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# **#SaveStripes: Recommendations for EU-Vietnam cooperation on tigers**

Policy Briefing

February 2024



This paper calls on EU and Vietnamese officials to examine the tiger trade and the situation of captive tigers in Europe and Vietnam in light of Article 13.7.3 (d) and (e) of the Trade & Sustainable Development (TSD) chapter of the EU-Vietnam FTA, which commits the parties to implement appropriate effective measures to reduce wildlife trafficking.

### **The trade in wild and captive-bred tigers**

In East and Southeast Asia, at least 8,900 tigers are held captive, with approximately 395 held in Vietnam alone.<sup>1</sup> However, the true extent of this issue remains uncertain, likely exceeding reported figures. The lack of effective identification and registration protocols in Europe and Vietnam, coupled with uncontrolled and indiscriminate breeding practices, make it difficult to determine captive tiger populations. This regulatory gap not only leaves room for illegal trade but is also linked to wider welfare problems, including overcrowding in facilities, genetic disorders, poor diets, and the early removal of cubs from mothers.

Domestic and international trade in wild tigers for commercial purposes is prohibited in Vietnam under Decree 160/2013/ND-CP and Decree 92/2006/ND-CP. In addition, wild tigers are categorised in Appendix I within the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This means that the commercial trade of wild tigers is forbidden in order to ensure that the legal trade of live tigers, their parts and derivatives has no implications on the survival of the species. However, captive-born tigers are treated as Appendix II species which allows for trade. These tigers are born, raised, and laundered in captivity, or illicitly traded, living their entire lives behind bars in substandard conditions that do not meet their species-specific needs.

Tiger trade remains highly active due to weak law enforcement and demand for live tigers and their parts. The demand for tigers to be displayed commercially, and for their

<sup>1</sup> Roadmap to closing captive Tiger Facilities of Concern. FOUR PAWS.

<https://www.fourpawsusa.org/campaigns-topics/campaigns/break-the-vicious-cycle/roadmap-to-closing-captive-tiger-facilities-of-concern>

body parts to be used as luxury goods and in traditional medicine, **has resulted in a lucrative commercial trade and illegal trade within and out of the EU**. This poses a significant threat to captive-bred and wild tigers, fostered by the lack of transparency, traceability and registration management.

## Recommendations

In November 2023, Eurogroup for Animals and FOUR PAWS organised an online workshop titled '#SaveStripes: EU-Vietnam cooperation on tigers'. The aim was to put forward recommendations for EU and Vietnamese officials to address the issue of tiger trade and improve the welfare of captive tigers. Eurogroup for Animals and FOUR PAWS present the following recommendations to be implemented over the coming months and years.

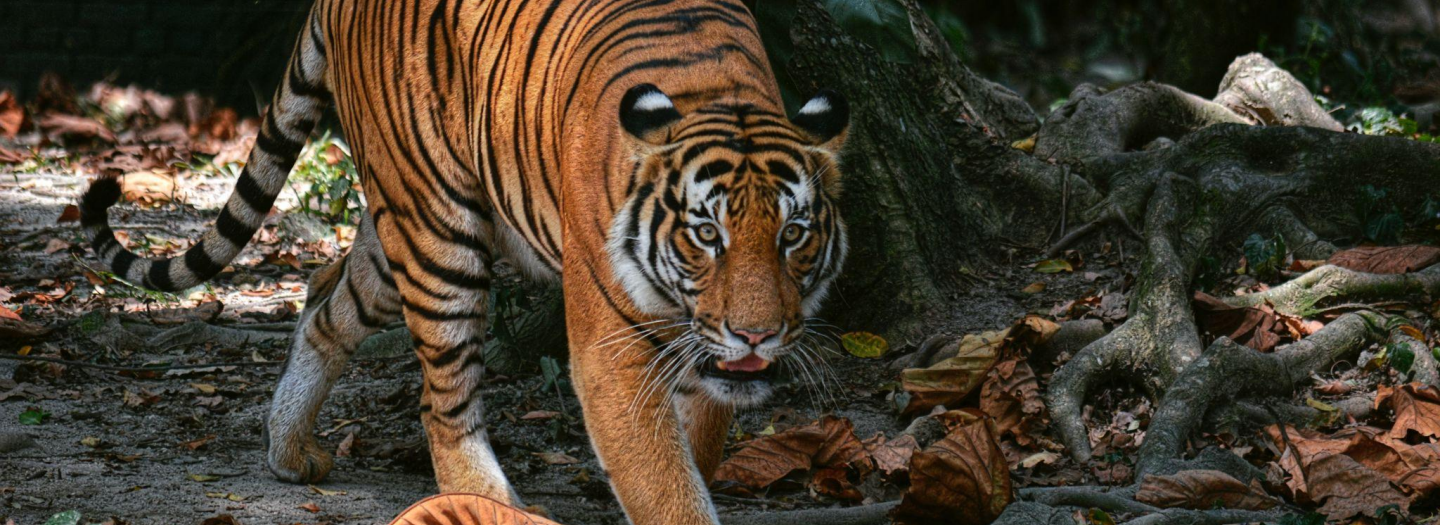
### Short-term:

