

Project objectives

1. To map environmental criminality in Crete, focusing on the protected areas of the NATURA 2000 Network. The statistical analysis of collected data will be used: to provide relevant information to all competent bodies; to support proposals for legislative changes; for research and academic purposes.
2. To assist local stakeholders and social partners of the project in developing skills that will allow them to effectively contribute towards preventing and confronting environmental crime, as well as in the implementation of remedial measures, wherever that may be possible according to the provisions of the legislation on environmental liability.
3. To provide information to local inhabitants and users of NATURA 2000 sites about illegal activities in their areas, which undermine local development, social cohesion and financial growth.
4. To encourage a change of attitude of all involved stakeholders regarding identification, documentation and prevention of wildlife crime and other violations of environmental laws.

Environmental Law Observatory of East Crete

28, Theotokopoulou str., GR-71202 Heraklion, Crete, Greece
Tel. / Fax: (+30) 2814 007442
E-mail: observatoryeastcrete@gmail.com
Sbokos Georgios, Lawyer

Environmental Law Observatory of West Crete

43, Iroon Polytechniou str., GR-73132 Chania, Crete, Greece
Tel.: (+30) 28210 41179, Fax: (+30) 28210 41189
E-mail: observatorywestcrete@gmail.com
Maniadaki Maria, Lawyer



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Partners



University of Crete Natural History Museum of Crete (NHMC)

Knossou Avenue Premises
GR-71409 Heraklion, Crete, Greece
Tel.: (+30) 2810 393265, Fax: (+30) 2810 393294
E-mail: themis@nhmc.uoc.gr



Heraklion Bar Association

Heraklion Courthouse, Dikaiosinis Avenue
GR-71110 Heraklion, Crete, Greece
Tel.: (+30) 2810 286386, Fax: (+30) 2810 288311
E-mail: dikigorher@yahoo.gr



Chania Bar Association

Eleftherias Square, Chania Courthouse
GR-73130 Chania Crete, Greece
Tel.: (+30) 28210 54529, Fax: (+30) 28210 55306
E-mail: dschania@dsch.gr



Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature

20, Nikis str.
GR-10557 Athens, Greece
Tel.: (+30) 210 3224944, Fax: (+30) 210 3225285
E-mail: info@eepf.gr



Ministry of Environment and Energy Coordination Office for the Implementation of Environmental Liability – COIEL

119, Mesogeion Avenue
GR-10192 Athens, Greece
Tel.: (+30) 213 1513890, Fax: (+30) 213 1513708
E-mail: sygapez@prv.ypeka.gr



Right and Liability for the Environment



Project Title

Promoting awareness of wildlife crime prosecution and liability for biodiversity damage in NATURA 2000 areas in Crete (LIFE14 GIE/GR/000026-LIFE Natura Themis)

The project

The 5-year project LIFE NATURA THEMIS is implemented in Crete since October 2015 and will end in September 2020. Its main goal is mapping environmental criminality in the Region of Crete, with emphasis on the protected sites of the NATURA 2000 Network. The project also aims to provide in-depth information to lawyers, judges and State prosecutors, investigating officers, and officials of the Regional Authorities of Crete about all aspects of environmental crime, especially in NATURA 2000 sites. It also aims to increase general public awareness about prosecution of wildlife crimes and to highlight the application of liability for the remediation of biodiversity damage. Thus, the project will contribute towards prevention and reduction of environmental crime by educating and increasing awareness of local communities.

Smart Devices Application:
app-naturathemis.gr

Download the application for:



Android



iOS



<http://www.lifethemis.eu>



LIFE Themis

Scientific work

Around 70% of those accused for violations of environmental legislation in Crete, even within NATURA 2000 sites, is acquitted.

It is an undisputed fact that in most violations of environmental legislation it is difficult to prove specific intent of the accused. Scientific complications that lie beyond the lessons learned from common experience are also frequently encountered.

The LIFE NATURA THEMIS project provides a unique database on environmental criminality in Crete, which will reduce research time for all cases processed by judicial officers. A brief review of the geoinformational map can enlighten the user about the “hotspots” of environmental law violations. At the Environmental Law Observatories of East and West Crete, judicial officers will find reliable and impartial legal advisors. You can personally contact the specialised lawyers coordinating the Environmental Law Observatories and receive information on land uses and the legislation governing the NATURA 2000 protected sites in Crete.

Support of competent environmental authorities

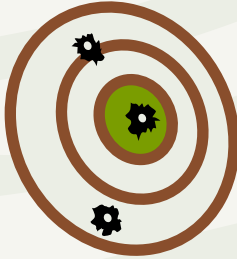
Research in the context of the project indicates that only two out of ten competent authorities keep electronic records of environmental criminality. As a result, environmental degradation remains a statistically “invisible” crime.

The NATURA 2000 sites in Crete do not have endorsed Management Plans. In addition, there is no responsible authority that exclusively keeps records of environmental crime. Investigating officers, however, may fill this gap significantly by recording violations of environmental laws in special registers in their respective services. Keeping such records, especially in electronic format, and allowing investigating officers to access the relevant data, creates a powerful tool for preventing and suppressing criminality.

The LIFE NATURA THEMIS project provides standardised forms for recording environmental crimes, as well as information on the rights and responsibilities of environmental authorities, and on the importance of proper investigating procedures.



