for adaptation to technical and scientific progress.
- **Marsican brown bear** (*Ursus arctos marsicanus*) - priority species under the HD.

The three animal species were selected on the basis of the following criteria: i) they are at high risk of extinction, ii) poaching represents one of the main threats to their survival and iii) methodologies, techniques and skills developed to contribute to improving the state of conservation of the three different classes of vertebrates (mammals, birds and fish) can easily be extended to other animal species that share their status and threats.

From this perspective, the LIFE FIGHT4WILDLIFE project will play a strategic role, as it will contribute to significantly increasing the potential for **identifying, preventing and prosecuting crimes against wildlife** through the use of **innovative analyses and instruments**, a widespread training, surveillance and specialization activities, the development of cutting-edge **investigative and intelligence techniques** for the rapid identification of trafficking linked to poaching cases, significant **awareness-raising** and activation of **social participation** for the prevention and fight against such crimes.

General objective: The general objective of the project is to improve the conservation status of the three target species, significantly reducing the threat posed by wildlife crime. By acting on the improvement of the skills and equipment of several specialized units, with the development of new investigative, operational and intervention procedures, the project focuses on the chosen body, the most suitable of all in terms of prerogatives and authority to combat environmental crimes, strengthening interinstitutional and social cooperation and acceptance. This will also allow us to guarantee the sustainability and continuity of results for the coming decades, providing national corps with cutting-edge personnel and structures in the fight against wildlife crime. The project, with the planned replicability activities, will export the virtuous model to four other European Union countries heavily affected by the poaching phenomenon.

Specific objectives

Objective 1: Understanding and improving the effectiveness of anti-poaching operations

Objective 2: Strengthen operational methods and tools, including innovative ones, to identify, prevent and stop poaching

Objective 3: Raising awareness and participation of the community and stakeholders on the importance of preventing and combating crimes against wildlife

Objective 4: Replicate best practices and implement protocols in other Countries and boost catalytic potential

Partnership

- 1) **CUFA, Cites Command:** Coordinating beneficiary.
- 2) **Legambiente Nazionale APS – ETS Association Network:** expert partner in LIFE planning for technical support and information, awareness and communication actions.
- 3) **ISPRA, BIO-CFS Service:** technical/scientific partner.
- 4) **National Reference Center for veterinary forensic medicine, IZS Lazio and Tuscany:** technical/scientific partner.
- 5) **Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park Authority:** territorial partner with conservation and protection purposes and with dedicated supervisory staff.
- 6) **Forestry Corps of the Sicilian Region, Autonomous Region of Sicily:** territorial partner with staff dedicated to supervision.
- 7) **Regional Forestry Corps, Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia:** territorial partner with staff dedicated to supervision.
- 8) **ENCI, National Body of Italian Dog Breeding:** technical partner for selection, training and operation of K9 units.
- 9) **EEB - The European Environmental Bureau:** European partner for the dissemination of tools and practices of civic participation for the prevention and fight against wildlife crime.
- 10) **Slovenian Police:** international partner for involvement and transfer (uptake) of good practices to combat wildlife crime.
- 11) **Croatian Police:** international partner for involvement and transfer (uptake) of good practices to combat wildlife crime.
- 12) **Cyprus Police:** international partner for involvement and transfer (uptake) of good practices to combat wildlife crime.
- 13) **Hellenic Police:** international partner for involvement and transfer (uptake) of good practices to combat wildlife crime.
- 14) **Malta Police Force:** international partner for involvement and transfer (uptake) of good practices to combat wildlife crime.

Duration

N. months: 63

Budget

Budget: 7 million €

EC contribution: 75%