- **Implement compulsory identification and registration** for captive tigers to enhance monitoring and accountability;
- **Issue a licence from the respective central authority** to possess captive tigers;
- **Facilitate health assessments, vaccinations, contraception, and treatment** for captive tigers;
- **Mandate a moratorium on commercial breeding of tigers** unless the facility takes part in true conservation breeding programmes;
- **Mandate minimum enclosure sizes and training programs for keepers** to improve conditions for captive tigers;
- **Perform routine inspections of keepers by authorised bodies** to ensure compliance with regulations;
- **Monitor tiger carcasses in rendering plants diligently to prevent them from entering the illegal trade**. The mishandling of carcasses could be linked to illegal trade;
- **Support ongoing projects from stakeholders involving tiger DNA sampling methods** for a better understanding of tiger demographics;
- **Promote awareness among citizens to diminish demand**. Education is vital for conservation and animal welfare efforts.

### Medium-term:

- **Establish a comprehensive database with tiger DNA and stripe profiles** to facilitate wildlife management, building on initiatives from stakeholders such as tiger DNA sampling;
- **Formulate a methodology for wildlife investigations and create an identification manual for enforcement staff**, ensuring efficient and standardised procedures;
- **Empower law enforcement agencies to confiscate illegally trafficked tigers and their parts** by providing necessary resources and legal support;
- **Enhance collaboration between EU and Vietnamese police, customs, and prosecutors** to join efforts in combating illegal wildlife trade;
- **Offer training programmes to veterinarians to build local expertise on tiger care in Vietnam**. Utilise the knowledge and expertise of stakeholders to enrich the training curriculum and strengthen veterinary capacity;





- **Increase the intake capacity of rescue facilities** to overcome current limitations, as they are currently at full capacity, impeding the potential confiscation of illegally kept tigers.

### Long-term:

- **End the trade in captive-bred tigers and their parts for commercial purposes. In this regard, work towards uplifting captive tigers to CITES Annex I** and bolster global conservation initiatives;
- **Align approaches to tiger trade** between the EU and Vietnam. To that aim, the EU should build on its 2023 tiger trade guidance by implementing an EU-wide legally binding framework for consistency and effectiveness;
- Together with stakeholders, **work towards phasing out tiger facilities of concern, particularly those engaged in commercial trade, following the [Roadmap](#)**. These facilities can be identified by assessing criteria such as:
  - Ensure zoo ticket sales are sufficient to cover all associated costs;
  - Identify facilities lacking reliable marking or proper identification of captive tigers;
  - Scrutinise facilities allowing direct contact between tigers and visitors, prioritising the well-being and safety of both the animals and the public.
- The phase out of tiger facilities of concern could be achieved by:
  - **Establishing immediate control and management mechanisms** over captive tiger facilities;
  - **Preventing the acquisition and breeding** of captive tigers for non-conservation purposes;
  - **Conducting a thorough audit** of all captive tiger facilities within their jurisdiction and individual tigers within them;
  - **Drafting phase-out plans** for tiger captive facilities of concern involving relevant government authorities, in consultation with, and with technical support from, local and international experts;
  - **Putting in place a clear timeline** to phase out existing captive tiger facilities of concern.

Eurogroup for Animals and Four Paws stand ready to offer input and expertise to policymakers in support of effective implementation of these recommendations. For more information, read our [previous report](#) on tiger trade.

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