

Project results and events

In addition to a report on the research results, the research team will compile two new German-language editions of a recurring statistical report on environmental crime in Germany ([Publikation Umweltdelikte](#)).

The research results are discussed with an expert audience at several events. These include expert workshops with enforcement practitioners on individual cases as well as events with researchers and practitioners focusing on improving the statistical basis on environmental crime in Germany and discussing the overall project results respectively.

The project last from January 2021 until October 2023. It is implemented on behalf of the German Environment Agency and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment (project number 3720 17 101 0).



Project team

Project coordination

Ecologic Institut:

Dr. Stephan Sina (stephan.sina@ecologic.eu),

Dr. Christiane Gerstetter

(christiane.gerstetter@ecologic.eu)

Other members of the research team

Institute of Forest, Environmental and Natural Resource Policy, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna:

Dr. Aron Buzogány, Dr. Ralf Nordbeck

Prof. Dr. Michael Faure

Prof. Dr. Christoph Stefes

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult Hans-Jörg Albrecht

Contact at Umweltbundesamt

(German Environment Agency)

Tina Mutert, Phone: + 49 340-2103-2340

(tina.mutert@uba.de)

Project implemented on behalf of:

Umweltbundesamt

Postfach 14 06

06813 Dessau-Roßlau

Germany

Phone: +49 340-2103-0

info@umweltbundesamt.de

Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de


 [/umweltbundesamt.de](https://www.facebook.com/umweltbundesamt.de)

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Criminal and other sanctions in environmental law A research project

For our environment

**Umwelt
Bundesamt** 

Background

The illegal pollution of soil, water, air, illegal trade in protected species or illegal shipments of plastic waste abroad - these are different forms of environmental crimes.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) **estimates** that environmental crime was the fourth most profitable type of crime globally in 2016. According to this estimate, the turnover generated by environmental crime globally was \$91-258 billion in 2016. In the criminal sphere, only drug trafficking, counterfeiting, and human trafficking generated more money.

Environmental crime has many negative effects. The ecological impacts range from the destruction of forests, to the pollution of water, soil, and air and to species extinction. Many types of environmental crime also affect human health, and organised forms of **environmental crime undermine** national governance structures and sustainable development.

That is why criminal law includes sanctions for acts that massively pollute or destroy the environment. Within the EU, the Environmental Crime Directive requires all member states to have such legal rules. Currently, the EU Commission is assessing whether the directive should be amended with a view to combatting environmental crime more effectively in the EU.

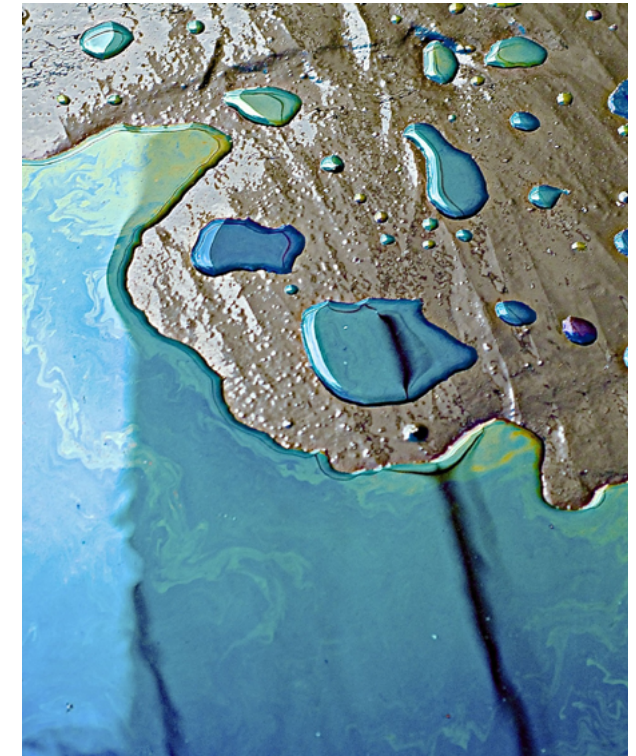


Violations of environmental law can also be addressed by measures other than criminal sanctions, however. In Germany, such measures include fines, site closures or orders to restore a polluted site to its proper condition. In other countries, it is also possible to publicize sanctions imposed on companies for violations of environmental law.

Research to date suggests that environmental crime can be combated particularly effectively if authorities can respond to environmental offenses in a differentiated manner, by using various instruments and sanctions.

Objectives and focus of the project

Existing research also shows, however, that the existing instruments and sanction are not always applied in way that leads to effective deterrence of environmental crime. Against this background, the Ecologic Institute, together with its partners, will develop recommendations on how environmental offences can be better prevented in Germany through deterrent sanctions in this project. The project is implemented on behalf of the German Environment Agency and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment.



The project first investigates theoretically under which conditions a certain sanction, such as a prison sentence, has a deterrent effect on environmental law violations. These theoretical considerations are substantiated by means of case studies on illegal waste disposal and disposal of waste by ships on the sea. On this basis, the research team will develop recommendations for policies as well as for practical measures to improve enforcement. In this context, the research team will take into account solutions developed in other European countries as well as current discussions in German – for example on creating additional sanctions for law infringements by companies.

The project brings together researchers from various disciplines, including law, criminology, economics, and public administration.