

Information on the commercial use of Rhino Horns in Austria

The illegal hunting of African rhinoceros for the Traditional Chinese Medicine market peaked in 2014, with 1.240 rhinoceroses that were killed in South Africa alone. While illegal killing is since then declining, demand in Asia remains high, with close to 400 animals killed in 2019. The illegal killing is linked to the high prices that are achieved for horn on Asian markets.

With regard to trade in rhino horn, the European Commission has developed recommendations in their „Guidance document: export, re-export, import and intra-Union trade of rhinoceros horns“ (November 2019), which are meant to guide member States when processing applications for CITES documents.

In essence, export and re-export permits for rhino horn should only be granted if the specimen is part of an exchange of cultural items (e.g. museum specimens), was not sold, but has been inherited and will, as part of a family translocation, or as part of an inheritance, be transported to a new location; or is part of a recognized research project.

In intra-Union trade, there should generally be no exemptions from the prohibition of commercial trade. Only under conditions of the most rigorous scrutiny should CITES certificates be granted. Within its legal powers, the Austrian Ministry of the Environment will take heed of these recommendations.

We explicitly point out that pre-evaluations and generally binding statements about future applications for CITES documents cannot be made by the Austrian CITES Authorities. An Authority can only make a binding decision (approval or rejection) on an application after carrying out a formal evaluation. Any other statements would be non-binding.