

Article – Animal welfare and protection: EU laws explained (videos)



Wildlife protection

The 500 **wild birds** naturally occurring in the EU are protected by the [Birds Directive](#), whilst the [Habitats Directive](#) aims to ensure the conservation of [rare, threatened or endemic animal species](#) and characteristic habitat types.

The EU Pollinators Initiative was launched in 2018 to tackle the [decline of wild pollinating insects](#), especially bees. Parliament called for a [further reduction of pesticides and more funds for research](#). In a report adopted in January 2018, Parliament had already said [regional and local bees varieties should be better protected](#).

[Whales and dolphins are protected](#) from capture and killing in EU waters. In addition, the EU has always been a defender of the full implementation of the [moratorium on commercial whaling](#) in place since 1986.

An EU regulation [bans the trade in seal products](#).

There are also rules on [trapping methods](#), prohibiting the use of leghold traps to catch wild animals in the EU and setting humane standards.

The EU implements and goes beyond the provisions of the [Convention on](#)

[International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#) (Cites) through its [Wildlife Trade Regulations](#) to ensure trade in **wildlife products** does not lead to species becoming endangered.

In May 2020, the Commission presented an [ambitious new Biodiversity Strategy](#) as part of the [EU Green Deal](#).

Zoos

[EU rules on keeping wild animals in zoos](#) seek to strengthen their role in the conservation of biodiversity and set standards for protection measures, including appropriate accommodation for animals.

Animal testing for scientific purposes

The EU has created a legal framework that [regulates animal studies](#) for the development of new medicines, for physiological studies and for testing of food additives or chemicals. The rules are based on the principle of the three R's:

- Replacement (fostering the use of alternative methods)
- Reduction (trying to use fewer animals for the same objective)
- Refinement (efforts to minimise pain and suffering)