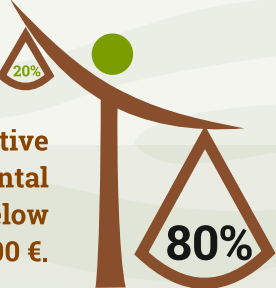
The arson cases that come into the unknown perpetrators file in Crete reach up to a percentage of 80%.



One third of the environmental offences in Crete are registered within a NATURA 2000 site.



The 80% of the administrative fines for environmental offences in Crete are below the amount of 5,000 €.



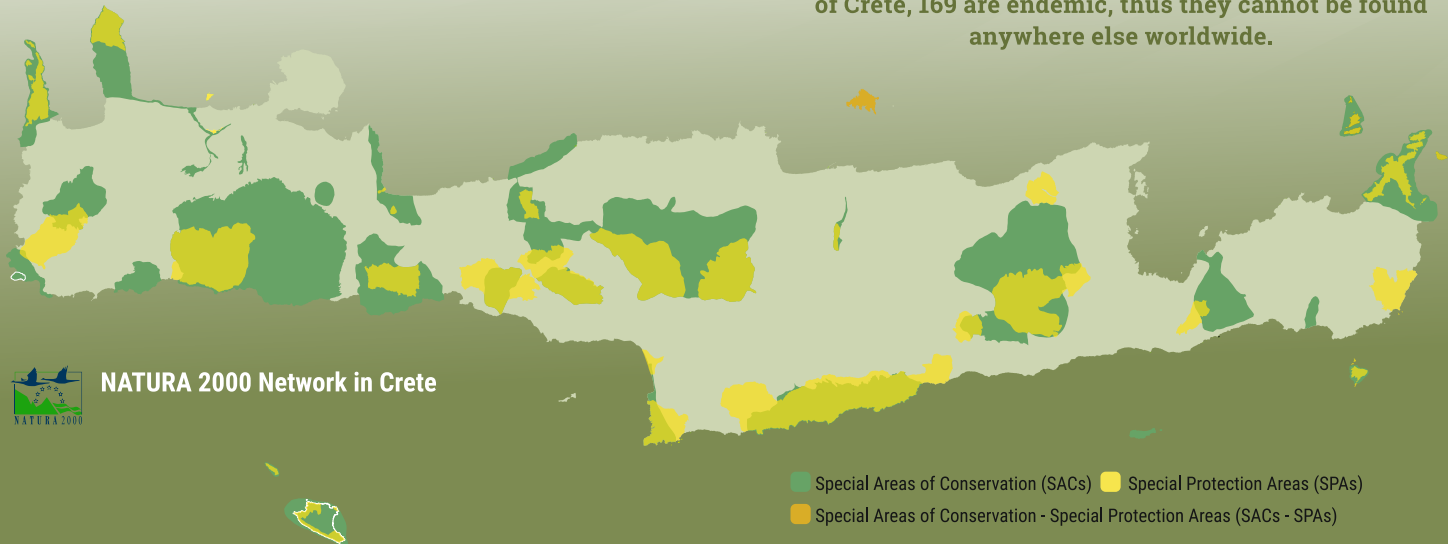
The 60% of the environmental offences in trial were postponed at least once, while the average duration between crime committing and trial is 5 years.

Around 70% of the avifauna of Europe finds shelter in Cretan mountains (361 out of 533 species).

Fifteen percent (15%) of mammals and 10% of reptiles known in Europe are accommodated in Crete.

Forty percent (40%) of fishes and 12% of mammals of Europe live in Cretan seas (476 fish species and 5 cetaceans).

Out of 1,896 species of flora that grow in the island of Crete, 169 are endemic, thus they cannot be found anywhere else worldwide.



Standing by the lawyers side

Approximately 6% of all cases tried in front of the Criminal Courts of Crete concern environmental crimes.

Lawyers can specialise in Environmental Law, thus combining their scientific interests with a professional activity strongly favouring the public interest.

The LIFE NATURA THEMIS project, and the participating Heraklion Bar and Chania Bar, support local lawyers with two Environmental Law Observatories, in East and West Crete, respectively. The Observatories provide specialised knowledge both at the theoretical and the case law levels. Interested professionals may participate in the seminars for lawyers. Lawyers already specialising in environmental issues may inform the Environmental Law Observatories, so that they may be included in their databases.

The citizens above all

Lawsuits against unknown perpetrators for environmental degradation are almost always archived and not brought to trial.

Lack of prosecution is, to a large degree, due to the inability of the public administration to process the lawsuits brought by citizens against unknown offenders. According to Circulars 1/05.02.2008 and 1/05.02.2009 of the Hellenic Supreme Court Prosecutor, investigating officers are frequently unable to carry out investigations, searches and seizures; thus, perpetrators of environmental crimes are seldom identified, even though the local inhabitants may be known who they are.

The LIFE NATURA THEMIS project informs citizens about their entitlements and obligations. Filing charges ensures that cases will not be archived, saves time during the investigation process, and strengthens social control of environmental criminality.

* Legal disclaimer:

The statistical facts on criminality correspond to the current results of the original research, and may change during the implementation period, according to the data collected by the Project Team.