

CITES (Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species)

What is CITES?

CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international agreement between governments that came into force in 1975. Its purpose is to ensure that no wild animal or plant species are subjected to unsustainable overuse by international trade.

Why is CITES necessary?

International problems call for international solutions: as wildlife trade crosses national borders, trade requires international regulation cooperation to protect certain species from overuse. CITES was developed in the spirit of such cooperation.

The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BFN) is the German enforcement authority for the implementation of the Washington Convention on the protection of species (WA = CITES) in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Possession of ivory

The sole possession of raw ivory and ivory products (without certificates) by private individuals (from inheritance, donation or ownership) is legal. The EU regulation refers - more or less - only to trade.

Trade in ivory and ivory products

Antiques are all processed products and mounted trophies before 1.06.1947. The trade within the EU can be done without EC certificate. All that is required is an age report from an expert recognized by the BFN if the object is also sold outside the EU. An export license is then absolutely necessary.

Preconventional stocks are all products (raw or processed ivory) which were taken over after 1.06.1947 and before 26.02.1976 (also outside the EU). Usually, there are no documents left to proof when item(s) were taken in possession. Old photos, travel documents, passport entries are helpful and an expert opinion on the age as well as a notarized, affidavit is usually required by the competent lower nature conservation authority. Legal purchases are products purchased within the EU between 6.02.1976 and 18.01.1990. This period probably covers most of the ivory products. In order to obtain an EU certificate (sales authorization),

the owner must file proof of taking possession. Usually there are no bills or papers left. The trade was not obliged to show CITES numbers on the invoices. Responsible is the lower nature conservation authority at the place of residence, which now decides on the basis of the information, whether an expert opinion or an affidavit is necessary.

After 18.01.1990 legally no ivory could be imported anymore from the countries of origin (exception hunting trophies, which are not allowed to be used for commercial purposes). There was the 1 kg regulation. For all sales between 1.06.1997 and 1.01.2009, which took place under the 1 kg scheme, the seller only was obliged to document the CITES no. and the weight in his species protection bookkeeping if the sale was done to end customers. If there is still an invoice, the assignment to the corresponding EU certificate is very difficult. This scheme concerned only the sale of old stocks of the above mentioned. If you have purchased ivory products during this period and would like to apply for an EU certificate, you will definitely need this invoice.

As a matter of principle, the lower nature protection authority at your place of residence is always responsible for all applications and questions. The application must be submitted by the holder. Further questions can be sent to the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (www.bfn.de).

Export of Ivory

Since October 2015, exports of raw ivory teeth (preconvention) to China, for example, are no longer possible. No more export licenses will be issued.